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‘THE CONTENTION OF POWER’:
THE ROLE OF THE JESUITS IN THE
CATHOLIC LIFE OF BRISTOL, 1700-1830

by

KENNETH MILES WARDLE HANKINS

A thesis submitted to the University of Bristol
in accordance with the requirements
of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

The Faculty of Arts
January 1998
ABSTRACT

It was the Jesuits who, in the early years of the eighteenth century, established the Catholic mission in Bristol after the Reformation and this thesis is the first attempt to trace in some detail, within the national context, their leading role in the development of Catholicism in the city up to the year 1830 when, for a while, they were forced to leave. By then the Society of Jesus had been restored in England and Catholic Emancipation had been won. The records of the Western District of the Catholic Church were destroyed in the Gordon Riots of 1780 and in consequence the eighteenth century has been less accessible (and perhaps, therefore, less inviting) to the researcher than have later periods. It is hoped, therefore, that this thesis will be a contribution to the study of the Catholic Church in Bristol in a less familiar age.

Bristol, for a time second in importance only to London, was strongly Protestant and we shall see how Catholic beginnings were discreet and private, yet closely observed by the authorities. In 1773 the Society of Jesus was suppressed by Pope Clement XIV but the ex-Jesuits in England were allowed by their bishops to continue as a body and they built some of the earliest Catholic churches in the country. In 1790 they erected the first purpose-built Catholic church in Bristol since the Reformation.

In many of its features the progress of Catholicism in Bristol mirrored what was happening nationally and, where appropriate, parallels will be drawn, but I shall also argue that a distinctive feature of the growth of the Catholic Church in Bristol was that nowhere in the country was there a more bitter struggle between Catholic laity and clergy for control. Relationships, too, between the Jesuits and the vicars apostolic - the Catholic bishops of the day - were, for various reasons, sometimes strained and these also will be examined. Who, for instance, had ultimate control over the missions which the Jesuits founded - the vicars apostolic or the Society of Jesus? Twice, in 1815 and in 1830, the Jesuits were forced at the request of the bishop to leave Bristol but clung tenaciously to their right to return.

One of the most significant figures in this history was Robert Plowden, who was Jesuit priest in Bristol from 1787 to 1815 and was crucially involved in the major themes studied in this thesis. An attempt has been made to provide the first historical study of this neglected but important figure as part of the overall evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the Jesuit mission.
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my wife

VIVIENNE
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful for the assistance and courtesy I have always received at the archives I have visited. I wish to thank the Rev. Dr Thomas McGoog and the Rev. Geoffrey Holt of the British Province of the Society of Jesus; the Rev. Ian Dickie of the Archdiocese of Westminster; the Rev. F.J. Turner, SJ, of Stonyhurst College; and the staff of the Bristol Record Office.

I am particularly grateful to the Rev. Dr J.A. Harding and Dr John Cashman, the Archivist and Assistant Archivist of the Clifton Diocese, for the help they have given me during my weekly visits to the archives over several years. In this connection I wish to thank the Bishop of Clifton, the Right Rev. Dr Mervyn Alexander, for allowing me to consult the archives at his residence, and his staff for their hospitality. Although engaged in her own researches, Dr Pamela Gilbert has always been most helpful.

I wish to express my thanks to the Abbot of Downside and to the Librarian, Dom Daniel Rees, OSB, for allowing me the use of the Benedictines' splendid library, and to his assistant, Mrs Bridget de Salis, for her kindness.

I am also grateful to the staff at the Bristol Reference Library who have been so helpful and efficient in dealing with my requests.

In the course of corresponding with me over work he was engaged in, Dr Paul Delaney of New Brunswick made me aware of some little-known material which has proved valuable for my own thesis and which, indeed, merits further research. I am indebted to him.

The Provincial of the British Jesuits, the Rev. Dr James Crampsey, gave
generously of his time to see me and to answer my questions about the work of the British Province today and the Thirty-Fourth Congregation of the Society of Jesus recently held in Rome.

Finally, I am most grateful to my adviser, Dr Sean Gill, of the University of Bristol, for his kindness and for his constant help and guidance.
DECLARATION

I declare that all the work contained in this thesis is the result of my own research and that the views expressed in it do not in any way reflect the views of the University of Bristol.

Signed: [Signature]

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<td>AHSI</td>
<td>Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu</td>
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INTRODUCTION

But the substance, the largely unrecorded and forgotten labours and prayers of the local clergy and religious, provided the presence of Christianity visible to the sight of most ordinary people throughout the land. (Edward Norman)¹

1.1 The Aims of This Thesis

This thesis seeks to provide the first detailed account of the work and influence of the Jesuits in Bristol from 1700 to 1830. These dates have been chosen to cast light on the history of Catholicism in England in what has been a neglected period in comparison with the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries on the one hand and the nineteenth and twentieth centuries on the other. In that this is the first detailed account of the early Jesuits in Bristol, where for years they were the only Catholic priests, this study is also a history of Bristol’s early Catholic Church. The records of the Western District of the Catholic Church were destroyed in the Gordon Riots of 1780 and in consequence the eighteenth century has been less accessible (and perhaps, therefore, less inviting) to the researcher than have later periods. It is hoped, therefore, that this thesis will be a contribution to the study of the Catholic Church in Bristol in a less familiar age.

I also attempt to examine at a local level two major themes in the history of English Catholicism which were first highlighted in John Bossy’s important study, The English Catholic Community, 1570-1850: firstly, the extent to which the modern Roman Catholic Church in England was not so much a medieval survival but a significant modern innovation in its forms of organisation and theology;² this thesis studies the Jesuits as a key factor in this process of modernisation. Secondly, Bossy
has highlighted the importance of the struggles between clergy and laity for the organisational control of the newly-emerging Catholic Church of the eighteenth century.\(^3\)

The expression, ‘The contention of power’, which forms part of the title, was used by Robert Plowden (the most important of the Jesuit priests to serve in Bristol during this period) to describe the attempts of some of the laity to gain control over the Catholic Church in the city.\(^4\) This must be seen in the wider context. It was a time when many Catholics were no longer dependent on the patronage of the country gentry, but being closely-knit in urban communities began to acquire a voice of their own. It was an independent spirit manifested in the very vocabulary of the time, for from the honourable, age-old word ‘patron’ with its connotations of beneficence and protection sprang a newcomer, ‘patronise’, welcomed by men with airs of resentment and aspirations of their own.\(^5\)

In his book Bossy makes three significant points: he argues that the Catholic gentry, whose role was central to the survival of Catholicism in England after the Reformation, were superseded in the second half of the eighteenth century by a third estate - a new and prosperous lay elite, self-assured and eager for a prominent, even dominant, role in church affairs; secondly, in reviewing the situation country-wide he is unsure as to whether such a group existed in Bristol; and thirdly he suggests that the religious orders, for example the Jesuits and Benedictines, were more sympathetic to lay participation than were the secular clergy, although this sympathy was limited by concern for their own rights. Their position, Bossy felt, remained ‘ambiguous’.\(^6\) I shall attempt to show that in Bristol - the largest mission in the Western District, with a congregation of some 1,500 growing to 5,000 - the struggle
between priest and laity was fierce, bitter and protracted, and that in no other community in the country served by the Jesuits was there a more prolonged contest for mastery between priest and laity. At no stage did the Jesuits regard the Bristol mission and its property as anything but theirs, or consider that they might ever be relieved of it. Referring to a letter (after the suppression of the Society in 1773) from Bishop Walmesley of the Western District to the former provincial of the Jesuits, Fr Thomas More, allowing him to govern all the ex-Jesuits within his District as before, Henry Foley, the distinguished nineteenth-century Jesuit archivist, writes:

In virtue of this letter, therefore, you see that Jesuits were not to be dispossessed of their former missions, but might build chapels, and do anything else for their improvements, provided they could raise money either from the public, or from their own order for the purpose, which was the case at Bristol.\(^7\)

As for lay participation, Foley has this to say about the situation at Bristol and elsewhere at this time: ‘A spirit of freedom and independence of their spiritual leaders began to display itself among many parts of the Catholic community which had the most pernicious and fatal consequences.’\(^8\)

Other ‘contentions’ for authority can be discerned in the relationships between the Jesuits and the vicars apostolic, and between the Jesuits and the secular priests. As Sheridan Gilley has put it:

The Counter-Reformation Church was a battleground of competing jurisdictions, and any delver into Roman Catholic archives will be impressed at the energies which English Catholics devoted to fighting one another. Yet there is a certain especial impressiveness to the evidences of warfare and bad feeling between the Vicars Apostolic on the one hand, and the regular and secular clergy on the other, and between the seculars and the regulars. These animosities were to last for three centuries, and it was only in the course of the nineteenth century that the bishops got the upper hand and brought their clergy under their control.\(^9\)

Relations between the Jesuits and the bishops were often good, but on occasions the
religious orders (such as the Jesuits and the Benedictines) zealously resisted what they considered episcopal interference with their privileges, derived, they claimed, from the pope himself. For their part the bishops often regarded the independent actions of the regulars as encroaching on their own jurisdiction. The matter was partially dealt with in 1753 when the bull *Apostolicum Ministerium* declared that faculties for the administration of the sacraments should be granted by the bishops, but there remained other problems which were not finally resolved (in the bishops’ favour) until the constitution *Romanos Pontifices* of 1881.10

Rivalry between the seculars and members of the Society of Jesus had existed in England since the sixteenth century, when the secular clergy anxiously watched the Jesuits’ spirited propagation of the Catholic faith, a missionary style they thought unnecessarily provocative and challenging, and thus threatening whatever little security Catholics still possessed. They also, like others, came to resent the privileges the regulars enjoyed, and sided with the vicars apostolic in their disputes with them. All these tensions were played out in events at Bristol and will be considered in the national context.

A further aim of the thesis is to provide the first detailed account of a hitherto unduly neglected figure in the history of English Catholicism, both locally and nationally - the Jesuit priest, Robert Plowden. By doing so it is hoped to shed new light on the problems facing Bristol Catholicism in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. A final aim has been to make some overall assessment of the difficulties which the Jesuits faced in Bristol and the degree of their success or failure in tackling them.

As is well known, the history of the Jesuits has always been a controversial
matter. Acting on the Ignatian axiom of 'finding God in all things' and of 'God labouring in all things' and believing that all honorable activities should lead to his greater glory (Ad maiorem Dei gloriam, the Jesuits' motto), Jesuits engage in a variety of tasks wherever their talents may be used. It is a conscious involvement in the affairs of the world - what the Jesuits would call a 'creative response to the call of the Spirit in concrete situations of life', restated as recently as the Thirty-Fourth General Congregation of their Society held at Rome in 1995 - which has often led to a polarisation of opinions of them. In his History of England Lord Macaulay, the great Whig and Protestant historian of the nineteenth century, was moved to write (before, it must be said, adding some strictures):

Before the Order had existed a hundred years, it had filled the whole world with memorials of great things done and suffered for the faith. No religious community could produce a list of men so variously distinguished; none had extended its operations over so vast a space. There was no region of the globe, no walk of speculative or of active life, in which Jesuits were not to be found. They guided the counsels of Kings.

There was another perception of them - as dangerous meddlers in secular matters, who by their preaching and writings inflamed men's passions. Were they not, it was argued, the closest allies of the pope, one who denied the validity of other Christian Churches and, as a temporal prince, might intervene in the affairs of sovereign states? Thomas Newton, the eighteenth century Anglican Bishop of Bristol, expressed such a view:

Never was there a set of men that acted more contrary to their name and profession. They call themselves by the name, and profess themselves the peculiar disciples of the meek and lowly Jesus; but they are in reality, and have been from the very first institution, the pests and incendiaries of the world.

It is hoped that by a detailed reconstruction of the historical context in which
matter. Acting on the Ignatian axiom of ‘finding God in all things’ and of ‘God labouring in all things’ and believing that all honorable activities should lead to his greater glory (Ad maiorem Dei gloriam, the Jesuits’ motto), Jesuits engage in a variety of tasks wherever their talents may be used. It is a conscious involvement in the affairs of the world - what the Jesuits would call a ‘creative response to the call of the Spirit in concrete situations of life’, restated as recently as the Thirty-Fourth General Congregation of their Society held at Rome in 1995 - which has often led to a polarisation of opinions of them. In his History of England Lord Macaulay, the great Whig and Protestant historian of the nineteenth century, was moved to write (before, it must be said, adding some strictures):

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It is hoped that by a detailed reconstruction of the historical context in which
the Jesuits found themselves, a more balanced and less polarised assessment of their achievements and significance can be achieved.

1.2 Sources

In the mens of the Church, archives are the places of memory of the Christian community and storehouses of culture for the new evangelisation. (Pontifical Commission)¹⁵

Most of the material used in this thesis is derived from primary sources: the Clifton Diocesan Archives, Bristol; the Archives of the British Province of the Society of Jesus, London; the Westminster Archdiocesan Archives, London; Stonyhurst College Archives, Lancashire; and the City Record Office, Bristol.

The Gordon Riots of 1780 resulted in most of the records of the Western District, then housed in Bath, being destroyed, so the first volume of bishops’ correspondence in today’s Clifton Archives begins no earlier than 1772, before which date the researcher must look elsewhere for his sources.¹⁶ The loss of these early documents is the more grievous in that Bishop Walmesley was meticulous in preserving his papers. Nevertheless the Clifton Archives are among the most important diocesan collections in the country and were, by his own acknowledgment, the inspiration behind Monsignor Bernard Ward’s several important volumes on Catholic history written in the early years of the twentieth century. They have, moreover, an underlying continuity which offers an excellent narrative base for research. Most of the archives are at the bishop’s residence at Leigh Woods, Bristol, but some, including baptismal and marriage records, are still kept at the city’s Record Office which originally housed the full collection.

The nineteenth-century Jesuit archivist, Brother Henry Foley, a former
solicitor, was responsible for gathering and establishing the archives of the English Province (today the British Province) at their main residence at Farm Street, London. These are supplemented by Foley’s own manuscripts and his valuable printed Records. Reports over the years sent in by Jesuit missionaries, which are normally circulated only within the Society, are also available at Farm Street in volumes entitled Letters and Notices, together with documents collected from individual Jesuit parishes such as Bristol. There is also a small but interesting collection of letters relating to Bristol and the Western District to be found at the Westminster Diocesan Archives in Kensington, London.

The Bristol papers which are kept at Stonyhurst College, Lancashire (regarded before the days of Farm Street as the centre of the Jesuits’ organisation in England), deal solely with the redoubtable priest, Robert Plowden. The rich vein of material on Plowden to be found in the various archives has resulted in a certain imbalance in this thesis, allowable, perhaps, in that he was not only the second longest-serving Jesuit at Bristol, at an important time in its Catholic history, but also the most controversial.

The splendid library of the Benedictines at Downside Abbey, Somerset, has given me access to a wide range of printed material, some of it rare, whilst the eighteenth and nineteenth century pamphlets and newspapers available at Bristol’s Central Reference Library, together with publications by former Anglican Bishops of Bristol, have provided excellent contemporary evidence of local events and opinion.

Throughout this study Geoffrey Holt’s biographical dictionary, The English Jesuits 1650-1829, has helped me identify and locate many of the dramatis personae of a bygone age. It has been an invaluable aid.
NOTES TO INTRODUCTION


4. CDA (Clifton Diocesan Archives), *Correspondence 1772-1788*, Robert Plowden to Bishop Sharrock, 6 July 1788.

5. The OED’s earliest reference to ‘patronise’ in this sense is dated 1797; its illustrations of ‘patronising’ and ‘patronisingly’ are mainly nineteenth century.


7. ABPSJ, *Foley MS 5*, p.158.


16. The destruction in 1780 of the records of the Western District of the English Catholic Church is discussed in Chapter III of this thesis.

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CHAPTER I
The Background to the Establishment of the Jesuit Mission in Bristol in the Eighteenth Century

1.1 The Beginnings

The Society of Jesus (the Jesuits) was founded by the Spaniard, Ignatius Loyola, in 1540 and today is the largest Catholic missionary force in the world, numbering some 23,000 priests (or candidates for the priesthood) and brothers.\footnote{We may mention here certain original features which have a bearing on this thesis and which distinguish the Society from other religious orders.} Ignatius laid particular stress on the virtue of obedience, and Jesuits accept the rule of a highly centralised authority under a superior general (Father General) elected for life and residing in Rome.\footnote{Jesuits who are `professed of the four vows' have, in addition to the normal vows of the religious, taken a fourth vow of special obedience to the pope, to accept whatever assignment he may give them in whatever part of the world it may be. The Society has no female branch, so references to women in this study are occasional.}

The Jesuit presence in England has always been significant but in numbers never large - no more than a few hundred priests and brothers at any time. The first Jesuit mission to England took place in 1580. Despite persecution, by 1623 the three Jesuits leading the original group of twelve had grown to over two hundred, and the English Society was designated a province under the leadership of a `provincial'.\footnote{This chapter will attempt to trace the early development of the Society in the Western District and then in the district's largest Catholic community, Bristol - a city strongly Protestant, wealthy and cosmopolitan in character, and for a while second in}
importance only to London.

Jesuit archives refer to Bristol as 'a very ancient mission' of the Society of Jesus and also as 'one of the Society's first class missions'. A document in the Public Record Office in Brussels suggests that a chapel existed in Bristol as early as the year 1697 for it makes mention of a Confraternity in honour of our Lord's Passion and of the Dolours of Mary, established by Pope Innocent XII pro capella Beati Stanislai Bristoliensi on 6 February 1697. The dedication of the chapel to 'Blessed Stanislaus' (the Jesuit, Stanislaus Kostka, was canonised in 1726) shows that it must have been served by a Jesuit Father. There is, however, no record of the Jesuits having a permanent residence in the city until the early decades of the eighteenth century, and we must assume that before then Catholics in Bristol and its neighbourhood were served intermittently by priests who stayed but a short while before departing in secret and in haste for duties elsewhere. It was indeed a time when 'neither chapel nor permanent altar existed at all: only a stray Jesuit coming from no one knew whence, lodging no one knew where, and going no one knew whither'.

The modus vivendi of the Jesuit missioner in the seventeenth century took one of three forms. He might be living in an upper room or in the attic of the house giving him shelter, remote from prying eyes and chance visitors, his room furnished with bed, table and altar. He would be visited now and then by his superior, but otherwise he rarely saw any of his fellow Jesuits or another priest.

There were more mobile missioners, who travelled on foot or horseback - missionarii excurrentes - changing their names and dress as circumstances dictated, alert to the threat from pursuivants and oppressive authority but, though more
exposed to danger, achieving more success in their work. They had, too, the opportunity of frequently meeting their superior and other members of the Society. They generally had one house where they could remain for a few days, and Catholics in the neighbourhood would know where assistance lay if they needed someone to administer the sacraments or to comfort the dying. Doubtless, these were the priests who served, whenever possible, such missions as Bristol.

The third class of missioner enjoyed greater security and greater freedom; he lived in a mansion whose owner, for some special reason, was to a degree exempt from the effects of the penal laws. It was likely that the Jesuit superior would live in such a house, free to visit the scattered members of his district or summon them to see him if required. But by 1613 things had entirely changed: the Catholics who were prepared to offer their houses for shelter had either died off or were reduced to ruin, and scarcely a family in the kingdom could be found who could help as of old, such was the oppressive nature of the times.

But certain old Catholic households had other links with the Jesuits. It became traditional in these families for a son with a religious vocation to enter the Society of Jesus rather than some other order; at least thirty-seven such well-known, titled families are listed in the Society’s records, some with numerous vocations over the years, one family with as many as sixteen.10

A report in 1605 by the High Sheriff of Herefordshire - a county served by the same group of Jesuit Fathers who had responsibility for Bristol and its neighbourhood11 - spoke of the trouble the Jesuits were causing the authorities in his district, and of their influence on the local Catholics, winning the respect of some but filling others with apprehension:
Except good order be taken in tyme the recusants by the Jesuites persuasions will take up armes against the Kinge... And the rather to move the people they brag much that they shall have assistance from the Kings of France and Spaine. In respect of which persuasion many Catholics in Wales are in great fear, and do wish the Jesuits with all their adherents out of the land.12

It was a problem which Fr Robert Parsons (Persons) had faced three decades earlier when he led the first Jesuit mission.

The report then listed the 'lay gentlemen that run this course with the Jesuits', some twenty in all. They were variously described as being 'hott for the Jesuits', 'altogether Jesuited', and 'stiffly Jesuited'. One recusant was noted as keeping two Jesuit priests in his house, whilst it was observed of another that he kept Fr Robert Jones, the superior of his district, very often in his house sometimes for a month at a time. Jones was indeed in the thick of things, described in the report as being 'the firebrand of all'.

In the same year a report concerning the activities of papists in his district from Robert Bennet, the Bishop of Hereford, to the Earl of Salisbury described how Sir James Scudamore (related to John Scudamore, the Jesuit priest who founded the Bristol mission), accompanied by Justices of the Peace, spent a summer evening scouring an area of about thirty miles near the Monmouthshire borders to seek out 'and apprehend Jesuites and priestes their abettors'. They came upon houses 'full of alters, images, bookes of superstition, reliques of idolatory ...', but their quarry had fled.13

By 1612 the 'firebrand' of the western shires had succeeded Richard Holtby as the superior of all the Jesuits in England, and in a lengthy circular letter to his brethren in that year reviewed their position and provided some guidelines as to how Jesuits should conduct themselves. Jones spoke of their numbers growing daily,
though the persecution was intense and increasing, but recognised they were dispersed and separated from one another by large tracts of country; and there was, too, the stress of the times - the poverty of Catholics and the continual harassment suffered by all through the machinations of their adversaries. The superior was particularly mindful of the many Jesuit priests who had the care of poor Catholics; he commended the frugal lives of such priests and their indifference to material things, for thus they became examples to their flock. His next remarks provide some insight into how Jesuits were to achieve their ends:

By thus becoming all things to all men that they may save all, they accomplish the most divine of all divine works, which is to co-operate with God in the salvation of souls... The spirit of our Society and Constitutions [prescribes] that all, especially those who are appointed to the mission, should gain the goodwill even of our enemies, as much as in them lies, and thus make them aid in their endeavours.  

It was an echo of the guidance Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Society, had given his followers some seventy years earlier on how to succeed in their relations with people they meet - early signs, perhaps, of inculturation on which Jesuits lay such stress today. When he chose Alfonso Salmerón and Paschase Broët to visit Ireland in 1541 for the purpose of sustaining the Catholics and reporting for the benefit of himself and the pope on the state of the Church in that country, he wrote to them in September 1541 on ‘How to deal with others in Our Lord’:

In dealing with all ... speak little and speak late, listening long and _libenter_, until they have quite finished all they have to say ... let the leave-taking be prompt but courteous... Consider first what temperament they are, and conform yourselves to it ...

for, he said, each should think ‘omnia omnibus factus sum’. He warned them, too, to be discreet and guarded in all their conversation since everything they said or did could become public. Salmerón and Broët were instructed to report to Ignatius
regularly and inform him of their whereabouts, but (in Jesuit fashion, born of necessity) with great caution and disguise.\(^{16}\)

The poverty of most Catholics (Bristol's Catholics were described in the early nineteenth century as amongst the poorest of the poor) was something of which the Jesuits were particularly conscious. In his letter Fr Robert Jones urged his colleagues to be especially mindful of their vow of poverty, calling the spirit of private possession 'that greatest of evils'. They must set an example. 'I will add that ours [a favourite term of self-reference by Jesuits] ought to be very careful lest by adopting any special dress, however suitable in itself, we may be thought by Catholics to be affected, or to ape the elegant and polite.'\(^{17}\) Modesty of gait, religious conversation and the uniform way in which Jesuits celebrated the most Holy Sacrifice were, he said, the marks by which men of the Society were distinguished in the eyes of many Catholics who were complete strangers to them. Conformity both in interior and exterior things, he added, was very necessary for them.

As Ignatius had kept in touch with members of his order through a voluminous correspondence\(^{18}\) and the superiors in their turn had regularly submitted reports to him, so on 3 November 1613, Fr Robert Jones wrote to his Father General in Rome on the year's events in England. He pointed out that the absence of a fixed residence for many of the Jesuit priests was a great handicap to them. The old Catholics, whose houses in the past were always open to their fellows, had either died or were reduced to almost utter ruin, and their successors were so alarmed by the severe penal system of the times that few could be found courageous enough to emulate their ancestors. 'Hence they [Jesuit priests] have no regular workshops, which were much desired, but they labour up and down through various localities with good results, like
Bristol and the Jesuit College (District) of St Francis Xavier, part of the Western District of the Catholic Church in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. (Based on Foley's Records and constructed from Bossy, The English Catholic Community 1570-1850, pp. 416, 418).
missioners from place to place."^{19}

1.2 The Growth of the Jesuit Organisation in England and Wales

In 1619, by which time there were two hundred members in the English Society, including forty professed fathers, the Father General, Mutius Vitelleschi, raised the status of the English Jesuit Mission to that of a vice-province, with Fr Richard Blount as the first vice-provincial. England was then organised into quasi-colleges or districts,^{20} the first to be established being the College of St Ignatius (the London District), in November 1622. This was followed, perhaps not surprisingly in view of Catholic strength in the north west, by the establishment of the College of St Aloysius (the Lancashire District), and thirdly the College of St Francis Xavier, comprising North Wales (until about 1666), South Wales, Monmouthshire, Herefordshire, Gloucestershire and Somerset. Then, as the membership of the Society rapidly increased, Vitelleschi, by Letters Patent of 21 January 1623, raised England into a province of the Society and appointed Richard Blount its first provincial.

The nominal College of St Francis Xavier, which included Bristol, was thus one of the earliest of the fourteen Jesuit colleges, with its own funds and superior, Fr John Salisbury. Its original benefactor was Lady Frances Somerset of Llantarnam, daughter of the Earl of Worcester, and the patronage of the family and those connected with it continued, for one of the early eighteenth century rectors (and for many years the Catholic priest at Bristol), John Scudamore, declared that the foundation money of the College was a donation of £2,000 by a Mrs. Watson (Foley gives her name as ‘Mrs Brigardin’), housekeeper of the Marquis of Worcester, a
Catholic, at Raglan Castle, six miles south west of Monmouth, which often sheltered Jesuit priests. In the seventeenth century we find the Fathers of the College serving some thirty-three places, including Bristol, Bath, Beckford (near Tewkesbury), Cherry Orchard (near Coleford), Courtfield, Glastonbury, Hereford, Holme Lacey, Monmouth, Ross, Shepton Mallett, Stone Easton and Wells; and, in Wales, Cardiff and Swansea. The earliest headquarters of the College was at Combe (Cwm), a few miles north west of Monmouth; it comprised two houses and land, and was bought by Fr Charles Brown when he was superior of the college in 1625.

Henry Foley, the distinguished archivist of the Society in Victorian times, remarks in his Records that 'this College was fruitful in martyrs, confessors of the faith, and distinguished members of the Province', amongst whom he lists (somewhat retrospectively as the College was not then in existence) three leading figures at the time of the first Jesuit mission - Robert Parsons, George Gilbert, and Alexander Briant who was executed with Edmund Campion at Tyburn in 1581.

The Annual Letter (report to the provincial) from the College of St Francis Xavier for 1623 stated that 120 people had been received into the Church and there had been twenty baptisms and 'some quarrels arranged'. In the first half of the seventeenth century the priest-as-arbitrator was a role readily accepted by the Jesuit missioner, but after the Civil War less so, as he came to regard it as peripheral to his priestly duties.

During the period from 1635 to 1655 the average number of priests serving annually in the District was about twenty, and, at a loose calculation from the records available, the number of converts made to the Catholic faith was about eighty or
ninety a year. 26

If most Catholics were poor the Jesuits themselves, although obedient to a vow of poverty (they lived on alms and in some years, the College relates, the alms were insufficient for their numbers), were often from well-to-do or titled families with estates - as Ignatius himself had been - and had therefore abandoned no small degree of material comfort. 27 When entering the English College in Rome all students were required to write answers (Responsa Alumnorum) to questions designed to yield a short autobiography (and, when instituted by the Jesuit Robert Parsons in 1597, also to reveal Government spies), and amongst the entries of west country seminarians we come upon such remarks as: ‘My parents are of good families’; ‘My father is an esquire’; ‘My parents are well born; my paternal aunt, Jane Watson, is a rich widow; my cousin, William Watson, is rich; all these are Catholics’. William Gwyn, who was educated in Bristol, stated: ‘My parents are of the middle or yeoman class, though my principal friends are styled gentlemen, and are all wealthy.’ 28 They were not necessarily from Catholic families, for their religious background was often one of differing family loyalties.

The Annual Letters relating to the College of St Francis Xavier for 1641-4 are combined, and show that there were twenty-seven Fathers and two lay-brothers in the College; 154 conversions had been made. 29 It was, of course, the period of the Civil War, the perils of which reached their district later than most other parts of the country. One of the casualties of this period was the destruction of a Jesuit haven in the western district, Raglan Castle.

The report referring to 1642-1643 speaks of the Jesuit in a new role, as camp missioner in the Royal army. During the attack by the Royalists on Bristol, which
was strongly fortified by the Parliamentary troops, one of the Fathers joined the ranks of the cavalry to exercise his sacred ministry:

The brother of the commander-in-chief was among the first to present himself to receive the Sacrament of Penance... About one hundred and twenty-two soldiers followed his example... Of these, two cavalry officers fell, one an Englishman who had been brought up a Protestant... it was only two days before, that by the providence of God he had been received by the Father into the Church. The town was taken by the King's troops, and the Father was engaged to remain with them and attend them in the dangers of their future warfare.\textsuperscript{30}

Although the ravages of the Civil War were late in affecting the district covered by the St Francis Xavier College, from 1649 onwards Catholics there were harassed more and more, and from the 1650s for about twenty years the annual reports of the college appear to have been interrupted, reflecting the troubles of the times. An Order of the Privy Council to the Justices of the Peace of the county of Hereford, dated 13 September 1667, urged them to use their 'utmost endeavour to apprehend all Popish priests and Jesuits that endeavour to seduce and pervert his Majesty's subjects'.

Certainly the order was effective in Bristol. During Charles II's reign M. Jorevin de Rochefort, Treasurer of France, made a European tour. In 1672 he published his experiences,\textsuperscript{31} observing of Bristol, which he had visited about two years previously, that it was the third city in the country and the most important port outside London. He relates how he found the cost of living cheaper than in France, and for two shillings a day (which included the cost of the care of his horse) he was provided with hospitality in Bristol at the home of a Fleming. Although at one time his host had kept a priest who secretly said Mass in his house, the authorities had discovered this and he was forbidden to continue the practice, so that it was remarkable, de Rochefort continued, that in a city whose port was visited by so many
Catholics - Flemish, French, Spanish and Portuguese - there was no Mass for them to attend. He might also have added that there were fewer priests available too, for by 1672 the number of Jesuit missioners throughout the nearby counties was down to seven, a striking contrast to conditions just prior to the Reformation when a visitor to Bristol would have found a town encircled with religious houses - of the Black Friars, Carmelites, Grey Friars and Augustinians - and its citizens at one in professing, outwardly at least, the Catholic faith, since their monarch, King Henry VIII, 'Defender of the Faith', permitted no other. Now, under Charles II, no city in the land was more strongly Protestant.

Six years later a severer persecution of the Catholics, and of the Jesuits in particular, was set on foot through the plot of Titus Oates and a blow was struck against the very heart of the College of St Francis Xavier when the Bishop of Hereford, Dr Herbert Croft, ordered a search of their headquarters at Combe, five miles north of Monmouth. He had been prompted by a letter from the House of Lords, dated December 1678, and signed by 'Jo. Browne, Cleric-Parliamentor', in which he was informed that 'five or six Jesuits commonly reside there, and in the chapel there Mass is said constantly, and the place is commonly called and known by the name of the Jesuits' College by the Papists'. The bishop was doubtless anxious (and not a little curious) to discover all he could about these people who so sorely tried him and his fellow bishops, and accordingly his officers seized the residence early in the new year.

In his report to the House of Lords the bishop described one of the two houses ('a fair genteel house') as having six lodging chambers, each with a study, besides several other rooms. The other building ('a good country house') had several
chambers, some of them with studies, and was in very good repair. Each house had a walled court in front and lands belonging to them worth about £60 per annum. The Jesuits must have had intelligence of the intended search, for two 'horse-loads' of books from the library had been hidden in a nearby pigsty and all the furniture had been removed, with the exception of the inkstand ('standish') in each study.

If at all possible, seclusion and the means for a hasty escape were looked for by Catholic priests in houses where they stayed. Bishop Croft noted that the dwellings at Combe were situated at the bottom of a thick, woody and rocky hill, 'with several hollow places in the rocks, wherein men may conceal themselves, and there is a very private passage from one of the houses into this wood'.

In one of the houses at Combe there was a secret room, the door of which was behind a bed and was plastered to merge in with the wall, and it was the contents of this which particularly interested Dr Croft. He reported that there was a great store of religious books, and two paper books, one of which was entitled *Ordinationes variae pro Collegio Sancti Xaverii*, containing orders and rules from the Father General and from the English provincials. The other listed the English and foreign benefactors of the Society of Jesus - queens, princes, nobles and others who had contributed towards the foundation of the Jesuit colleges - and the number of Masses appointed to be said for their souls. There were fifteen or sixteen printed books containing the rules of the Society, a bundle of little catechisms, some recently printed Catholic books in Welsh and some new Catholic manuscripts. There was, too, a picture of Ignatius Loyola, and 'the most remarkable actions and pretended miracles of his life ... written in printed books'.

Elsewhere on the site pious objects were found which would doubtless confirm
the bishop and their lordships in their opinion of the superstitious ways of Catholics: ‘many bottles of oil; a box of white wafers stamped, several Popish pictures and crucifixes, some relics, a little saint’s bell, and an incense pot’.

When questioned, a servant in one of the houses revealed the names of seven Jesuit priests who used to say Mass there, a number which accords with the Jesuits’ own figures for the college.35 The bishop concluded his report by remarking that on Sundays and holy days many papists resorted to Combe.36 Although Combe was held under a long lease granted to the Jesuits by the Marquis of Worcester (of Raglan Castle) which did not expire until 1737,37 it is unlikely that they used it as a residence again.

In the same year in which Combe was seized, a public proclamation promised £20 to anyone who intercepted a priest and £50 to any one arresting a Jesuit. Soon afterwards it was decreed that the reward for the capture of a Jesuit would be £200, a great inducement to pursuivants at that time.

Once again Catholics were apprehensive, even resentful of the Jesuits and their restless, challenging ways. A Frenchman living in London gave an account of the times in a letter addressed to Père de la Chaise, the chief Jesuit in France and the French King’s confessor:

The name of ‘Jesuit’ is hated above all else - even by priests both secular and regular, and by the Catholic layfolk as well, because it is said that the Jesuits have caused this raging storm, which is likely to overthrow the whole Catholic religion.38

When Parliament met on 21 October 1680, Sir Robert Cann, the member for Bristol, a wealthy Bristol merchant, outspoken in his ways and continually wrangling with the corporation about his precedence on the council, found himself in trouble with the Commons. The Swordbearer of Bristol, John Roe, informed the House that
Cann had, about a year previously, advanced the view that the plot was not Catholic but Presbyterian. He further said that Sir Robert 'was the mere tool of the Papist Marquis of Worcester who governed the city in all things'. Sir John Knight, the other MP for Bristol - an inveterate opponent of Dissenters, and one who asserted that the Duke of York was 'amongst the thickest of the Jesuits' and should be excluded from the throne - corroborated the allegations against his colleague and Sir Robert was forthwith deprived of his seat and taken to the Tower of London.39

The Society's Analytical Catalogue notes that in this year there were ninety Jesuits at work in England, seventeen of whom suffered death for their faith - eight upon the gallows, five in prison and four 'from sufferings at the hands of pursuivants'40 - but by 1685 the persecution was faltering amidst its absurdities, and Oates, the principal instigator, finally overreached himself and was imprisoned when he accused the Duke of York of treason. The consequence of the whole affair for the College of St Francis Xavier was that their organisation was almost destroyed.

On the accession of James II in 1685 the tide turned for a while in favour of the Catholics. The King (who had himself been received by one of the Jesuit Fathers) permitted the Society to open churches and some ten schools for the study of the humanities in different parts of the country.

In 1686 we learn of an occasion when the civic authorities acted to stop a Mass being said in Bristol. On 25 April the mayor received information that Mass was being celebrated in a certain house, and hastening there with the sheriffs and some aldermen he seized the priest and some of the worshippers and committed them to prison. On 10 May the priest was brought to the King's Bar, but owing to the absence of the Lord Chief Justice, Sir Edward Herbert, and his counsel, Mr Brent,
he was remanded to the King’s Bench Prison in Southwark. The King, who with his court was attending Mass daily and hearing Jesuit preachers, conveyed his great displeasure to the mayor and aldermen of Bristol, and to Sir John Knight in particular, seen as the ringleader in the affair, and arranged that the priest should be released. But this was not the end of the matter; the mob had yet to play their part and vent their anger at this sign of royal favour towards popery. Despatches of the Dutch and Papal envoys in London, dated 18 and 19 May, spoke of disorder in the streets of Bristol:

The rabble, countenanced, it was said, by the magistrates, exhibited a profane and indecent pageant, in which the Virgin Mary was represented by a buffoon, and in which a mock host was carried in procession. Soldiers were called out to disperse the mob. The mob, then and ever since one of the fiercest in the kingdom, resisted.

The mayor and five of the aldermen were arrested; the attorney-general then prosecuted Sir John Knight as a leading figure in the disorder, but a jury of Bristolians ensured his acquittal. The King, however, had the last word, for he ordered Lord Chancellor Jeffreys to create new city magistrates of whose support the crown could be assured.

In April 1687 James issued a Declaration of Indulgence proclaiming all people free to exercise their religion in public, but it failed to gain universal acceptance and even Nonconformists saw it as a stratagem by the King to introduce popery into the realm. The clergy in Bristol, as elsewhere, were ordered to read it during divine service on two successive Sundays but for the most part they refused, holding it to be an illegal Declaration.

In the summer of that year a Papal Nuncio was received in state at Windsor and subsequently, during a tour of the country to propagate the Catholic faith, visited
Bristol where the city Fathers entertained him at the Three Tuns tavern in Corn Street. It was observed that Protestant feeling in the city expressed itself in a particularly elaborate and enthusiastic celebration of Guy Fawkes' Day that year.\(^43\)

It would seem that in most of the principal cities Jesuit priests were now preaching two or three times a week, though if they were doing so in Bristol it must have been with great circumspection. Further south, in Exeter, the Society of Jesus was able to open a chapel under Fr Richard Norris,\(^44\) a Lancastrian, while in the north of England, where Catholics were more numerous, Jesuit chapels were built in Pontefract, Formby and Southill, and those in other parts of Lancashire flourished. At Oxford, the Rector of University College, a Catholic, had a public chapel served by Jesuits, while the Rector of Christ Church, the principal college at that time, was received by the Jesuits into the Catholic Church. At Magdalen the Jesuit Father, Dr Thomas Becket, taught philosophy. In Wolverhampton the Jesuits were so assured of their position that they lived in a very large house with a commodious chapel and a school with nearly fifty pupils. The town, it would seem, was so Catholic that it had acquired the nickname of 'Little Rome'.\(^45\)

The King's attempts to wrest power from Protestant hands alarmed his opponents who began to look more and more to Prince William of Orange, married to Princess Mary, James's daughter, to save, as they saw it, the Reformation in this country. The Prince for his part circulated a variety of pamphlets in England to promote his cause, in one of which he promised to put an end to the 'councils and plans of Papistical Jesuits with which the land was flooded'.\(^46\) Sensing growing opposition James moved to placate his enemies by restoring the magistrates he had driven from office and the corporations displaced in Bristol and other cities. But all
concessions came too late: William landed at Torbay on 5 November 1688.

The confusion into which Bristol had been plunged by the flurry of events enabled the fanatics and the unruly to pour onto the streets. On the first morning in December, less than a month after William's arrival in the country, a mob gathered and attacked the house of a Catholic harness-maker in Castle Street near the city centre. The building was sacked and its contents burned or looted. Inflamed by this success the rabble advanced the short distance to King Street where they destroyed a further two houses occupied by Catholic families. Order was restored when in the afternoon the Earl of Shrewsbury, with four hundred men, entered the city without opposition to assume control on behalf of the Prince of Orange. The civic authorities sent William assurances of Bristol's loyalty (an important boost for the Orange cause), and interpreting the mood of the time issued a proclamation forbidding Jesuits, monks and Catholic priests from living in Bristol, and threatening heavy penalties for those who gave them shelter.47

The literary output of the English Jesuits during this century reflected the vicissitudes of the time. Between 1615 and 1640 they were responsible for approximately one hundred books; between the longer period 1641 and 1684, only thirty-nine; but during the four years of James II's reign, twenty-three.48 The popish plot of Titus Oates, the short-lived attempt by James II to re-establish the Catholic religion (ending in his abdication and return to exile), and the anti-Catholic legislation which continued afresh under his son-in-law, William III, were grievous setbacks for the Society of Jesus - and for the College of St Francis Xavier in particular, for with only three priests left to serve the district it had barely survived.49 All this in little more than twenty years brought the seventeenth century
for the Jesuits in England to a sombre close.

In the Spring of 1700 the General of the Society of Jesus received a long-awaited letter from the English Provincial, Henry Humberston, written not from England but from the Jesuits' College of St Omer's in Belgium. The reason, Humberston explained, was that he had not thought it safe to write from home 'as a great persecution [was] about to be raised in England'.

His letter was given over to detailing the new oppressive law which both Houses of Parliament had passed to prevent Catholics practising their faith and which only awaited the assent of the King. The penalties seemed crushing: Humberston observed that no act of Parliament more calculated to root out the Catholic faith in England was ever enacted, and foresaw that it would 'be impossible for religion long to exist in the kingdom'. But the temper of the times, different from that of a century earlier, was no longer for such repressive measures. People now viewed fanaticism ('enthusiasm' as the Age of Reason was to call it) with distaste; certainly in achieving lasting goals it had proved ineffectual. The new spirit found its philosophical voice in John Locke, west-country born, who in the dying years of the seventeenth century published in the cause of religious liberty his Letter concerning Toleration; a second and third followed, and yet a fourth which remained unpublished on his death in 1704. Penal laws were for the most part weapons to be stored in the armoury, to be flourished when dissenters overstepped the mark, as a warning that they exercised their faith on sufferance only. Much, then, depended on local conditions and it behoved Catholics to be wary.

On the accession, in 1714, of the new Hanoverian King, George 1, 'loyal mughouses', based at clubs and taverns; had sprung up in London in his support and
in opposition to popery and the return of the Jacobites; they later spread to towns as far apart as Norwich, York and Bristol. They took upon themselves the task of organising such traditional anti-popery displays as that on the Fifth of November, but there was always the possibility that the rowdyism of these groups would turn to violence, and the civic authorities viewed them with apprehension and were disposed to discourage them. 52

In the eighteenth century Jesuits were known to be working in such towns as Durham, Holywell, York, Worcester, Leicester, Gateshead, Lincoln, Norwich, Liverpool, Preston, Wigan, Bury St Edmunds, Hereford, London, Bath and Bristol, and they were able to go about their business with some sense of security despite the forebodings of their provincial. 53 The Annual Report for 1710 of the College of St Francis Xavier (the district embracing Bristol) showed that there were six Fathers, with 238 Catholics under their care, thirty-five of them converts, an improvement on the sad state of the College at the end of the last century.

At this time the Jesuits still felt the need to communicate with one another in a certain coded language, lest the correspondence fall into unfriendly hands. 54 The Jesuit Districts (or Colleges), for instance, had their aliases: the North Wales District was referred to as ‘Mrs Flint’ or ‘Widow Flint’, the Worcestershire District as ‘Mrs St George’, and the South Wales District as ‘Mrs’ or ‘Lady S.W.’. Lancashire was known as ‘Mrs Lancaster’ or ‘Eliza Lancaster’, and also as ‘our factory’, doubtless because Catholics were numerous there. Bristol was ‘Mrs Bristow’. 55 The English Jesuits would recognise a reference to their own provincial in ‘Mrs Province’. To ‘open a shop to be kept by one of ours’ meant to ‘establish a Jesuit mission’, and to ‘furnish the shop with proper utensils’ signified to ‘fit up a chapel’. 56
the nineteenth century Jesuit archivist, thought some of the terms ‘quaint’. But in 1720 came signs of a change: for the first time, a Jesuit address in London was mentioned overtly in writing - that of the Rector of the College of St Ignatius, John Turberville, who was living at the house of W. Pritchard, a goldsmith in Drury Lane. Seven years later, also for the first time, the address was given of a Jesuit priest living in Bristol. These were significant as indicating a growing confidence on the part of the Society of Jesus in England.

1.3 The Catholic Community at the Beginning of the Eighteenth Century

Throughout the 1700s Bristol was to prosper through trade and commerce, and its population to double in size, but in 1700 it was a city of just 20,000 inhabitants and for the most part still to be entered through its gates; and if its merchants grew rich through adventurous commerce on the high seas (‘the very Parsons of Bristol talk of nothing but Trade, and how to turn the penny’) in their daily lives its citizens were content with limited horizons.

The Bristolian of 1700 never dreamt of travelling for recreation or amusement ... and if a tradesman had been invited to visit the Wye at Tintern, the rocks at Cheddar, or the ruins of Glastonbury, he would have regarded the proposal as that of a lunatic or a Papist.

A papist, then, was thought of as a singular creature, and there were few in Bristol ready to declare themselves Catholic. A return of Roman Catholics in the city made to the government in 1716 by the town clerk listed several workmen (two tailors, a shipwright, a weaver, a cordwainer, a gardener) and ‘a stranger’. About the same year a Bristol gunsmith by the name of Ward was arrested at the nearby district of Baptist Mills (John Wesley later spoke of papists living there) and was committed by Sir Abraham Elton to Gloucester jail. He was subsequently charged
at the quarter sessions with being a Romish priest, but there being no evidence to
convict him he was released on offering recognisances for his good behaviour.62

On 21 February 1734 the Catholics of Bristol were given a clear reminder of
how things stood in the city. The Prince of Orange, who was about to marry the
Princess Royal of England, and who was on a visit to Bath, was invited to make the
short distance to Bristol where he was entertained by the Corporation, and was also
pleased to receive the city clergy - a welcome extended to him, he was assured, on
account of his ‘illustrious descent and firm attachment to the Protestant religion’.63

The Bishop of Bristol, Thomas Secker, had been consecrated just one month
by the time of the royal visit. Destined to reach the highest office in the English
Church, Bishop Secker proved to be an able defender of the Protestant faith and as
we shall see later, when appealed to as Archbishop of Canterbury, he was prepared
to take action against the Jesuit priest in Bristol. A popular preacher - by 1771
twelve volumes of his works were in print - he had much to say on popery.64 His
strictures on Catholicism, under various headings, show those aspects which most
alarmed him: ‘The pretended Infallibility of the Church of Rome; Saints and Angels
not proper Objects of Worship; Against the Worship of the Virgin Mary; Against
the Worship of Images; the Doctrine of Transubstantiation shown to be absurd and
false; The Administration of the Lord’s Supper in one Kind only to the Laity
condemned; On auricular Confession, and private Absolution; On Purgatory; On
the Doctrine of Indulgences; Extreme Unction; Prayer in an unknown Tongue;
Prohibition of the Scriptures; Various Corruptions and Superstitions of the Church
of Rome’. How did he advise the clergy of the Established Church to treat
Catholics?
HOOK'S MILLS in 1795 and 1994. Today the name is not used, and the site behind the church is the Ashley Trading Estate.
Let none of their bad doctrines or practices tempt you in the least to any hard treatment of them... The severe laws we have in force against them were not enacted for their religious opinions; but for their refusing to own, and promise due obedience, to the government under which they live; and they have long experienced that nothing but absolute necessity will ever oblige our superiors to put any of these laws into execution.65

Secker's remarks once again touch upon the question of Catholics' relationship to secular authority and their loyalty as subjects of the realm.

1.4 Where Bristol's Catholics Lived and Worshipped

We shall see that in 1727 Catholics began to attend Mass at a house in the city and then, in 1734, the Mass centre was established just outside the city boundaries to the north east, at Ashley Manor House, a building dating from the end of the sixteenth century but soon added to.66 It was there, in an upper room, that a chapel was fitted out, and from that time the Catholics of Bristol were never without a recognised centre in which to worship.

Bishop Secker tells us some families were in the parish of St Nicholas ('some journeymen in low trades'), and a 'gentleman's family' lived in St Michael's, while a few Catholics lived in the parishes of St Augustine's and St John's; he even identifies two by name - a Mrs De Groot and a Mr Stanton, a silversmith. But most were in the large parish of St Philip and St James, which in 1735 extended from Old Market to beyond the city boundaries. In 1735 Bishop Secker recorded five Catholic families living in St Philip's parish, and also six individuals and twenty to thirty families of foreigners 'who were sent for by the Quakers to their Brass works at Baptist Mills'.67

Baptist Mills was a few minutes' walk from Hook's Mills, and John Wesley
ST. FRANCIS XAVIER.

(From an Engraving of Marco Pitteri, 1703-1787.)
himself would occasionally preach there to a small band of followers ('I warned our little Society in the evening to beware of lenity, slackness in good works ...') and observed that many if not most of the inhabitants were papists. In his Journal of 1739 he described the place as 'a sort of suburb or village about half a mile from Bristol'. Despite Wesley's great dislike of Roman Catholicism he had a deep respect for individual Catholics like Francis Xavier and Gregory Lopez, though he thought Catholic missionaries lacked true religious passion:

I am not persuaded, that the Romish Missionaries (very few excepted) either know, or teach, true, genuine, religion ... he [Francis Xavier] never taught one tittle of the religion of the heart, but barely opinions and externals.

On one occasion he mockingly claimed to have heard a report current in Bristol that he himself was a papist, if not a Jesuit! It was part of his rhetoric against Rome, 'the mother of abominations' - an argument set up to be demolished and to ensure his followers understood his teaching on justification:

When will you understand, that the most destructive of all those errors which Rome, the mother of abominations, hath brought forth (compared to which transubstantiation and a hundred more are trifles, light as air) is That we are justified by works (or to express the same thing a little more decently) by faith and works.

Bishop Secker makes specific reference to the priest at Baptist Mills: 'One Busby says mass every second Sunday at least, at a large house there called Whitehouse,' and he speaks of him baptising children and marrying couples. But the Bishop says nothing of nearby Hook's Mills, leaving it unclear whether the Whitehouse was at Hook's Mills or was indeed a separate Mass house at Baptist Mills. Jesuit records and Oliver speak only of Hook's Mills; in any event barely ten minutes' walking distance separated the two places.

One of the important issues exercising Catholic leaders in the early part of the
eighteenth century was the nature of the oath of allegiance which Catholics might properly swear to George I. The debate was vigorously conducted, engaged in on the Catholic side by the leading clergy, the vicars apostolic and Rome, but without apparent resolution. While the search for agreement continued Jesuits were advised by their provincial to give no public opinion on the matter, but to say, if asked, that the vicars apostolic alone had the necessary papal authority to decide. In the end further debate was pointless as Parliament declared that it alone would formulate the oath.

1.5 The Earliest Jesuit Missioners in Bristol

It was at the house of a Mr Fermor in Earl Street, Jobbin's Lays, that Joseph Marshall of the Society of Jesus came to live in c.1727, and became the first Catholic priest known to reside and work permanently in Bristol since the Reformation.72 Earl Street is just to the rear of the oldest part of Bristol's Royal Infirmary, which opened in 1737, three years after Marshall left the city. His rather odd address, 'Jobbin's Lays' (also 'Leys') can be understood if we take 'Lays' as a variant spelling of 'leas', alluding to the open land that existed in the neighbourhood when he first arrived.73

Fr Marshall was a local man, born in Gloucestershire in 1683. He entered the Society of Jesus at the age of twenty-five and after studies in philosophy and theology at the English Province's houses on the Continent was ordained priest in 1715; he was professed of the four vows in 1726. Before coming to Bristol most of his work was at Jesuit institutions on the Continent - at Loretto, Rome and Watten. In addition to his ministry in Bristol he was, on three occasions (in 1727, 1728 and 1733) also
PERSPECTIVE VIEW OF ST. OMER'S COLLEGE.

A. The Front of the College; B. The Church; C. The Print-house; D. Parlours receive Visitors; E. A Gallery with inward Chambers; F. The Wardrobe for the Stag
G. The Great Library; H. The Flower Garden; I. The Cloister; K. The Upper a
Lower Hall of the Students; L. The Students' Domestic Chapel; M. The Music Schoo
N. The Great Theatre; O. The Little Theatre; P. The Masters' Apartment; Q. T
Clock Tower; R. The Dormitories; S. The Common Refectory; T. The Pantry a
Kitchen; U. The College Infirmary; V. The Common Wardrobe; W. The Glazier
Shop; X. The Kitchen Garden; Y. Middle Wall between the Garden of the Engl
and the Walloon Colleges; Z. Summer-house opening a passage into the Garden of
neighbouring College.

1. The Chapel of the Sodality; 2. Students' Garden; 3. The Schools; 4. Rhet
School; 5. The Students' Common Place of Study; 6. The Students' Library; 7. 'Common Magazine of the two Theatres; 8. The Entrance into the Students' Infirm;
12. The Chapel of the Students' Infirmary; 13. The Bass Court and Wood-ho
Quarters; 21. The Stables.
socius (secretary) to the English provincial, a position which would have given him an excellent overview of the affairs of the English Society at that time.

The education of a Jesuit priest in the eighteenth century followed a certain pattern. As a youth he would go to school on the Continent (there being no Jesuit houses of formation in England and Wales until the end of the century), to St Omer’s College in the town of Saint-Omer in northern France, about twenty miles from Calais - not far from England but even so a journey which might then take many days. St Omer’s, a school for up to two hundred boys, was founded in 1593 by the leader of the Elizabethan Jesuits, Robert Parsons. Most of the boys were from England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland, though some came from exiled families already living on the Continent and some from as far afield as Maryland or Pennsylvania where the Jesuits had worked since 1630. Although the curriculum did not have the breadth we would expect today, the standard of education was high and the boys were able to speak impromptu in Latin and Greek on any subject given. 74 Most of the boys at St Omer’s were there to receive the Catholic education which was not available to them in England75 and were under no obligation to become priests, but those planning to join the Society of Jesus would, at about the age of eighteen, proceed to the novitiate at Watten for two years and thence to Liège for three years of philosophy. In the tradition of the Jesuits as educators they would then return to St Omer’s to teach for a while before studying theology at Liège for four years, after which they were ordained. Even then the formation of a Jesuit priest was not complete - there was still a year to be spent at Ghent in intensive spiritual preparation. 76 Men who had studied at one of the other seminaries on the Continent could also ask to be allowed to join the Society of Jesus.
Joseph Marshall’s training as a Jesuit priest did not follow the normal pattern in that he had not been to St Omer’s College as a boy, and though he proceeded to the Society’s seminaries at Watten and Liège he then studied philosophy and theology at Antwerp and Louvain, which were not houses of the English province.

He was appointed to Loretto at the age of thirty-six as a penitentiary and as such to Rome four years later. Marshall’s selection as a penitentiary, and his later positions as socius to the Provincial and Rector of the English College at Rome, suggest a man of standing within the Society and it is a measure of the importance the Jesuits attached to the Bristol mission that they should have assigned him there.

His nearest Jesuit neighbour at Bristol was John Musson, just three years his senior, the priest in Bath and probably the chaplain to some family. He lived at the Bell-Tree House, an address which for a time was to become the residence of the vicars apostolic of the Western District. The Jesuits did not establish, as they did in Bristol, a permanent mission in Bath, which became rather ‘the jewel in the Benedictine missionary crown’. It was an uncomfortable time for Catholics in Bristol, and the horrific punishment meted out to a Catholic soldier on one occasion for persevering in his religion and refusing to go to church must, just as it aroused their compassion, have subdued their spirits. A tangible sign that the city was strongly Protestant was the erection in 1736 of a bronze statue in Queen Square in memory ‘of our great and glorious Deliverer, William III’. This complemented another act, three years earlier, smacking of anti-Catholic sentiment. At the junction of two important city streets, High Street and Wine Street, stood the High Cross, ornamented with figures of pre-Reformation monarchs, which a petition to the Council in July of that year said...
Best Copy Available

Print bound close to the spine
High Cross of Bristol

The Statue of King William III in Queen Square
was an obstacle to the smooth flow of traffic and should be removed:

It hath been insinuated by some that this cross, on account of its antiquity ought to be looked upon as something sacred. But when we consider that we are Protestants, and that Popery ought to be effectively guarded against in this nation, we make this request to you to consider.\(^{82}\)

In 1733 the cross was removed.\(^{83}\)

It was, then, with a sense of unease that Joseph Marshall served in Bristol until 1734 when he was instructed by his provincial to go to Rome where he became Rector of the English College. Details of his ministry to the Catholics of Bristol are not known; the destruction of the papers of the Western District, when the house at Bath of the vicar apostolic, Charles Walmesley, was burned down in the Gordon Riots of 1780, has resulted in a serious loss of archival material.

It may be said here that the respected nineteenth-century Catholic chronicler, Dr George Oliver, named John Lallart (or Lalart), originally of the French Province, as the first Jesuit in Bristol,\(^{84}\) but the Jesuit archives in London show Oliver was mistaken.\(^{85}\) Oliver had consulted a provincial’s notebook and seen the word ‘Bristol’ against Lallart’s name, but it was intended to refer to Joseph Marshall’s immediately above. John Lallart was a member of the College of St Ignatius and as such served the London District. Small wonder that in his brief note on him Oliver writes: ‘I cannot ascertain the period of his services.’\(^{86}\) Unfortunately, such is the esteem in which Oliver is rightly held, the mistake persists to this day.

It was at an address on St Michael’s Hill (in the eighteenth century the main exit from the city to Gloucester and South Wales), at the house of a Mrs Grosvenor, that John Busby, Joseph Marshall’s successor, seems to have resided.\(^{87}\) John Busby,
St Michael's Hill. John Busby, the Jesuit priest, seems to have lived here for a while.
alias Brown, was a native of Oxfordshire; he had been a Jesuit priest for some twenty-five years, having served in Brinn, near Ashton in Lancashire, and briefly in York. Brinn was a mission enjoying the support of the Gerards, Catholic gentry, patronage that was not available to Busby in his new urban mission. Now in his middle fifties he was, within a year of his arrival, given the additional responsibility of supervising the College of St Francis Xavier and he remained its rector for the next five years. He died on 20 July 1743, at the age of sixty-four. Fr Robert Plowden, the Jesuit who in 1790 opened Bristol’s first purpose-built Catholic chapel, said that he ‘died in the repute of sanctity’, though strangely Plowden was imprecise in the dates he ascribed to him, and even seemed uncertain as to whether he was a regular or secular priest.

In the St Francis Xavier District stood Pembridge Castle, the home of the Scudamores of Holme Lacy. In the time of Henry VIII the family was Protestant, but in succeeding years a few members of the Holme Lacy family still professed the old faith. Towards the end of the seventeenth century the inhabitants of Pembridge Castle were the recusants Henry Scudamore and his wife, Mary. In March 1696 Mary gave birth to a second son, John, an event which was to be of special significance in the history of Catholicism in Bristol.

The priest whom Henry and Mary Scudamore kept at Pembridge doubtless prepared their son for schooling abroad, as was the tradition for the sons of Catholic gentry. John Scudamore’s education and training followed the usual course as he proceeded from St Omer’s to Watten and then Liège, being ordained priest around 1727. His superior could have retained him for work in one of the English houses on the Continent or assigned him as a missionary to America, but chose instead to
send him, in 1728, to the College of St Francis Xavier. The placing doubtless suited him, for the College included his birthplace, although his actual posting was to Pyle in the vale of Glamorgan, a district which in later years was to be the responsibility of the Bristol mission. In passing we can refer to Henry Foley's reference (in his Records) to Scudamore working in the South Wales District: 'By the 1740s, an obscure Pyle man was the last known host for the two priests who occasionally visited the county, John Hill and John Scudamore.'

The date of the latter’s arrival in Bristol cannot be given with certainty. We know that John Busby died on 20 July 1743, but if he was ill for some time before that it is possible that Scudamore arrived to take over about 1740 and for the next few years continued to serve Mass at Hook’s Mills. Nor can we be precise as to when Hook’s Mills was given up, although in an old account book we find the entry: ‘A present to Mrs Bristow, or Glamor., October 8, 1746, towards paying the house rent where serves at Hook’s Mills, 01 : 01 : 00’. The coded reference to Bristol and Glamorgan identifies John Scudamore, who had recently come from South Wales.

The occasion for the setting up of a Catholic chapel at Hook’s Mills, and soon another within the city boundaries, owed nothing to religious enlightenment. A Bristol firm anxious to introduce spelter or zinc-working to the city was unable to induce the Flemish workers, whose expertise they needed, to come unless they were allowed to practise their religion without hindrance. The concession was finally given, commercial considerations thus gaining for Catholics the imprimatur the law had previously denied them, an irony celebrated in a neat turn of phrase by the priest who remarked that ‘Bristol cupidity overcame Bristol stupidity’. With some justification a Belgian priest visiting Bristol over a century later could say to his Jesuit
friend then serving there: 'C'est à nous autres, "braves Belges", que vous devez
votre existence.'

Both Busby and Scudamore, with their years of study and training on the
Continent, would have established a ready rapport with the Flemish newcomers, but
it is likely that a considerable part of the colony at the brass works at Baptist Mills
moved in time to Morriston Copper works, near Swansea, and that Fr Scudamore
deemed it appropriate, about 1744, to establish his chapel within the city itself.

But if a Jesuit in England was no longer executed for his faith he might yet
be subject to many trials, and the decision could not have been taken with complete
ease of mind. From time to time disturbing news would have reached the priest’s
ears. Twice the English provincial, then living on the Continent, found it prudent to
postpone his visitation of England, and in 1744 his house in London was searched.
In Worcester the chapel built in 1740 had been destroyed on the orders of the Privy
Council and, further north, in 1746 the chapel at Hardwicke, near Hartlepool,
Durham, was attacked and plundered by a ‘No Popery’ mob. In the same year a
mob invaded and burned the Catholic chapel in Liverpool, the first to be built in the
city since the Reformation.

The situation at Liverpool affords an interesting parallel to that at Bristol. It
was often the practice at that time to locate chapels in the upper part of houses and
the chapel in Liverpool was no more than a room on the upper floor of a house which
the Jesuit priest built out of town, in Edmund Street, eventually part of the city. This
was true of the house at Hook’s Mills, a site outside Bristol’s boundaries but in an
area which also, as the years passed, was subsumed within the ever expanding city.

There is yet another point of similarity in the Liverpool story. After the
destruction of the Edmund Street chapel a leading merchant, Henry Pippard, a Catholic, asked the Mayor and Corporation for permission to rebuild it. This was refused, whereupon he asserted his right to build a warehouse and make what use of it he pleased. The authorities agreed he could do this - but at his own risk. He subsequently built a warehouse, the upper storey of which then served as the chapel. In Bristol John Scudamore arranged with a Mr Webb to rent the upper floor of a building, a kind of warehouse, and to adapt it as a place for Catholic worship.

The location John Scudamore had chosen for his new chapel was in the parish of St James, a twenty-minute walk from Hook’s Mills. The contrast with the quiet, rural surroundings he was leaving could not have been greater, for St James’s was the most populous district in the city - and as a parish could record more burials each year than any other.
NOTES TO CHAPTER I


2. The Society's Constitutions were the first to enjoin upon a religious order the duty to engage in educational work and to open schools (See *Constitutions*, Part 4, Chapter 7). Jesuits are permitted to recite the Divine Office privately and not in choir, and instead of wearing a religious habit peculiar to their order they adopt the dress of the secular clergy of the region in which they happen to be serving, or (if appropriate to their duties) of the laity.

3. 'That the Society may be well governed, we have judged it especially expedient that the General should have power over the Society for edification ...' (*The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, Part 9, Chapter 3, Section 1). The virtue of obedience is stressed throughout the *Constitutions*, for example: 'They (inferiors) depend upon their immediate superiors, and ... it is highly expedient, and even necessary, to obey them in all things for the sake of Christ our Lord' (*Constitutions*, Part 2, Chapter 1, Section 2).

4. For administrative purposes the Society of Jesus is divided into provinces (e.g. the British Province, which today also has responsibility for Guyana and South Africa) under the control of 'provincials'. Groups of provinces (assistancies) are under the supervision of 'assistants' who reside in Rome with the General and act as his advisers. See *Constitutions*, Part 9, Chapter 5.


7. cf. The organisational title given by the Jesuits to the district of Devon and Cornwall: The College of St Stanislaus.

8. ABPSJ, *Address on the Centenary of the Opening of St Joseph’s, Trenchard Street, Bristol* by Fr Ignatius Grant, SJ, 27 June 1890 (Roehampton: Stanley, 1890).


11. The principal founder of the Catholic mission in Bristol, John Scudamore, SJ, (1696-1778), was of the Scudamore family of Pembridge Castle, Holme Lacey, Hereford.


13. Matthews, John (ed.), ‘Records Relating to Catholicism in the South Wales Marches, 17th and 18th Centuries’ in *Recusant History* (Catholic Record Society [CRS] 1906) vol.2, p.289. All the inhabitants escaped into Wales. Herefordshire and particularly Monmouthshire were among the counties with the highest proportion of recusant households to all households in the country. See John Bossy, *op. cit.*, p.404.


17. Foley, *op. cit.*, Series X, p.384. cf. such Jesuit phrases in use today as ‘option for the poor’ and ‘solidarity with the poor’ and see *Documents of the Thirty-Fourth General Congregation*, pp.131-139.


20. See Appendix 1.


23. Henry Foley, a solicitor by training, entered the Society of Jesus in 1851 on the death of his wife, and for thirty years served as a Jesuit brother, mainly in the capacity as secretary to the Jesuit provincials. He gave much of his life to the collection, translation and transcription of documents relating to the English province, and between 1877 and 1883 published eight volumes, for the most part covering the years up to 1773. For the last few years of his life he was almost blind.
24. cf. Foley, op. cit., vol.7, p.1106: ‘Some notable lawsuits were adjusted; family quarrels extinguished. A duel also was prevented, and the combatants reconciled with their swords in their hands.’ See also Foley, op. cit., vol.IV, p.380.

25. See the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus, Part 7, Chapter 4, Section 9: ‘They [the houses and colleges of the Society] shall devote themselves also ... so far as spiritual labours, which are of greater moment, shall allow ... in restoring contending parties to harmony.’


27. Of the first four priests (all Jesuits) to maintain permanent Mass centres in Bristol in the eighteenth century, three were from well-to-do families: John Scudamore of Pembridge Castle, Herefordshire; Thomas Brewer, whose family had estates in Lancashire; and Robert Plowden of Plowden Hall, Shropshire. See also Bossy, op. cit., p.200, 200n.


29. Ibid., p.441.

30. Ibid., p.442.


32. The Popish Plot fabricated by Titus Oates (1649-1705), in which he alleged the existence of a conspiracy by the Jesuits to assassinate King Charles 11, resulted in a large-scale persecution of Catholics in England. From 1678 to 1681, twenty-five Catholics were executed and many hundreds were imprisoned.


34. The books and papers that Dr Croft seized were later placed in Hereford Cathedral Library.

35. See Appendix II.


37. Ibid., Series XII, p.891.


40. See Appendix II.


42. Latimer, *op. cit.*, 1, 439-441.


44. In 1688 the reaction against Catholicism set in and Norris's chapel in Exeter was razed to the ground by an angry mob. He only just escaped with his life.

45. See Edwards, *op. cit.*, pp.95, 96.


47. Latimer, *op. cit.*, 1, 450-2.


49. By 1695 there were just three Jesuit priests serving in the College of St Francis Xavier, whereas in 1643 there had been twenty-four priests and two brothers. In 1667 North Wales had been removed from the College and formed into a separate Residence called St Winefrid's.


51. John Locke (1632-1704), the philosopher, was born at Wrington in Somerset. For political reasons he was not in favour of toleration for Catholics.


54. Holt, *op. cit.*, p.1. For example, Fr Tamburini (Fr General 1706-30) was known as Mr Drummer.


57. See also Reynolds, E.E. (ed.), *The Mawhood Diary* (CRS, 1956) vol.50, where William Mawhood, a London woollen-draper who died in 1797, writes: 'All the family at Prayers' (at Mass), p.2 *et al.*; 'did the necessary', 'at duty' (made my confession), p.61 *et al.*. He always uses the old form of address,
‘Mister’, when referring to a priest (and sometimes to Bishop Challoner). To this day priests at the Venerable English College, Rome, are called ‘Mister’, as the secular priests were called when the College was founded.


59. Latimer, op. cit., ll, 6.

60. Ibid., p.24.

61. Ibid., p.115.

62. See BRO (Bristol Record Office), Bristol Record Society’s Publications, XXXVII (1985): Bishop Secker’s Diocese Book, p.45, ed. by Elizabeth Ralph. Baptist Mills was then just outside the city boundaries, in Gloucestershire.

63. Latimer, op. cit., ll, 187.

64. BRL (Bristol Reference Library), Extracts from Archbishop Secker’s Five Sermons Against Popery: Errors of the Church of Rome, published by Dr Beilby Porteus, Bishop of Chester (London, 1815).

65. See Ibid., Chapter XIV.

66. It was purchased around 1733 by Andrew Hook of Ashley, then in the county of Gloucester. Next to it was a pond and grist mill, and the buildings - at different times in the past called the Mansion House, Grove Mill and Green’s Mill - then became known as Hook’s Mills. See BRL, Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society, 1908, 31 (1908), 288-309, which also refer to a myth that a subterraneous passage ran from beneath Ashley Manor House direct to St James’s Priory. The house was demolished in the early 1900s.


68. John Wesley: 3rd Journal August 12, 1738 to November 1, 1739 (London 1797, printed for G. Whitfield, City Road, August 1739), p.89.


70. J. Wesley, op. cit., extract from April 1739.

71. BRO, Bishop Secker’s Diocese Book, p.45.

72. ABPSJ, Foley, MS. 5.
73. Latimer: *op. cit.* II, 200.


75. Catholic schools were illegal in England before the Catholic Relief Act of 1791.


77. The Vatican College of Penitentaries was established by Pope Julius III to hear the confessions of pilgrims in their diverse languages. The penitentaries appointed were chosen from priests more than thirty-five years of age, of good report and of sufficient learning, who after examination were appointed to the office by Papal Rescript.

78. In 1730 Bishop William York, a Benedictine, the third vicar apostolic of the Western District, came to reside at the Bell-Tree House in Bath. For the account book of the Ball-Tree House see J.A. Williams, *Post-Reformation Catholicism in Bath*, vol.1, pp.113-177. On 30 January 1688, Pope Innocent XI organised the Catholic Church in England for administrative purposes into four districts, London, Midland, Northern and Western, each with a vicar apostolic. The number of vicars apostolic was increased from four to eight (Wales, for example, becoming independent of the Western District) in 1840. The office continued until September 1850 when Pope Pius IX restored the hierarchy to England and Wales, and Catholic dioceses as we know them today were created.


80. Latimer, *op. cit.*, II, 180. In 1794 in his *Jura Anglorum*, Francis Plowden, the distinguished Catholic lawyer, pleaded for the right of Irish Roman Catholic soldiers and sailors serving in the English forces to worship in their uniform.


83. The High Cross was erected at the intersection of the four main streets of the town (High Street, Broad Street, Corn Street and Wine Street) in 1373 to celebrate the granting of one of the royal charters to the burgesses of Bristol. It can now be seen in the grounds of Stourhead in Wiltshire. See Latimer, *op. cit.*, p.223, and Elizabeth Ralph, *Government of Bristol 1373-1973* (Bristol, 1973), p.7.

84. Ignatius Grant, SJ, *Address (given on 27 June 1890) on the Centenary of the Opening of St Joseph's, Trenchard Street in 1790* (Printed by James Stanley, Roehampton, 1890).
85. ABPSJ, Foley MS 5, p.132.

86. George Oliver, *Collections Illustrating the History of the Catholic Religion in the Counties of Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Somerset, Wilts and Gloucester* (London: Dolman, 1857), p.342. Dr George Oliver was the last survivor of a group of Catholic priests who had been students of the Jesuits and who, although they did not enter the Society of Jesus, had a great affection for it and were employed by it as missioners. Oliver served the mission at Exeter as *locum tenens* for the Society for forty-four years, retiring in 1851. Foley acknowledged the valuable service Oliver rendered with his biographical notes of the English, Scottish and Irish members of the Society in his *Collectanea SJ*, and frequently refers to his writings. Some of his MSS are at Cambridge and others at Stonyhurst College.

87. The name ‘Grosvenor’ was uncommon and does not appear under any parish in the *Bristol Poll Book* of 1734. There are references to this address in Jesuit records in later years. See *Recusant History* (CRS., 1913) vol.13, p.188.

88. Brinn is an interesting example of a Jesuit mission benefiting from the patronage of the Catholic gentry, in this case the Gerard family. See Edwards, *op. cit.*, p.119.


90. There is no record of Joseph Marshall, unlike John Scudamore and so many other Jesuit priests, having attended St. Omer’s, though he was at Watten and Liège.


92. ‘To Jh. Scudamore to be left with Tho. Hopkins in Pile near Margam, Glamorganshire’, Foley, *op. cit.*, vol.VII, p.694. John Hill was at Pyle in 1727, the year before John Scudamore arrived. Hill subsequently served at Powis and Holywell before transferring to the College of St Ignatius in 1734.


94. The identity of the firm is not known although the well known Bristol firm of Champions, has been suggested.

95. Oliver, *op. cit.*, p.109. The remark was made in a letter to Dr Oliver written by the Rev. Patrick O’Farrell, dated Bristol, 19 September 1854.


Another chapel was built in 1765: 'A new shop is begun to be built' (Foley, *op. cit.*, Series XII, p. 860, n. 20).

Ibid., p. 652.

Ibid., p. 364. This was not the end of the troubles in Liverpool and two subsequent churches were destroyed.

In 1746 only a very few towns, like Liverpool and Preston, were served by two Jesuit priests. At this time, and throughout the eighteenth century, the Bristol mission had only one.
Part of Jacob Millerd's map of 1673, showing the centuries-old street, St James's where John Scudamore, S.J., established his chapel c.1744, and also the original location of the city's High Cross, considered by many to be a 'Catholic' monument and subsequently removed.
CHAPTER II

John Scudamore and the Problems of the Mission

An examination of John Scudamore’s work in Bristol indicates a number of problems that the Jesuit mission in the city faced, most notably the hostility of the majority Protestant population; the need to create sound forms of organisation and financing; and exceptional and unforeseen pastoral demands.

2.1 Protestant Hostility to the Mission

The place available to John Scudamore to set up his chapel was in St James’s Back - today, in truncated form, completely changed and named Silver Street, adjacent to Bristol’s busiest shopping area.¹ The building was wretched enough, no more than the upper floor of a kind of warehouse which could accommodate between sixty and eighty worshippers. For this the Jesuits paid the owner, Richard Webb, rent of £11 a year; for the purpose of the Poor Law it was rated at just one shilling. The building was set back in a cheerless courtyard, towards one end of the street, which, perhaps inevitably, came to be known as Chapel Court.²

Dismal though the chapel’s setting was, its position in the town was central and thus in keeping with the Jesuits’ policy of placing their churches as near as possible to the centre of cities and their populations. In this respect they have, over the years, been particularly successful in Bristol where the Society’s church has been ‘in every sense central to the heart of the city’.³

Whatever the drawbacks for the Catholics of Bristol the situation in other important towns in the area, for example in Exeter (the city the Jesuits then called the
capital of the west) was even less satisfactory. At about this time a priest - sometimes a Franciscan or Benedictine or secular - occasionally visited Catholics in the city and said Mass in an upper room of a house in South Street. After a while even this monthly Mass was given up until the Jesuits sent a permanent missioner in 1762.

That a Jesuit priest would be permitted to set up a school in Bristol was inconceivable, and it could not, it seemed, be achieved by proxy, for when a member of John Scudamore's flock, a Mr Coppinger, tried to establish one in the district of Kingsdown about the year 1757, as soon as it was discovered he was a Catholic he was forbidden to proceed, although well-qualified, and the venture collapsed.\(^4\) It may be added that although the Jesuits were later successful in setting up (but not themselves staffing) a primary and secondary school in the city their attempts to establish a grammar school were frustrated.\(^5\)

The attitude of the Established Church concerning such matters in the mid-eighteenth century was expressed by Dr Thomas Newton, Bishop of Bristol from 1761 to 1782:

> But then they [Catholics] should take and enjoy these liberties with some kind of modesty and decency in a private manner and in private houses. If they presume to erect public schools and mass-houses, if they set up openly to make converts ... then it should be made to appear that the law is not dead but sleepeith.\(^6\)

The Jesuits, as a Society - despite the great achievements of individual members in so many spheres of learning - saw education primarily as a means of propagating the faith and gaining souls, and if in the eighteenth century in towns like Bristol they were denied their schools, then they were the more determined to promote the catechetical teaching of their flock.\(^7\) When in her eighty-ninth year a Mrs Player
recalled her days at the chapel at St James’s Back, her special memory was of being taught her catechism as a young girl.⁸

‘He had to struggle with difficulties almost incredible in that bigoted and fanatical city.’ So wrote Dr George Oliver of John Scudamore at a later date.⁹ But there was little excitement in the south west when in 1745, at far-off Edinburgh, the Catholic Pretender, Charles Edward, grandson of James II, was proclaimed James VIII. However, when two thousand English troops advancing against him under Sir John Cope were cut to pieces by clansmen at Preston Pans - ‘nothing but a wicked crew of robbers and plunderers, or if of any religion Scotch and Irish papists’, said Bishop Newton of Bristol¹⁰ - there was an outburst of patriotic fervour in the city, and £30,000 was raised for the mustering of forces to defend the crown. In Liverpool the sum raised was only £6,000 and in Hull, £1,800.¹¹ A sermon preached by Bishop Newton on the consequences if the rebellion should succeed, once again raised the spectre of England losing its religious and civil liberties and proceeding ‘from liberty to slavery, from the purest religion to the grossest idolatry and superstition’.¹² Two months after Cope’s defeat there was a ready-made formula at hand for patriotic protest, and on the anniversary of the Gunpowder Plot effigies of the pope and the Pretender were carried with enthusiasm in procession through Bristol’s streets and burnt on a huge bonfire in College Green.¹³

During the rebellion all professed papists in the kingdom were required to take the oath of allegiance, though in Bristol only nineteen did so. It is likely that discretion and caution played their part, for Bishop Secker’s figures for 1735 and Bishop Newton’s subsequent returns in 1767 suggest there were more Catholics living
in the city, in addition to the twenty or thirty families of foreigners. 14

Oliver's description of Bristol as a bigoted city was, of course, a Catholic perspective, but at one stage even Bristol's Anglican bishop, Joseph Butler (1738-1750), perhaps the most distinguished to hold the office, fell victim to Protestant zealotry. He came under suspicion of being a papist when he caused a plain cross of white marble inlaid to be put on the communion table of the private chapel of his palace in Lower College Green. Although many might have thought it a harmless ornament, intended, as the Bishop of Gloucester later referred to it, as a sign 'that true Christians are to bear their cross and not to be ashamed of following a crucified Master', yet the pressure put upon the Lord Chancellor was such that eight years after Butler's departure he urged Bishop Yonge (1758-1761) to remove it. 15

In 1751, a year after he had left Bristol, Butler unwittingly compounded his 'error' when on his first visitation to his new diocese of Durham he stressed the importance of external religion, declaring in a Charge to the Clergy that religion itself cannot be preserved amongst mankind without the form:

In Roman Catholic countries, people cannot pass a day without having religion recalled to their thoughts by some or other memories of it; by some ceremony or public religious form occurring in their way: besides their frequent holydays, the short prayers they are daily called to, and the occasional devotions enjoined by confessors... Our reformers ... reduced the form of religion to great simplicity... Thus they [the generality amongst us] have no customary admonition, no public call to recollect the thoughts of God and religion from one Sunday to another. 16

Intending no more than to encourage a more ardent faith Bishop Butler thus laid himself open to accusations of favouring popery and of dying in the communion of the Church of Rome, from which charges both Archbishop Thomas Secker (formerly Bishop of Bristol) and Bishop Samuel Halifax laboured in their writings to
rescue him.\textsuperscript{17}

The chapel in St James’s Back was the only centre for Catholic worship for many miles around Bristol and some Catholics were involved in travelling considerable distances in the practice of their faith. Two zealous converts, William and Ann Hippisly, for example, walked the twenty-odd miles from their home in Shepton Mallet, Somerset, to Bristol (sometimes to Bath) to attend the Sunday service. They later became founder-members of the Catholic chapel established by the Jesuits at Shepton Mallet in 1765, and with their priest, John Brewer, took the Oath of Allegiance at Warminster in 1778 and again at Wells in 1792, as required by the Catholic Relief Act of 1791.\textsuperscript{18} They formed an attachment to the Jesuits, and their daughter, Ann, was later to become mistress at the Catholic school in Bristol and continued to correspond with one of Scudamore’s successors, Fr Robert Plowden, after the latter was compelled by his bishop to leave Bristol in 1815.

As his congregation increased and the curative powers of the Hot Wells in the western part of the city attracted more visitors (including foreigners who were likely to be Catholic), John Scudamore, encouraged by the Duke of Norfolk, determined at some time between September 1764 and July 1765 to establish another chapel in the vicinity, in Dowry Square.\textsuperscript{19} News of this reached the ears of the mayor, Henry Swymmer,\textsuperscript{20} a prominent merchant and brother-in-law to the Earl of Westmoreland, and he was so alarmed at the intelligence that he hastened to London to apprise the Bishop of Bristol of the Jesuit’s plan.\textsuperscript{21} Bishop Newton in turn looked for advice to his superior, Thomas Secker, Archbishop of Canterbury, who as a former Bishop of Bristol took a special interest in the case.

No doubt conscious of the part the chief lay Catholic, the Duke of Norfolk,
might attempt in the proceedings both agreed that nothing could be done effectively without the support of government ministers, which Newton, having a friend at court in no less a person than the premier, George Grenville, was confident would be forthcoming. Grenville, assuring them of the government’s full backing, invited the bishop and the mayor to put the laws into execution, but suggested they might first try persuasion - even threats.

When the bishop returned to Bristol a meeting was arranged at the mayor’s house between the two parties. On one side of the table sat Bishop Newton, the mayor, and Sir Abraham Elton, the town clerk, and facing them John Scudamore, the proprietor of the building, and, as the Bishop expressed it, ‘their agent’. The Bishop represented his case forcefully. Although, he said, he was no friend to the Catholic religion, ‘as it stood distinguished from our common Christianity’, he was no enemy to their persons, but they must be aware that they were acting contrary to the law, and if they sought the protection of the Duke of Norfolk then let it be said he had no more authority to break the law than any common man. They already had a private Mass-house, and since their priest had behaved decently and given ‘no great offence’ they would be allowed to continue with it, but it would be a contemptuous defiance of authority if they presumed upon opening a public Mass-house and it was something no government could endure. Moreover, the bishop added, he had discovered that the building they intended to convert stood upon Church land and was held by lease from the Dean and Chapter. As they were unmolested themselves, ‘they ought not’, as he put it, ‘to molest others’. If they did not desist in their plans he would prosecute them to the utmost severity of the law.

The bishop pronounced the outcome most satisfactory, relating how at the
conclusion of the meeting the priest and his supporters said they were sorry, thanked him for his civility and said they would convert the building to some other use. They also promised they would not resume the same design elsewhere. 'And', the bishop remarked, 'they were really as good as their word.' He then added: 'Only a bastard kind of popery, Methodism, has troubled Bristol since that time.'

If we are to judge by events elsewhere in England, the time was not yet propitious for such ventures. A similar but perhaps more cautious attempt had been made at Preston a few years earlier. The Catholics there, who like those in Bristol had previously worshipped outside the town (in a barn), moved in 1733 to a tenement in Friargate, but in 1761 their Jesuit priest, Fr Patrick Barnewall, built a chapel behind the front houses so as to be concealed from view. In 1763, a year after its opening, and shortly after Fr Barnewall's death, a mob forced an entry and gutted the building compelling the unfortunate missioner, Fr John Smith, to flee for his life, which he only managed by crossing the Ribble on horseback. A few months after Bishop Newton's clash with John Scudamore, Bishop Richard Terrick began 'to prosecute' Mass-houses in London and even, in 1773, refused to sanction the Royal Academy's proposal to introduce paintings of sacred objects into St Paul's Cathedral on the ground that it smacked of popery.

The clue to Bishop Newton's real concern about the public Mass-house at Bristol can perhaps be found in his observations, at a later date, on a quite different matter. When a Bill for the Relief of Protestant Dissenters was before the House of Lords (it was defeated), he was prevented by ill health from attending the second reading, and arranged instead to have his views printed and distributed to their lordships. He professed himself as hearty a friend to freedom of enquiry and liberty
of conscience as any dissenter, but precautions were necessary:

Liberty of thinking and judging is one thing, and liberty of public preaching is another... But, it may be said, why not allow liberty of preaching, as well as liberty of printing? ... Men preach more than they dare to print, and more easily infuse their poison when there is no antidote at hand to prevent the bad effects of it.30

It was clear, then, that although a private Mass-house such as the one on St James's Back would be tolerated, a public Mass-house would give the Jesuits an opportunity of preaching their 'poison' before steps could be taken to counter it. The new chapel could not therefore be allowed, particularly in such a fashionable district as Hotwells, often frequented by people of standing and influence.

At the conclusion of Newton's account of the Hotwells episode, he offered the strange juxtaposition of Catholicism and Methodism, referring to the latter as 'a bastard kind of popery'. He developed the point a little later in 1766 when addressing the Bristol clergy on 'the great growth and increase of Popery in this kingdom', where he advanced the belief that Methodism and Catholicism are closely linked and that the one creed can lead directly to the other - that from 'methodism to popery is a natural and easy transition'.31 Methodism, he argued, unsettles men's religious principles and they become restless. But they must settle at last

and where are they so likely to fix as upon the rock of an infallible church, which promises easy absolution and certain salvation? ... This instability in religion is giving the subtle Priest and Jesuit the advantage that he would desire.32

A Methodist is 'most easily dyed a papist in grain' and every Methodist meeting house is in truth 'a school and seminary for papists ... [Methodists] excel in all the same arts of sophistry and evasion, equivocation and mental reservation'.33 Methodists must have considered such remarks particularly perverse since only six years earlier Dr Challoner, the best known of the English Catholic bishops of the
eighteenth century, had publicly warned the faithful against them with his pamphlet: *A caveat against Methodists. Shewing how unsafe it is for any Christian to join himself to their society, or to adhere to their teachers.*

Bishop Newton also lamented the failure of the authorities to enforce the laws against ‘popery and popish priests’. The reluctance on the part of government to act against Catholics was something Archbishop Secker had warned him about at their meeting in London when advising on Scudamore’s plan for a new chapel in Bristol; nothing could be done effectually, he had said, without the concurrence and assistance of the ministry, ‘and ministers, whatever may be their reasons, seldom lend a favourable ear, or give a helping hand to such applications’.

Newton was particularly severe on the Jesuits, seeing them as one of the main causes for the increase of popery in the Kingdom. It cannot be expected, Newton said, that Jesuits can ever be loyal subjects to those of a different religion. Like moles they work underground, undermining the faith and conscience of those they come upon. They are devious in their ways and in the worst sense of the words ‘they become all things to all men that they may by all means gain some. They take as many forms as Proteus’.

Newton clearly felt that the most telling argument to offer against Catholicism, ‘when all else had been said’, was to speak of the threat it posed to English liberty. In a dissertation he dramatically entitled, *The Romish Clergy lords over God’s heritage*, he remarked:

> Slavery of any kind is bad, and surely that of the body is not worse than that of the mind and conscience, but both together must be intolerable. If there were none other arguments against Popery, yet this is argument sufficient, that we should not be slaves.

It is the same point that one of Newton’s predecessors at Bristol, Bishop
Conybeare (1750-1756), had made a few years earlier. Conybeare, who in general seemed little exercised by the issues of Catholicism and Nonconformism in Bristol, nevertheless posed this question in the aftermath of the 1745 Rebellion: What were the rebels aiming for? ‘Is it the advancement of a popish prince over a protestant people, who, possessed of every arbitrary notion, will reckon us not as his subjects, but his slaves?’

This perception in English minds of membership of the Established Church connoting both loyalty to monarch and love of country was to persist throughout the next century and beyond. Bishop Conybeare, in a Charge to the Clergy of Bristol delivered at his opening visitation in July 1752, had spoken specifically on the point of Anglicanism and patriotism being one: ‘The Church can be established only by Law... This being the case, our obligations to Loyalty are extraordinary.’

2.2 Financial and Organisational Questions

In 1750 John Scudamore succeeded Fr John Bodenham as Rector of the College of St Francis Xavier, a post he held for many years in addition to his responsibility for the Bristol mission. This entailed the supervision of other Jesuits serving in the College (District), numbering up to a dozen priests by 1768.

In the absence of the many records of the Western District lost at Bath in the Gordon Riots of 1780, the financial accounts of the old College which survive in the Jesuit archives provide valuable information, for we are often able to flesh out mere names and numbers. They show payments made by Scudamore, as rector, to other Jesuits in his District. On 29 August 1757, for instance, he paid £5.0.0 to the Hon. Francis Dormer, the priest at Cherry Orchard near Coleford in the Forest of Dean.
(Dormer’s salary was £20.0.0 a year), and there is mention of a payment by him of £5.5.0 in June 1775 to Robert Plowden, who was later to become priest at Bristol but at the time was serving on the Continent, where for the most part he had remained since his schooldays at St Omer’s some twenty-four years earlier. On several occasions Scudamore himself is the recipient, sometimes identified by name and sometimes, in Jesuit code, as ‘Mrs Bristol’ or ‘Mrs Bristow’. We learn that on 17 July 1753 he was paid £3.3.0 by ‘Mrs S.W.’ (South Wales District / College of St Francis Xavier), and on another occasion received £0.17.3 from Mrs S.W. for ‘letters’, and two shillings ‘for treating Mr Royal’. This was probably John Royall, a Jesuit priest and chaplain at Plowden Hall in Shropshire, who was born in Pennsylvania and after ordination in 1755 sailed from Plymouth to become a missionary in Maryland, but had been captured at sea by the French (the Seven Years War had begun) and on release decided to return to England.

The accounts show that in 1767 attempts were made to improve the chapel on St James’s Back: £9 was paid for an antependium (‘Antipendium’), including the fitting, and £3.9.5 for ‘covering for the stairs’ and for ‘white lining’. At a cost of £1.14.0 some chairs were also bought for the house which the Jesuits owned and in which Fr Scudamore lived, in Montague Street, a short distance from the chapel.

In 1767 John Scudamore was paid expenses when he visited Bath to meet his provincial, Nathaniel Elliott, on the occasion of Ralph Hoskins becoming a professed Father of the Society of Jesus; and again in December 1774 he was granted £20 (probably to distribute as Rector of the College) ‘for ye Distresse at Bath, etc’. He himself later received a payment of a guinea ‘for treating five Brothers from Bath’, where by 1773 there were two Jesuit chaplains.
The missioner at Bristol also had a responsibility for the Catholics of South Wales, and Scudamore and his successors were expected to visit counties like Glamorgan several times a year. Evidence for this duty is seen in various expense items ‘on Mrs S.W. account’, such as a journey in Wales in 1776 ‘in a Post Chaise etc.’, costing £6.10.6.46 This responsibility of the Bristol priest continued until the early part of the nineteenth century when a permanent chapel was established at Swansea.

The origins of the annuity granted for supervision of the Glamorganshire missions can be seen in a letter from Charles Shireburn, the provincial, to Thomas Hildeyard, the Rector of the College of St Francis Xavier, dated 4 October 1743: ‘Mrs Province [Society of Jesus] ... allows gratis £30 per an. for the incumbent at Bristol [John Scudamore] to go once in a month, or 6 weeks, to Glamorgan.’47 In the event it is very doubtful if any missioner at Bristol in the eighteenth century felt he could afford to go more than three or four times a year. But in an old account and memorandum book of the College we come across an example of the practical help that was enjoined upon the Society by the terms of the original foundation which stated that it should pay yearly a sufficient competence for the education of a youth of Monmouthshire or South Wales:

Feb.25, 1774 ... it was agreed between Mr Scudamore and Mr Augien [Rector of the Jesuit College at Bruges) that on the said Mr Scudamore giving £100 to Bruges, Corcoran, a pupil of S. Wales was to be maintained at free cost during his residence there ... [Times were difficult and for a while payment was suspended though] Mr Corcoran’s diet was still regularly paid by S. Wales which has been no small detriment to Her Ladyship [the College of St Francis Xavier].48

Corcoran, it may be said, never entered the Society.

In July 1755 John Scudamore received £4.4.0 for expenses on a visit to
London to see 'Mr Poyntz'. The two had good reason to meet: Fr John Poyntz was the procurator of the English Province and as such had an overall responsibility for its finances. Each District also made an annual contribution to the 'Office', the central financial organisation of the Jesuits which provided for the needs of the provincial and his staff and those who fell outside the administration of the Colleges. But the reason for Scudamore's journey might well have been to discuss more serious matters. A French Jesuit, Antoine La Valette, superior of the mission in Martinique in the West Indies, had engaged in commercial ventures which, though successful at first, later ran up huge debts for the Society. Early in 1755 (a few months before Scudamore and Poyntz met) on the authority of the Father General, La Valette borrowed money from the provinces, including the English province and its districts, to meet immediate needs, but the collapse of the Marseilles bank from which he had secured big loans brought matters to a head. The French government became involved and in 1764 the Jesuits, who were unable to meet their creditors, were expelled from France. Henry Foley, the nineteenth-century Jesuit archivist remarked: 'The province was well-nigh brought to a wreck.' John Scudamore's own district of South Wales, one of the poorest, had invested £161 in the project (other districts much more) and was in straitened circumstances.

2.3 Relations with the Vicar Apostolic of the Western District

On 30 May 1753 Pope Benedict XIV, by his bull *Apostolicum Ministerium*, rescinded the privilege whereby the regular clergy, such as the Jesuits, were exempted from episcopal jurisdiction: in future they were to be subject to the vicars apostolic in all that appertained to the cure of souls in their district. Each Jesuit was required to
WILLIAM YORK, O.S.B
Vicar Apostolic, 1741-1763
present himself to his vicar apostolic with a testimonial from his own superior and needed to be approved by the bishop before being granted faculties for administering the sacraments. But in all things that concerned him specifically as a Jesuit he was still exempt from the bishop’s authority. Philip Carteret, the English provincial, wrote to the vicars apostolic assuring them that the members of his Society would obey the wishes of the Holy Father, and - doubtless sensitive to allegations that Jesuits showed too great an independence of spirit in the face of authority (other than their own superior’s) - hoped that the bishops for their part would testify that the Jesuits at all times showed them proper respect.52

The vicar apostolic of the Western District, William York (1741-1763), had taken up his appointment about the time of John Scudamore’s arrival in Bristol; he was the third vicar apostolic to be appointed to the office and the second Benedictine.53 With the destruction of so many records of the Western District before 1780 little is known of the work of this quiet, withdrawn prelate, but he responded favourably to Carteret’s letter and acknowledged the contribution of Scudamore and his colleagues by assuring him that the Jesuits and other religious orders merited great praise for their indefatigable endeavours to promote the cause of religion in their districts.

He had more to say on the good relations he had with the Society - and was ready to show a special favour. On 20 March 1755 he wrote from his residence at Bath to the Jesuit provincial in connection with the appointment of a coadjutor in the Western District, and asked him to let him know ‘what you or yours may think of him’. He continued:

As for those of your people that come or go out of my district, yours, as the proper superior’s approbation, shall be sufficient upon their
giving me notice of their subject’s coming or going out of it, providing
them with proper faculties as from myself. I shall at all times ... be
ready to serve you or yours when you shall judge it [within] my
power.54

The excellent relationship at that time between the Jesuit Fathers of the Western
District and their vicar apostolic was for the most part also true of the Society’s
relationship with the three other vicars apostolic, and also with the country’s secular
and regular clergy.

2.4     Jesuit Missioners in the Western District

The Catalogues of the English Province of the Society of Jesus for 1772-3 contain
alphabetical lists of the 285 members with reference to their various Colleges and
Residences and the missions in each of them.55 The Districts with the greatest
number of Jesuit missions were Lancashire (College of St Aloysius) with thirty-one;
London (College of St Ignatius) with nineteen; and Yorkshire (Residence of St
Michael) with fifteen. Yorkshire, which still retained the title ‘Residence’, normally
indicating one of the smaller colleges, was clearly gaining ground.

In 1773 there were twelve missioners in the College of St Francis Xavier:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jenison, James</td>
<td>At Mr Porter’s, Bath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More, Christopher</td>
<td>At Mr Dalton’s, Bath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scudamore, John</td>
<td>Bristol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dormer, Robert</td>
<td>Beckford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westby, Peter</td>
<td>Courtfield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butler, Thomas</td>
<td>Eyne, Hereford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butler, John</td>
<td>Hereford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falkner, Thomas</td>
<td>Rotherwas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horne, William</td>
<td>Sarnesfield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brewer, John</td>
<td>Shepton Mallett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarkson, George</td>
<td>At Mr John Rowe’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knight, George</td>
<td>Montgomeryshire</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is worth examining the backgrounds of these missioners, reflecting as they do
several features which characterised the membership of the English province in
general. We have observed previously how many Jesuits were from well-to-do
families: three in the above list, Robert Dormer, John Butler and Thomas Butler
were the sons of peers, with the title 'Honourable'. Two, John Scudamore and John
Brewer, were from families of substance, owning estates. Several of the missioners
were from families which had traditional ties with the Society of Jesus: Robert
Dormer was one of five sons of Charles, the fifth Lord Dormer, all of whom became
Jesuit priests; James Jenison was one of three Jesuit sons of John and Elizabeth of
Durham. Christopher More, serving at Bath, was the brother of Thomas More, at
that time (1773) provincial of the Society of Jesus. As the sons of Thomas and
Catherine of Barnborough Hall, Yorkshire, they were the last direct descendants of
the Lord Chancellor and martyr, Sir Thomas More.

The colourful career of Thomas Falkner, serving at Rotherwas, illustrates the
adventurous, pioneering spirit of the Jesuit missioners of those days.56 A qualified
surgeon, he spent thirty-eight years as a missioner among the peoples of South
America. In addition to his role as priest and surgeon he showed himself something
of a polymath by writing a geography of Patagonia which was published in Hereford
in 1744.57 He subsequently served as a chaplain at Plowden Hall, seat of the
Plowden family who over the generations were to provide thirteen priests for the
Society of Jesus, including Robert, for twenty-eight years the missioner at Bristol,
and Charles, his brother, who became provincial.

2.5 The Challenge of Meeting Pastoral Needs in Bristol

Until Bishop Newton's arrival in Bristol, few entries had been made in the Diocese
Book which Bishop Secker had started in 1735. Since Secker’s time there had been six Bishops of Bristol, but of these only Newton made any return of Catholics in the city; he gives the numbers (sometimes adding comments) for 1766 to 1767, a year or so after his confrontation with the Jesuit priest. We are not surprised to learn that ‘the papists at Baptist Mills decrease daily and now have no priest or Mass-house’ (transferred, of course, to St James’s Back), but it is difficult to know how accurate Newton’s figures are and on occasions whether they refer to individuals or families. Some of the figures in the 1784 returns of Bishop Christopher Wilson are strikingly at variance with the earlier list. Where, for instance, Newton records ‘some 100’s’ of papists for St Stephen’s Parish, Bishop Wilson, seventeen years later, notes only ‘18’.

In 1767 the Archbishops of Canterbury and York ordered the bishops of the twenty-six Anglican dioceses to compile a census of Catholics, and the lists were then laid before the House of Lords. It is not clear why the census was requested though it is likely to have been in response to demands in the London and provincial press for such information. Was the country seeing a dangerous increase in Popery? The results, overall, are more valuable than those of any returns previously made.

There were 500 papists living in the Bristol Deanery in 1767, including Winterbourne in the north east but not Bedminster in the south west of the city, which was then in the Diocese of Bath and Wells. The largest numbers were in the parishes of St Stephen’s (293), St James’s (53) and St Philip’s (47). St Stephen’s, the city’s mercantile area, also contained the largest occupational grouping - ‘mariners’, doubtless through its being the parish nearest the harbour in the centre of the city. Bishop Newton had remarked on this situation a year earlier when writing in Secker’s
Old houses in the Pithay, a turning off St James's Back where the Catholics of Bristol went to Mass in the eighteenth century. In the nineteenth century many Catholics lived in this area.
Diocese Book:

Some hundreds perhaps of papists consisting mostly if not altogether of Irish sailors and their wives or females of a worst denomination; their number more or less according to the shipping in the Port; a poor wretched set with no persons of rank or more among them.\textsuperscript{56}

After the 102 'mariners' listed in the 1767 returns, the next largest groups were thirty-six 'poor people' and twenty-seven 'labourers'. At this time the poor were suffering unprecedented distress caused by the bad harvest and the Council took measures to assist by subsidising all the bakers in the city and suburbs.\textsuperscript{59} But the Catholic community was not without its gentlefolk - eight gentlewomen and four gentlemen - all but one residing in the parish of St James.

St Philip's, which with its brass-workers and foreigners had registered the highest number of papists in 1735, had now been overtaken by St Stephen's. In 1767 the brass-workers were still in the St Philip's parish, but numbered no more than seven. The oldest Catholic was a woman (a net seller) of seventy-five. The only Catholic foreigners also lived in St Philip's - a Frenchman, who was a saltpetre maker, and a Spaniard, employed as a merchant's clerk.

The 'priest' mentioned in the 1767 list for Bristol can refer only to the Jesuit, John Scudamore, but I find the figures relating to him quite inaccurate. Jesuit records give firm dates for Scudamore's birth (1696) and death (1778), and as we would expect state his age at death as eighty-two. This would then make him seventy-one years old in 1767 and not sixty-six as Bishop Newton's return states. He is there described as having been resident for thirty-five years, but this would date his arrival in Bristol as 1732 when John Busby was priest in the city, and it is unlikely, considering the needs of other areas, that the two Jesuits would have served together until Busby's death eleven years later. Besides, Bishop Secker is precise and names
‘one, Busby,’ as being the Catholic priest in 1735, making no mention of Scudamore. Jesuit archives give the date of Scudamore’s arrival in Bristol as c.1740.

In addition to the kinds of needs which any Jesuit priest might be expected to deal with, Scudamore was confronted with exceptional circumstances in Bristol with the arrival of a group of exiles from across the Atlantic. On 19 June 1756 he found the Catholic community in Bristol unexpectedly augmented when the packet from Virginia arrived in the city harbour carrying two hundred and eighty-nine Acadians, exiles from Nova Scotia, or, as they were known at the time, ‘French Neutrals’. Their enforced stay in the city was to last seven years.

The year previously war had broken out in North America between the English and French, and the governor of Nova Scotia, faced with the threat of a possible attack on the British colony, considered whether there might not be a fifth column in his midst. Among the inhabitants were some nine thousand Acadians, whose ancestors had been settlers of the territory in the early years of the seventeenth century when French Jesuits established the first missions. The Acadians - of French origin but now after a hundred and fifty years a separate people - promised neutrality but the governor, uncertain of their loyalty, decided to expel them for the duration of the war. The first intelligence of them received in England came from a firm of Bristol merchants, Messrs Lidderdale, Harmer and Farrell, who had been informed by the captain of one of their ships from Virginia that another vessel was on its way with a large number of ‘Neutral French’ on board. On Saturday, 26 June 1756, readers of Felix Farley’s Bristol Journal learned of the arrival in Falmouth of a group of Acadians and of a similar group, ‘a great part of whom [were] women and children’, who had landed at Bristol itself. The report added that several hundred
These three houses in Guinea Street were originally a mansion, built in 1718. The house would have been a familiar sight to the Acadians, who lived in the same street from 1756 to 1763. The building still stands, situated between a modern block of flats and Bristol General Hospital.
more were shortly expected in the city, though in the event no more came.⁶⁴

There is very little local reference to them and the subject deserves further research. Latimer in his *Annals of Bristol* devotes forty-eight pages to the years 1756-63 but surprisingly makes no mention of the Acadians, though they must have made a tragic impression while they were in Bristol and on occasions occupied a good deal of the authorities' time. There are, however, contemporary references to them in various editions of *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*.

Following a meeting of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, Mr Louis Guigner was sent from London to make arrangements for them.⁶⁵ By the Tuesday following their arrival in port he had succeeded in renting for their accommodation several large warehouses around a courtyard in Guinea (Guinea) Street (today the site of the Bristol General Hospital), on what at the time was the southern edge of the city, near the famous parish church of St Mary Redcliff.

In exile the Acadian communities drew strength from their extended family relationships and a common faith, the Catholic religion, which they practised with a 'profound and unshakeable' devotion.⁶⁶ One of the requests that the Bristol group had made to the governor of Virginia, where they were originally transported, was that they should be allowed the free exercise of their religion,⁶⁷ and there is no reason to suppose that whilst in Bristol this was no longer their ardent wish.⁶⁸ Certainly the Catholic priest, John Scudamore, would soon have known of their presence for the *Bristol Journal* had reported that when 'they lay at our Kay waiting for orders from above, for the disposal of them, vast numbers of the citizens flock[ed] daily to see them'.⁶⁹ The Catholic chapel on St James's Back (now established some thirteen years) was little more than fifteen minutes' walking distance
from Guinea Street, though it is unlikely the Acadians would have been permitted to worship there. John Scudamore, however, who had spent many years in France and could converse with them in their own tongue, would have been a welcome minister in their homes. At the other seaports to which the Acadians had been sent, they lived, though exiles, fairly normal lives: in Liverpool they were left undisturbed in a section of the town assigned to them, whilst the French Neutrals at Falmouth enjoyed even more freedom of movement.  

In July 1756, a month after their arrival, cases of smallpox (an infection they must have brought with them) were reported amongst all four groups in England. Such a calamity would have imposed special obligations on a Jesuit priest, aware not only of the personal example set by Ignatius Loyola but also of the particular responsibility imposed on him by the Rule (Formula Vivendi) of his Society that members should undertake to serve the sick, the poor and the oppressed:  

Moreover, this Society should show itself no less useful in holily assisting and serving those who are found in prisons and hospitals, and indeed in performing other works of charity, according to what will seem expedient for the glory of God and the common good. 

The sickness ravaged the four Acadian communities, particularly those at Bristol and Falmouth, and when a count was taken in 1762 by the Sick and Hurt Board of the Admiralty it was seen that the Bristol contingent had fallen in numbers from the two hundred and eighty-nine at the time of their landing in 1756, to one hundred and fifty-two.  

The Acadians were not in such a restrictive situation that they could not make fairly free associations, but it behoved them to act discreetly for few English cities were more overtly Protestant than Bristol. Little more than four months after their arrival Felix Farley's Bristol Journal reported that the fifth of November had been a
Thanksgiving Day for the happy deliverance of King James 1 and the Three Estates ‘from the most traitorous and bloody intended massacre by gunpowder’, and that the day had been observed by the ‘Magistracy and Commonalty [of Bristol] with that reverence and respect as became a loyal, and grateful and Protestant city’. In exile, then, the Acadians worked and worshipped as unobtrusively as their foreignness in local society permitted. At the time of their departure, the Bristol Journal remarked that during their stay the ‘Neutrals or Canadians’ had behaved in a decent manner and by their industry and civil deportment ... gained the esteem of all ranks of people'.

When by the Treaty of Paris in 1763 England acquired Canada and Nova Scotia, and the Acadians were free to leave the country, they were asked by the Admiralty in ‘what manner they would chuse to be disposed of’. Those at Bristol made several requests, the two most important being that they hoped they would be sent to their own country and that they would be allowed the free exercise of their religion. The Acadians at Liverpool were content to identify themselves with the aspirations of the Bristol group, but those at Falmouth asked for more time to consider their position.

In May 1763, after an exile of almost seven years, the Acadians finally left Bristol. With the coming of peace there came to light firm evidence that John Scudamore had been free to minister to them during their stay in the city: none of the marriages contracted there needed subsequently to be rehabilitated in accordance with Catholic rites, and similarly none of their children baptised. In this respect the experience of the French Neutrals who had been at Falmouth, Southampton and Liverpool had been similar, unlike that of those Acadians who from 1755 to 1763 had
been kept in New England. There, when hostilities between England and France ceased, it was seen that many marriages needed to be rehabilitated and the children up to seven years of age baptised, for during the war no priest had been available to them. 79

2.6 The End of Scudamore’s Mission

As we have seen John Scudamore wrestled heroically with these problems, but it was from another quarter that he was to suffer the severest blow.

The expulsion of the Jesuits from South America by the Spanish and Portuguese governments in 1768 (which led to Thomas Falkner’s return to England), prefigured a momentous occasion for the Society several years later. Although there had long been rumours that the Jesuits might be totally suppressed the blow did not fall until 16 August 1773. On that day the Father General, Laurence Ricci, was arrested in Rome and moved to the Castel Sant’Angelo, where he remained until his death two years later; the other Jesuits in Rome were, for seven days, detained in their houses. Throughout the world Jesuits learned that their Society had ceased to exist. 80

Although the Jesuits had enemies within the Catholic Church itself - Jansenists and Gallicans, for example - the reasons for their suppression were mainly political. The pope wielded political power, and being his strongest supporters the Jesuits attracted the enmity of foreign governments who might have reason to oppose him, particularly those of France, Spain and Portugal who had possessions overseas where Jesuits served and where they were accused of interference and conspiracy.

Following the expulsion of the Jesuits from Portuguese territories they were,
in 1764, also suppressed in France where there was considerable hostility to them and where the La Valette affair had highlighted their activities. Spain expelled them in 1767 and smaller states followed suit. From 1769 the new pope, Clement XIV, was under increasing pressure from the Bourbon powers, particularly Spain, to abolish the Society completely and on 21 July 1773 he officially signed the Brief, Dominus ac Redemptor, the instrument of suppression.81

It was a document of over eight thousand words signed earlier in great secrecy (that the Jesuits should have no time to organise resistance or dispose of their property) the previous month at Rome, at Sancta Maria Major. In the opening pages Clement recalled how Christ recommended to his Apostles the ministry of reconciliation: it is a duty, said Clement, which is 'deeply engraven on our heart'. Accordingly, as peacemaker he must be ready in the interest of Christian unity and harmony 'to pluck up and destroy even the things which are most agreeable to us'. Clement observed that amongst the things which contribute to the good and happiness of the Christian world 'the religious orders hold as it were the first place', and have been favoured with many 'exemptions, privileges and faculties'. But there must be checks, or abuses may arise; indeed, he continued, it had been necessary on several occasions in the past for some orders to be abolished.

The brief then dealt specifically with the Society of Jesus and the burden of the pope's complaint:

... almost at the very moment of its institution, there arose in the bosom of this society divers seeds of discord and dissension, not only among the companions themselves, but with other regular orders, the secular clergy, the academies, the universities, the public schools, and lastly, even with the princes of the states in which the society was received.82

Convinced that there could never be a firm and durable peace in the Church as long
as the Society existed Clement announced its suppression: ‘We deprive it of all activity whatever.’

The authority and detail of the Brief carried an air of finality which must have dismayed members of the order: ‘We declare all, and all kind of authority, the General, the provincials, the visitors, and other superiors of the said society to be for ever annulled and extinguished.’ It continued: ‘The name of the company shall be, and is, for ever extinguished and suppressed... Our will and pleasure is, that these our letters should for ever and for all eternity be valid, permanent, and efficacious.’

But there was comfort in that certain countries, Prussia and Russia, did not promulgate the Brief (it was a matter for individual states), thus, though but a shadow of itself, the Society continued in being.

For elderly Jesuits like John Scudamore, then aged seventy-eight and a member of the Society for fifty-five years, the suppression must have caused bewilderment. A letter on 20 October 1773 from a colleague, Fr John Gage of the College of the Holy Apostles, to Bishop Hornyold, vicar apostolic of the Midland District, reveals something of the anguish felt: he writes, he says, in the bitterness of his soul at the news of the suppression of the Society

to which I owe all the little learning and virtue I have got; an Institute which has no other end than the greater honour and glory of God ... an Institute for whose preservation I would willingly have laid down my life. The standard of St Ignatius is too deeply planted in my heart ever to be plucked out, but with life itself.

Outside Prussia and Russia individual Jesuits were required to acknowledge that the Society no longer existed, and that they were now secular priests (unless they chose to enter another regular order) and they should apply to a bishop for diocesan appointments. Pope Clement had decreed: ‘We do permit them to live at large, as
secular priests and clerks, always under a perfect and absolute obedience to the jurisdiction of the Ordinary of the diocese where they shall establish themselves.’ A stipend was to be paid them out of the revenues of the house or college where they resided. The Brief precluded all chances of appeal by stating that no one should ‘impugn, combat, or even write or speak about the said suppression, or the reasons and motives of it’.

Taking their lead from their General, the Society obeyed, without resistance, the wishes of the Holy Father. In England a sympathetic Bishop Challoner informed the other vicars apostolic of the papal orders and met the London Jesuits personally to discuss their situation. Bishop Walmesley of the Western District, well disposed to the ex-Jesuits as were the other vicars apostolic, granted John Scudamore and his colleagues faculties to continue as before, and within the terms of the Brief of Suppression to govern themselves. Writing on 31 October 1773 to Thomas More, the provincial at the time of the suppression, the bishop desired him to perform the function of ‘Vicar over your former people’ and ‘to appoint Rectors in different parts as there were before’.

John Scudamore was to live for another five years. He lived in a house owned by the Jesuits, No.29 Montague Street, not far from Earl Street where the first priest, Fr Joseph Marshall had lodgings in the 1730s. Sketchley’s Directory of 1775, the first Bristol Directory, has the following entry against his address: ‘Skudamore, Rev. John, R.-priest’. His neighbours were Benjamin Thomas, book-keeper, and Ann Axford, widow. In the last decade of the century the house was no longer needed by the Society and by 1816 it was being let at a rent of £24 annually, but it was proving difficult to maintain and the rent was gradually reduced so that by 1840
it was no more than £16 as was explained in a letter to Fr George Jenkins in London:

I fear you must think me a very neglectful agent in not accounting to you for the rent of your houses [there was by then another in Trenchard Street]. The reason is the house in Montague Street has partly been void upon account of its being full of bugs and other vermin, and secondly I have had very bad tenants by one of whom I lost nine pounds, he having removed his goods and gone to London. I have since let it at £16 per annum to a jobbing gardener who pays monthly.85

The following year their agent, P. Husenbeth, was advising the Society not to sell the house too cheaply as it had been put into an excellent state of repair. It was finally sold in July 1841 to John Smith of College Street, Bristol. It was troublesome to the last, for although Husenbeth believed that a good title could be made out for the property, such was not the case and the house was sold for £150 instead of the £200 hoped for.

In the final years of his life John Scudamore must have found the climb from the chapel at St James’s Back to his house on the slopes of Montague Street a taxing experience. A letter from him at the age of eighty-two to the rector of the College of St Francis Xavier, the Hon. Thomas Butler at Eyne near Hereford, dated 3 January 1778, gives a glimpse of his domestic arrangements:

I cannot but think you are surprised to receive so many solicitations for money from me who am not less astonished at my late extraordinary expenses... I had several to maintain for about half a year, some with sumptuous victuals and copious spiritual liquor at my sole expense ...

I hope you have received both the quarter cask of wine and coffee I lately sent and in good order ... [I acknowledge] the payment of my annual income ... Total due to me £20.2.6 [for wine, coffee, surgeon and apothecary]... Pray send me the sum due at your convenience who am all life and spirit, tho weaker in my constitution, hardly able to walk or stand, have not eat above a pound of flesh or fish this last half year, nor drank above a pint of drink, and that only once in twenty four hours.
Pray pay my best respects to Mr Berrington, wishing both you and all
enquiring friends a happy new year. 87

On 2 April 1778, he wrote again to Butler. Unable to walk though ‘in good
spirits’ and conscious that he was near death, he was settling his financial affairs and
informed Butler that he was bequeathing his money to the College of St Francis
Xavier. 88 Six days later, on 8 April 1778, he was dead. Felix Farley's Bristol
Journal of 11 April carried the following notice:

Wednesday, died after a lingering illness, which he cheerfully bore to
the time of his death, Mr John Scudamore, many years a Catholic
priest in Montague Street; whose honesty and affability made him
much esteemed and greatly beloved in and out of his sacred function.

And a week later the same newspaper reported: ‘Monday last was performed at the
Romish chapel on St James's Back a Solemn Dirge on the death of their late priest,
Mr John Scudamore.’

With the Rev. James Parker, another ex-Jesuit, assisting at his funeral, he was
buried opposite the porch of St James's Church, Bristol, but today there is no trace
of his grave. The burial register of the parish carries the simple entry: ‘1778, April
11. John Scudamore’; of his priesthood there is no word. His grand-nephew, John
Jones, who lived with him for some time, remembered him as a priest much beloved
by his flock for his zeal and piety, and as a man whose manner of living was very
plain and moderate. 89 Since he was the first Catholic priest to establish a permanent
chapel (albeit a private one) within the city walls, and to serve it for almost forty
years, he can be regarded as the principal founder of the Catholic mission in Bristol.

A letter and statement of fees from John Scudamore's lawyer to William
Horne, SJ, at Sarnesfield Court, Herefordshire, winding up his affairs, again touched
upon the house in Montague Street and the vexed question of the title: ‘... it
appeared that such house rested in Mr Thomas More of London [the Jesuit provincial],’ but before the matter could be clarified John Scudamore had died. But there were other assets - the sale of his goods realised thirty-four pounds, thirteen shillings and five pence.90
NOTES TO CHAPTER II

1. See John Taylor, Antiquarian Essays (Bristol: Crofton Hemmons, 1895), p.79. John Taylor, city librarian and local historian, remarked that St James’s Back had held its name for five centuries until 1895 when the city authorities changed its name to Silver Street. The irony was not lost on Taylor who pointed out that by then St James’s Back was one of the dingiest and poorest districts of the city. Maps of the time show that Silver Street was the name of a small, adjacent street, almost a continuation of the Back.

2. Latimer, op. cit., II, 278. There was not one street light in the whole parish.

3. The words of William Maher, former provincial of the English Province. See Kenneth Hankins, In My Father’s House (Bristol: St Mary-on-the-Quay, 1993), p.188.

The first church the Jesuits acquired was in the sixteenth century - the church of Santa Maria della Strada in Rome. The Gesu, the Jesuits’ principal church today, now stands on its site in the historical centre of Rome. See also Charles Walmesley, A Short Address to the Catholics of Wigan occasioned by the Rev. Richard Thompson’s ‘Case Stated of the Wigan Catholic Chapels’ (Wigan: Brown, 1818) p.14, in which he says the site of the Jesuit chapel in the town could not be bettered because it was ‘centrical’. On the other hand when the Dominicans built the first post-Reformation Catholic chapel in Leeds in 1793 they were content to situate it on the northern edge of the town. See Catholicism in Leeds, ed. by Robert E. Finnigan and George T. Bradley (Leeds: Diocesan Archives, 1994), pp.16, 19.

4. It was not until the opening of the Jesuits’ new chapel, St Joseph’s, in 1790, that Catholics in Bristol had their own school.


6. The Works of the Right Reverend Thomas Newton, DD, Late Lord Bishop of Bristol & Dean of St Paul’s (London: Rivington, 1782), II, 676. cf. Bossy, op. cit., p.276: ‘But the hint of a popish school was enough to stir the Anglican authorities to action.’

7. cf. ‘Within the formal structures of education, especially schools, colleges and universities, the first task is to recover a sense of teaching as a vocation and genuine Christian ministry’ (James Hanvey, SJ, ‘Educating for the Kingdom’, The Month, April 1994, p.137). See Bossy, op. cit., pp.272-277, on the increase of catechetical work in the eighteenth century.


9. Ibid., p.408.


18. South Western Catholic History ed. by Aidan Bellenger (Bath: Downside Abbey, 1990), No.8, p.34; Post-Reformation Catholicism in Bath ed. by J. Anthony Williams (CRS, 1975), I, 59; Downside Review (1893), 12, 158-159. cf. the French émigré priest, M. Le Vivier, who on 10 July 1857 walked from Newport on the Isle of Wight to Swanbourne, a distance of thirteen miles, to say Mass and promised to do the same every Sunday (Bellenger, The French Exiled Clergy, Bath: Downside Abbey, 1986). The Benedictine, Dom John Birdsall, served Horton when he moved to Cheltenham in 1809. On the occasions he visited there he would set off from Cheltenham early in the morning and walk the whole way, a distance of over thirty miles (John Fendley, 'The Pastons of Horton' in Recusant History 22 (1995), 501-524 (p.513).

19. The development of Dowry Square began in 1727 as interest in the Hot Wells grew, and in 1744 the Anglican Bishop Butler approved the building of Dowry Chapel and the appointment of a curate. See Bishop Secker's Diocese Book, p.52. In 1746 a number of extensive lodging houses were built to accommodate visitors. See Latimer, op. cit., p.245.

20. Members of the Swymmer family, wealthy merchants, had held the office of mayor of Bristol on several occasions since William Swymmer was first elected in 1685.

21. Bishop Newton, like other bishops in the eighteenth century, was required to spend a good part of his time in London to fulfil his duties at Court and in Parliament. In any case he had a great affection for St Paul's Cathedral, of which he held a residentiaryship (he was later to become Dean), and it was his custom to spend only three or four months in the summer at Bristol, which he described as his 'little bishopric', no doubt because it was the poorest bishopric in the country and the income little more than £300 a year. See
The incident of the proposed Mass-house must therefore have taken place between September 1764, when Henry Swymmer became mayor of Bristol, and July 1765, when Grenville's ministry ended.

This was Sir Abraham Isaac Elton, JP, who lived in St James's Barton, a short distance from the Catholic chapel. His father, Sir Abraham Elton, former Mayor of Bristol, Member of Parliament and adversary of Bristol's Catholics in John Busby's day, had died in 1742. Members of the Elton family had been mayors of Bristol on six occasions since 1710.

An expression Newton uses more than once when speaking of Catholicism. cf. '... and if we would examine the doctrine of Popery, as it standeth distinguished from our common Christianity ...' (Dissertation No.54).

One of the tasks the diligent Bishop Secker had set himself during his few years in Bristol was to draw up an account of all the leases and estates belonging to the bishopric.

Catholics in general were law-abiding citizens; in any event prudence dictated that they should go about their business in a quiet, orderly way. cf. 'We have probable grounds to believe that the Roman Catholics meet sometimes for their service in a house in the parish, but they are civil, quiet, and peaceable.' (From the Return of Popish recusants for the county and city of Oxford, and referring to the parish of Somerton). See Foley, op. cit., vol.5, p.945.

Newton, op. cit., l, pp.88,89.

Foley, op. cit., Series XII, p.395.


Newton, op. cit., l, Appendix No.1 (unpaged).

Newton, op. cit., II, 672-674.

Ibid., p.672.

Ibid., pp.673-674.

Richard Challoner, A caveat against Methodists. Shewing how unsafe it is for any Christian to join himself to their society, or to adhere to their teachers (London: Cooper, 1760).

Archbishop Secker's precise and formal manner probably gained him few friends at Court, for he does not seem to have had the influence there his office merited. cf. Bishop Newton's complaint that by degrees ministers of state had engrossed powers of ecclesiastical preferment into their own hands 'and Bishops are regarded as little better than cyphers', unless the preferments
happened to be in their own gift (op. cit, vol.1, p.89).


37. Ibid., p.671. He is echoing St Paul's words to the Corinthians (I,IX,22), as was Ignatius Loyola ('omnia omnibus factus sum') when he advised his followers, Salmerón and Broët, how they should conduct themselves on their visit to Ireland in 1541. Perhaps Newton is alluding to this too.

38. Newton, op. cit., ll, 620.


40. Conybeare, op. cit., ll, 526.


42. ABPSJ, Old College of St Francis Xavier, Part lll, Accounts ff. 13,43.

43. Ibid., f.159.

44. Ibid., ff. 156,157,159,161.

45. See J.A. Williams, Bath and Rome (Bath: St John's, 1963), p.73. In 1757 Fr Scudamore was also able to supply (no doubt through his wine merchants at Bristol) the Bell-Tree House at Bath with '3 dozen of genuine Spanish wine' (Williams, Catholicism in Bath, 2 vols (C.R.S., 1975), l, 19.

46. ABPSJ, Old College of St Francis Xavier, Part lll, Accounts f.161.

47. Ibid., Document 1.

48. Ibid., f.49.

49. Ibid., Accounts ff.156,157.


51. Ibid., p.153.

52. See Edwards, op. cit., pp.124-125. Philip Carteret, the English provincial, protested: 'We have nevertheless been aspersed among the Catholics here as if superiors tolerated the greatest excesses in their subjects, refusing to correct them, though admonished thereof by their respective Apostolic Vicars.'

53. Until the restoration of the Catholic hierarchy in 1850 by Pope Pius IX, it was the practice for the vicars apostolic in the Western District to be appointed from the regular clergy. With the exception of Bishop Charles Baggs (1844-1846), who was a secular priest, all the vicars apostolic of the Western District were Benedictines or Franciscans.

55. Foley, *op. cit.*, VII, pp.cxxxvi-cxxxviii. 'At Mr John Rowe's', i.e. at Leighland, in Somerset.

56. Foley, *op. cit.*, VII, 243,244.

57. Thomas Falkner's geography of Patagonia also contained particulars relating to the Falklands and a map 'engraved by Mr Kitchen, Hydrographer to the King'. It was printed in 1744 by Pugh of Hereford and sold by Lewis of Russell Street, Covent Garden (Foley, *op. cit.*, IV, 565). There was an American edition in 1935: *Thomas Falkner SJ: A Description of Patagonia and the Adjoining Parts of South America*, ed. by Arthur E.S. Neumann (Chicago: Arman, 1935). It is reviewed by Lesmes Frias, SJ, in *AHSI.*, vol. 6, 1937, pp.128-129.


60. a) In the Bristol Record Office there are copies of two important articles on the Acadians in Britain, published in Canadian journals, to which I am indebted: Dorothy Vinter, 'The Acadian Exiles in England 1756-1776', in *The Dalhousie Review*, 36 (1957) 344-353, reprinted in *La Société Historique Acadienne*, 3 (1971); and Naomi Griffiths, 'Acadians in Exile: the experiences of the Acadians in the British seaports', in *Acadiensis*, 4 (1974). Vinter's sources are mainly Admiralty papers and *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*. Griffiths is less focused on Bristol; she too draws on Admiralty papers and on records to be found in French provincial archives.

   b) 'Acadian pert. to Nova Scotia. Acadia, latinized form of Acadie, name (of unkn. origin) given by the French in 1603 to part of the mainland of N. America' (*OED of Etymology*). 'Fr. Acadie, Nova Scotia - Micmac Indian akade abundance' (*Chambers Dictionary*).

   Today the lands which the Acadians' ancestors first settled form New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and part of the state of Maine. See Griffiths, *op. cit.*, p.67.

61. Vinter is mistaken in saying that the Acadians landed at Bristol on 26 June 1756 (*La Société Historique Acadienne*, p.398). This was the day on which *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal* published the news of their arrival and subsequent developments. The more likely date is 19 June 1756.

62. BRL, *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*, 22 May 1756, reports how the Principal King at Arms read out 'His Majesty's Declaration of War against the French King' at St James's Palace while 'his Majesty [George II] appeared with his sword drawn at the window of the room over the gateway'. At one point the
declaration referred directly to the Acadians' homeland, speaking of 'the usurpations and encroachments made ... upon our territories ... particularly in our province of Nova Scotia'.

63. BRO, Griffiths, op. cit., p.69.

64. Latimer in his *Annals of Bristol* writes of the declaration of war with France in May 1756 and later of the 1,100 French prisoners of war at Knowle, Bristol, and the efforts made by the corporation and citizens to relieve their distress (II, 339), but makes no mention of the French Neutrals.

65. Vinter spells it 'Guigner', Griffiths 'Guiguer'.

66. BRO, Griffiths, op. cit., p.77.


68. cf. the French Neutrals who had landed at Falmouth and were housed at first in makeshift quarters at a farm near Penrhyn. They declared themselves 'well situated' and requested that a priest should attend them (Vinter, op. cit., p.404).


70. *Ibid.*, pp. 77, 78, and Vinter, op. cit., p.404. cf. the Falmouth contingent, who by 1762 were living in middle-class houses, whilst the younger ones had secured apprenticeships and had adopted English ways.

71. cf. *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*, 19 June 1756, which reported the Indians of St John's, New Brunswick, as having smallpox: 'The Penobscots brought it amongst them, which tribe is now almost reduced to nothing.' This is about the time of the Acadians' arrival in Bristol and the other seaports in England.


74. M. de la Rochette, the French Ambassador's secret agent, gave a higher number (184) surviving in Bristol. The drop in numbers amongst the other groups of French Neutrals between the years 1756 and 1762 was: Liverpool 242 to 215; Southampton 293 to 220; Falmouth 250 to 153 (Vinter, op. cit., p.405).

75. BRL, *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*, 6 November 1756.


77. Griffiths, op. cit., p.74.
78. BRL, Felix Farley’s Bristol Journal, 21 May 1763. Vinter says they were sent in waggons to Shirehampton, near Bristol, and from there sailed to Southampton.

79. No Acadian is thought to have remained in Bristol after 1763. A few families stayed in Brittany, two or three went to New Brunswick or Quebec, and three or four returned to Nova Scotia, but the great majority of the Acadians who had been in Bristol finally emigrated to Louisiana, where the name Acadian became corrupted to Cajun. (For this note and the information on marriages and baptisms I am indebted to Dr Paul Delaney of Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada, with whom I was in correspondence. Dr Delaney has made a special study of the Acadians of Nova Scotia and has placed copies of the two articles by Vinter and Griffiths in the Bristol Record Office.)


81. I have used the English translation of the Papal Brief given as an appendix in Constitutiones Societatis Iesu, 1558, reprinted from the original edition by J.G. and F.Rivington, London, 1838.

82. Ibid., p.114.

83. The Hornyold family of Blackmore Park and Hanley Castle was one of the foremost Catholic families from the time of the Reformation (motto Fidem Tene). It was not a family with special links with the Jesuits and there were only two members who joined the Society up to 1883. See Hornyold Pedigree, Foley, op. cit., VII, 1392.

84. Foley, op. cit., V, 539n. In a warm, sympathetic reply Bishop Hornyold stated that he wished the Jesuits to deal with their temporalities as before, remarking: ‘... avarice [on the part of their opponents] has been the cause of all the dark and dismal scenes that have been enacted there [at Bruges] and elsewhere.’

85. The term ‘ex-Jesuits’ was widely used after 1773 though many Jesuits found it unsatisfactory, doubtless disliking the connotation, and even ambiguity. cf. the adjective preferred by Geoffrey Holt, SJ, in the title of his book, William Strickland and the Suppressed Jesuits (London, British Province of the Society of Jesus, 1988).

86. ABPSJ, Old College of St Francis Xavier 1723-1847, Part 1, Documents 34, 37, 105.

87. ABPSJ, Varia 1706-1815. Parts of the letter are illegible.

The Rev. Thomas Butler, alias Thompson, to whom the letter was addressed,
died four months later. His younger brother, the Hon. John Butler, also an ex-Jesuit, was in the same year (1778) nominated to the bishopric of Limerick which he declined. When his father, Baron Caher, died in 1786 he succeeded to the title, but unfortunately two weeks later, on 20 June, he himself died. He thus had the unusual distinction of being a peer for a fortnight.

88. ABPSJ, Old College of St Francis Xavier, Part III, Scudamore to Butler, 2 April 1778. Fr Scudamore was near death and to speed his letter on its way he added to the address: 'Turn at Gloucester.'

89. Oliver, op. cit., p.408.

90. ABPSJ, Old College of St Francis Xavier 1743-1847, Part 1, Documents 4,5. Some fifty items are listed, e.g. 'for doing up the garden'. The lawyer's signature is illegible.
CHAPTER III
The Gordon Riots of 1780
and the Initiatives for a New Catholic Church

3.1 The Gordon Riots and Bristol

In 1777, some months before his death, the ailing John Scudamore was given a socius in the person of a thirty-eight year old ex-Jesuit, Jean Baptiste de la Fontaine, originally a member of the French province of the Society of Jesus who in about 1764 had joined the English province on the suppression of the Jesuits in France.

He was known to his flock (as he had been at his previous missions in Norfolk and Suffolk), as Fr John Fountain, a name he had adopted at the Liège Academy preparatory to setting out for England in July 1768. It was something about which his fellow Jesuit, Pierre-Joseph de Clorivièrè (who himself had taken the name Rivers), spoke lyrically in a letter to his friend, Charles Fleury (Forrester), in 1767. He thought Fontaine's new name most apposite:

You are called Forrester and I am called Rivers... I cannot yet leave this chapter [letter] without mentioning that [name] of Fountain. The limpidity, clearness and quiet of a fountain agrees so well with the character of our friend, which I love most dearly, and now more than ever that every one, I think, must perceive the conveniency. ¹

De Clorivièrè was convinced at the time that Fountain was destined to serve in China:
‘There he will find the Lord. And these words shall be verified of him fons aquae salientis in vitam aeternam.’ ²

Fontaine had been in Bristol little more than three years when a series of dramatic events, originating outside the city, led to his premature departure. In 1778 a measure was passed for the relief of Catholics, enabling them for the first time
(provided they took an oath of allegiance to the Crown, which had been so drafted as to be acceptable to them) to purchase land legally and keep schools, and which removed the threat of persecution from their priests. Although the act was limited (Catholics were not granted complete freedom to worship until the Relief Act of 1791), it was fiercely opposed by Protestant extremists led by Lord George Gordon who raised petitions and then turned to violence. Trouble had first occurred the previous year in Edinburgh and Glasgow, but the most serious disturbances took place in June 1780 when rioters took to the streets of London in an effort to compel parliament to repeal the bill. The terror of the tumult over several days, during which many buildings were burned and 285 people killed, was not confined to the capital: there were consequences for other cities too.

Disturbances erupted at Birmingham, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Norwich and Hull while, in the Western District, Bristol, Hereford and Shrewsbury prepared for outbreaks of violence. At Bath, on 9 June, mobs destroyed the Catholic chapel and set fire to five adjoining houses. Archives of the Western District were lost when Bishop Walmesley's manuscripts and library were destroyed. It was the worst disturbance outside the capital and caused great alarm in neighbouring Bristol, just ten miles away. In his book, Anti-Catholicism in 18th-Century England, Colin Haydon remarks that although the disturbances of 1780 were far less geographically confined than is generally supposed, in the event, many of the concerns felt about other districts proved to be unfounded. My own study confirms that this was true of Bristol. When on the day following the turmoil at Bath it seemed that the rioters were preparing to attack targets at Bristol also, the authorities acted quickly. Volunteers and constables guarded the Catholic chapel at St James's Back, and the
CHARLES WALMESLEY, O.S.B.
Vicar Apostolic, 1770-1797
Duke of Beaufort took charge of the militia, while the magistrates let it be known they were at hand, day and night, to deal firmly with breaches of the peace. When the possibility of danger had passed (on 12 June the Duke of Beaufort wrote to the authorities in London stating that all was quiet in Bristol), the owner of the building in which the chapel was housed announced plans to alter it and put it to some other use, thus removing 'any pretence of evil-disposed persons to destroy the same'. But as the days went by the Catholic community found itself able to use the building as before.

At this time of turmoil Catholics were advised by their bishops to act with calm and resignation. In a letter to his clergy on 12 June, Bishop Walmesley of the Western District required them to preach and enforce to the people committed to their care the principles of Christianity:

Let us keep an inviolable peace in ourselves, bearing with patience whatever calamities have happened or may happen to us, showing no resentment or revenge, but submitting all to the will and direction of the all-powerful and all-bountiful Being.8

The following month the bishop, in acknowledging 'the great humanity of Government' towards them and the 'extraordinary favour' newly granted to them by Act of Parliament, was again urging prudence and advising Catholic congregations to avoid what might tend to raise disputes or give offence. At their services Catholics were, as loyal citizens, to offer up their 'fervent' prayers to the Almighty for their 'most gracious Sovereign King George III' and members of the royal family.9

As a foreigner and an ex-Jesuit (the Society had been suppressed in 1773) John Fontaine seemingly felt himself in particular danger and left the city. He was doubtless alarmed by the fate that had befallen Dom John Brewer, the priest at Bath, where Fanney Burney, the novelist, had witnessed the rioting:

- 88 -
The new Roman Catholic chapel in this town was set on fire about nine o'clock [on 9 June]. It is now burning with a fury that is dreadful, and the house of the priest belonging to it is in flames also. The poor persecuted man himself has, I believe, escaped with his life, though pelted, followed and ill-used.¹⁰

A letter from Fr Robert Plowden recalls the occasion when shortly afterwards Fontaine took action to avoid a similar fate: 'After the frights of the year 1780 ... Mr Jean Fontaine fled to Wardour.'¹¹ It was, ironically, a place which at the height of the disturbances considered itself under threat from the Bristol mob.¹² Plowden offers no explanation for Fontaine choosing Wardour as his haven, but in addition to the protection the influential Arundell family could give him it is not unreasonable to suppose Fontaine particularly welcomed at that time the companionship of their chaplain, Charles Forrester - his old Jesuit friend and French compatriot, Charles Fleury.

It seems that in later years Fontaine showed a talent for writing for he is said to have been the author of several religious works. He finally settled in Norfolk as chaplain to a group of nuns (and from time to time still sought Bishop Walmesley's advice), and died in Paris on 29 March 1821 at the age of eighty-two.¹³ Over thirty years after Fontaine had left the city a member of the Bristol Catholic congregation, Cornelius Hayes, writing to Bishop Collingridge, observed: 'I am old enough my Lord to remember the great influence the deportment of the Rev. Mr Fontaine had on the public mind here; his sanctity of manners endear'd him to all.'¹⁴

Another victim of anti-Catholic sentiment in the city at this time was Bristol's distinguished Member of Parliament, Edmund Burke, who after the dissolution in September 1780 withdrew from the subsequent election and did not contest the seat. Amongst the factors convincing him of the hopelessness of his candidature was his
awareness of Protestant feeling in the city at his support for measures to remove the disqualifications previously imposed on Roman Catholics. Thus a man of distinction was lost to the city. It is interesting that in 1997 on the bicentenary of his death, Michael Portillo, the politician, went so far as to observe when reviewing two new studies of Burke’s life and work: ‘Since his death, in 1797, Burke’s writings have served to fashion a British view of moral justice, of Britain’s place in the world, of checks and balances, of rights and safeguards. His influence is all pervasive.’

Yet one other serious consequence of the riots in Bath was the destruction of most of the records of the Western District. There is evidence that John Fontaine was helpful to Bishop Walmesley in restocking his ravaged library at Bath. He sent him three books - the first volume of the works of St Epiphanius, the first volume of Cornelius a Lapide, and a book of St Cyprian’s writings. Fr Fontaine promised to send the bishop other volumes of Cornelius and assured him he was welcome to use the books until they were essential for his own purposes.

Although his stay in Bristol was short, John Fontaine is remembered as the first priest to keep a register of births and baptisms of Catholics in the city. On the front flyleaf of the first of these books (now held at the Bristol Record Office) is written: ‘1777. A Catalogue of the Christenings performed in the Catholic Congregation of Bristol Somersetsh [sic] by me John Fountain their Pastor’. The first entry, dated 7 December 1777, records the baptism and death of William Bromley, and there then follow 177 registrations until the date, 24 December 1780, by which time Fontaine had left the city; the records were then continued by his successors.

The first three years of the register show a substantial number of Irish names but only a sprinkling of Welsh, suggesting that few of the Welsh people living in
Bristol (a not inconsiderable number as we can see from Sketchley’s Directory for 1775) were Catholic. Elizabeth Ranquetti and Peter Donatti are the only foreign names. 19

3.2 A Period of Recovery

In the winter of 1780 Thomas Brewer, another ex-Jesuit, arrived in Bristol as Fontaine’s successor. He was the younger brother of Fr John Brewer, also a Jesuit, who in 1765 had established a mission at Shepton Mallet in Somerset and who, according to Fr Robert Plowden, had originally been destined to succeed John Scudamore in Bristol, though after the suppression of the Society he had thought it proper to remain where he was. 20

The Brewer family of Fishwick Hall, near Preston, was of considerable antiquity and had estates in the adjoining township of Ribbleton and also at Newton-with-Scoles. 21 It adhered firmly to the Catholic faith and produced many who entered the religious life as Jesuits or Benedictines. Thomas’s formation as a Jesuit priest had followed traditional lines - St Omer’s College, Liège Academy and Ghent, and then teaching at Bruges. At the period of the suppression he was a member of the College of St Aloysius, serving in the Lancashire District at the ancient Jesuit mission of Lydiate. He remained there for eight years before his posting in 1780 to Bristol at the age of thirty-seven.

A few months before Brewer’s arrival Bishop Walmesley had written on 24 October 1780 to Fr William Hall (not a Jesuit) welcoming him as the new missioner at Hatherop in Gloucestershire, a congregation of about forty communicants. In the guidelines he offered Hall we can see what he expected of the clergy in his district:
I hope you will be careful and diligent in attending your flock, even those who are at a distance and to get knowledge of them as soon as you can. On Sundays and Holy Days never fail of giving them due instructions which, in a little time will be, I hope of your own composition. Catechism in particular must never be omitted on the Sunday. It is a very essential article: and endeavour to explain it in the most clear and intelligible manner, and by that means it will be profitable both to the children and the upgrown people. Be assiduous in reading the Scriptures ... the moral and practical treatises of Divinity, and suitable books of spirituality.22

In 1784, four years after Thomas Brewer’s arrival in the city, the Anglican Bishop of Bristol, Christopher Wilson, carried out his first visitation and recorded the results in the Diocese Book that Bishop Secker had started in 1735. Little is known about Bishop Wilson, although when he died on 18 April 1792 the Bristol Journal observed that ‘though possessing the poorest bishopric of any in England [he] is said to have died the richest prelate on the list’.23 The last set of diocesan figures had been in 1767, and over the intervening seventeen years there seems to have been a marked decrease in the number of papists living in the city. In St James’s parish, for example, the numbers recorded had fallen from 53 to ‘about 20’, and in St Philip’s and St Jacob’s from 47 to 10, although Bishop Wilson had added the word ‘increasing’. But the most dramatic change is seen in St Stephen’s parish, where ‘some 100’s’ had been living in 1767, but apparently a mere 18 in 1784. We hear too of the chapel on St James’s Back; after noting there were 20 papists in St Augustine’s parish, Bishop Wilson added: ‘Mass twice a week in St James’s Parish’. Elsewhere he noted there was Mass at the chapel on St James’s Back ‘every Sunday and Saints days’.24 We have another specific reference to the Catholic chapel two years later, again on the occasion of a visitation, but this time by the Catholic vicar apostolic, Bishop Walmesley - and suggesting greater numbers: ‘I confirmed at Bristol 30 persons May 30, 1786. Mr Brewer [Thomas] there told me at the same
time that his congregation consisted he supposed of 1500 persons, men, women, and children.**25**

John Fontaine, concerned at the inadequacy of the old chapel at St James's Back, had entertained the possibility of building a new one and had obtained a licence from the bishop 'for begging'.**26** Some money had been raised which his successors were able to put towards the new building. A Mrs Mary Little, for instance, a member of his congregation, donated £200, and she was later remembered on every 21 June in an anniversary Mass at the new St Joseph's Chapel opened in 1790.

In Thomas Brewer, Bristol's Catholics had an energetic young priest eager to continue the fund-raising his predecessor had started. Certainly there seemed a pressing need to replace the old chapel as soon as possible, as we can see from the words of Frederick Charles Husenbeth who claimed to have been acquainted with the Bristol mission since 1786: 'The Rev. Thomas Brewer SJ used to officiate in a miserable room, in a still more miserable situation, within a dismal court called St James' Back.'**27** To build their own chapel was an exciting project for a community so long forbidden to own buildings which could be publicly designated Catholic churches, and Dr George Oliver later recalled a conversation he had with a 'most respectable gentleman'**28** resident in Bristol who had met the ex-Jesuits, James Parker (who had assisted at John Scudamore's funeral) and James Adams, and 'heard much conversation about the intended new chapel in Bristol and about the intentions of their Reverend Brethren'.**29** Years later James Parker in a letter to a Jesuit colleague, the Rev. Joseph Dunn, dated 12 April 1822, remembered those days:

The first £300 towards purchasing premises was collected by me, in company with the Rev. Thomas Brewer, then resident missionary of Bristol, in the streets of London. The Rev. Charles Neville, SJ, gave £300 also, for house and chapel; the Rev. James Adams, SJ,
Lodge Street. It had recently been built and bordered the newly-developed area to the right, in which St Joseph's Chapel was located. Trenchard Lane runs across the bottom of the street. The whole area was formerly part of the grounds of the Elizabethan Red Lodge (above).
contributed to the same, £200.\textsuperscript{30}

Thomas Brewer and his friends zealously continued to raise money to build a presbytery and chapel for the Catholic community. The site the ex-Jesuits were considering was a parcel of land within the boundaries, at that time, of Trenchard Lane, Stony Hill (later Park Row), Griffin Lane, and the recently-created Lodge Street - an area more readily identified today as just behind Bristol's leading concert theatre, the Colston Hall. Land was bought from Robert Bayley and by the time of Thomas Brewer's early death on 16 April 1787 at the age of forty-three the foundations of the building were laid, and the walls in part erected.\textsuperscript{31} But the whole project had thrown up a problem which was later, for a while, to bedevil the relationship between priest and congregation.

There were other tasks which compelled Fr Brewer's absence from Bristol. The responsibility the Jesuits had undertaken for the Catholics in South Wales (assumed in Fr Scudamore's time), meant his going there several times a year. The dutiful Brewer was accustomed to journeying as far even as Haverfordwest, to minister to a family living there, but by degrees he induced them to come and reside in Bristol; till his death he always went as far as Cowbridge, in Glamorgan. At first he made these journeys four times a year, but Bishop Walmesley allowed him to reduce them to three.\textsuperscript{32}

In his absence from Bristol his brother, John, another ex-Jesuit, often deputised for him, having made suitable arrangements for his own, smaller flock at Shepton Mallet. John Brewer, who survived his younger brother by ten years, felt close ties with Bristol and was a liberal contributor to the building-fund.\textsuperscript{33}

The bishop's pastoral letter which Fr Thomas Brewer read to his congregation
at St James’s Back at the beginning of March 1783 dealt with the Lenten fast they were about to observe. Acknowledging that provisions at the time were scarce and dear (Latimer, the Bristol annalist, reports there had been severe frost) the bishop judged it expedient to relax some of the strict rules, though with much reluctance:

These calamities ought [the rather] to be looked upon as punishments sent by the Almighty for the present irreligion and immorality of mankind, and consequently should be a motive for stricter fasting, in order to appease and avert the Divine wrath. 3a

But Thomas Brewer would have approved the mitigation: stern asceticism was not part of the Jesuit tradition. Ignatius Loyola, who as a pilgrim had subjected himself to severe physical hardship, came to regard such conduct as folly and always counselled moderation. He expected men who wished to join the Society to be fit for the arduous duty of missioner and he was opposed to the stern rules of fasting and penance observed by other orders. ‘You must not allow your body to grow weak. If you do, the interior man cannot function properly,’ he once said. 35 The short chapter in the Constitutions of the Society headed ‘Of the Superintendance of the Body’ formally expressed this thinking: ‘The castigation of the body should neither be immoderate nor indiscreet in vigils, fastings, and other external penances and labours, which usually do harm, and hinder better things.’ 36

The bishop’s Lenten pastoral contained further strictures. The ‘unwarrantable custom of card-playing upon Sundays’ was scandalous and must cease forthwith, and (something of particular interest to Bristolians, whose Theatre Royal was barely seventeen years old) Catholics should ‘break off the practice of going to the Stage’:

The Stage is the school of corruption and the nursery of vice. The Plays there exhibited are known to be of such a nature as to make bad impressions on the mind, and to inflame the passions. They are therefore pernicious, and tend to lead the heart into viciousness. What person then, possessed with a sense of virtue, can presume to be
William Strickland by G. Romney
present at such entertainments, or suffer those who are under their care to go to them? 37

Since the suppression of their society in 1773 the ex-Jesuits in England had attempted to maintain their organisation as a body. The provincial at the time had been the quiet and unassuming Thomas More (brother of Christopher, the missioner at Bath) and when leading ex-Jesuits, representing the different colleges, finally met in April 1776 to consider their position he was persuaded by his brethren to continue in a new role - that of administrator of a central office for which he was to be paid a salary of £100 per year. Each ex-Jesuit was to receive a pension. Those ex-Jesuits working in London, Derby, Suffolk, Hampshire and Lincoln were to subsidize their colleagues in the poorer districts of Durham, Worcester, Yorkshire and Devonshire.

When the representatives met again at the Queen's Head Tavern in Holborn in July 1784 a new leader came to the fore. Thomas More felt unable to accept another term and William Strickland, who had assumed responsibility for the academy at Liège (the only establishment of the English ex-Jesuits on the Continent to survive the suppression, saved by the independent prince bishop), 38 now volunteered his services as administrator. 39 He was voted an annual salary of £150, and for the next thirty years worked vigorously to revive the Society's affairs and to be a force for cohesion at a time when ex-Jesuits, now secular priests, were no longer constrained by vows of poverty and obedience to their old superiors. 40 He was also to become involved in bitter disputes with Fr Robert Plowden, Brewer's successor in Bristol.

At this period of the suppression the Liège academy, staffed by ex-Jesuits and providing seminary priests, stood as a potent symbol of the possibility of Jesuit renewal, though we may note in passing that Bishop Walmesley of the Western District saw little prospect of this. The pessimistic fatalism which he increasingly
came to feel about the progress of events - though it never affected his strength of
purpose - is seen in his correspondence in 1782 with his friend, Thomas Weld of
Lulworth Castle:

The times with respect to Irreligion, though so bad at present, will, I
apprehend, go gradually worse and worse... With regard to Religious
Orders, while in former ages Princes and rich persons were zealous in
instituting and raising them up, now the spirit of abolition prevails ... and in progress of time I suppose there will not be one Religious
Order remaining. 41

But Strickland was determined the English ex-Jesuits should hold their ground, and
having re-established the reputation of the Liège Academy he returned to London to
devote himself full-time to the administration of the ‘Office’, a post he held for some
thirty-five years.

On 11 September 1786, Bishop Walmesley wrote to Strickland advising him
of the needs of his brethren in the different missions of the Western District: ‘At
Plymouth the congregation is pretty numerous, but all poor, having a most miserable
wretched chapel in a horrible garret.’ 42 A fortnight later he was corresponding with
him again:

The congregation [at Plymouth] consists of about 50, mostly common
labourers or publicans at Plymouth Dock... With regard to the
maintenance of an incumbent in those places, I think that according to
the tenour of the times it should be about £80 per an. To keep house,
provide the chapel, take care of repairs and give little charities to the
poor, he could not do with less. 43

In the same year Walmesley was reporting that William Horne, the ex-Jesuit
at Sarnesfield near Leominster, had a congregation of about eighty and was paid £20
per annum, his board and the keeping of a horse. At Stapehill, near Bournemouth,
the ex-Jesuit priest, James Porter, had £20 per annum from Lord Arundel, £20 per
annum from the Society, and £50 per annum of his own. 44 On another occasion
Walmesley reported to his coadjutor, Bishop Sharrock: ‘The person [an ex-Jesuit] who attends Plimouth [sic], chiefly subsists upon a very small fund.’ Bishop Walmesley himself lived in comparatively modest circumstances: earlier in the year he had informed his coadjutor that the owner of his residence, Bell-Tree House in Bath, wished to take possession of it and accordingly he had taken a small house at No.8 Chapel Row, sufficient for himself, man and maid, with a small room for a chapel. He thought it would be useful to have his coadjutor near him at Bath, but Bishop Sharrock, saying he could not afford to live there, remained at Monmouth.

Now that there were clear signs of religious tolerance in the country at large, the resolve of the Catholics in Bristol and elsewhere to build their own churches was strengthened. The ex-Jesuits at this time were in fact building some of the earliest Catholic churches in the country. In the Western District a chapel was built at Hereford in 1790 by Fr William Horne, and in the following year it was granted a certificate ‘as a public chapel or place of worship for the exercise of the Popish religion’. In the south-west the foundation stone of a chapel in Exeter was laid in 1790 upon part of the site of the old priory of St Nicholas, and Mass was first celebrated there in 1792. Catholics in Plymouth, however, had to wait until 1806 before the ‘most miserable wretched chapel in a horrible garret’, as Bishop Walmesley had described it after his visitation (it was, in fact, a room over a stable in the back of the George Inn, Devonport), was replaced by a public chapel. Other Catholic churches were opened in towns such as Liverpool, St Helens, Preston, Worcester and Bury St Edmunds, as well as in lesser-known places. But it was Bristol’s chapel which was to become a particular subject of controversy and the focus of much interest.
Less than a week after Thomas Brewer's death Bishop Walmesley received a letter signed by twenty-two of the Catholic community in Bristol raising troublesome new issues. His Lordship, they said, should not appoint a successor in Bristol without consulting the body of Catholics:

Great uneasinesses have for some time prevailed among the people owing to the collections and contributions raised among them being disposed of without their concurrence, approbation or consent... We are frequently visited at our place of worship as well as at our private houses by men of respectable character of different persuasions and it is essentially necessary for the salvation of our own souls as well as the salutary effects it may work on others to have a clergyman that may be learned and eloquent in his discourse, easy and unaffected in his deportment, and discreet and affable in his manners.  

If, said the writers, his lordship would give directions on the business, it would remove 'every species of jealousy, animosity or dispute', and if he agreed to their request they promised that whoever was appointed they would support 'genteely'.

It was the voice of an urban Catholic community which had contributed money (though in reality it could not have been much) towards the building of their church and felt in consequence a right to speak in its affairs. Unlike a more widely-dispersed rural congregation, dependent most likely on the patronage and protection of Catholic gentry, they were able to articulate their own concerns as a body. They had, too, as their exemplars - and this was particularly so in Bristol where nonconformism had taken strong root - congregations deeply involved in the organisation and development of their own churches. It was a development in which Lord Petre, so often the leading spokesman for the Catholic gentry, saw advantages for the laity in both town and country. A few years later, when the building of new Catholic churches was growing apace, he responded to Bishop Sharrock's appeal for funds for a new chapel at Monmouth:
The collecting of the Catholics into towns in place of straggling missions has always been a measure much recommended by me. On these, now legal establishments, the Catholic religion must ultimately depend. The middling classes will find themselves more independent, and the Gentlemen will feel themselves at liberty to consult their own convenience in the expense attending chaplains.\textsuperscript{51}

But whatever the merits of the argument, lay control of a church was not part of the Jesuit tradition and the situation at Bristol remained a problem for Thomas Brewer’s successor to deal with.

For some months in 1787 an interregnum followed Brewer’s death during which his brother, John, the priest at Shepton Mallet, also assumed responsibility in Bristol. Spring passed into summer and Bishop Walmesley was disturbed that he had not heard from William Strickland, the ex-Jesuits’ agent, about a successor for the Bristol mission. Writing on 3 August 1787 to his coadjutor, Bishop Sharrock, he remarked: ‘Mr Strickland has not yet provided me with one for Bristol, which causes me great uneasiness.’\textsuperscript{52}

It was to be another two months before the ex-Jesuit whom Strickland finally proposed to Walmesley set out for Bristol from Arlington Court deep in the North Devon countryside, where he had been chaplain to the Chichesters. He was Robert Plowden, a member of one of the oldest Catholic families in the land, and one which over the generations had provided many sons for the Society of Jesus. At his first interview with Walmesley, Plowden was invited to begin the building of the chapel but was reluctant to take up the post, aware of the squabbles taking place. But, he said, the bishop ‘in a manner forced me to go there seeing that the place had been served by Jesuits’.\textsuperscript{53} Walmesley, however, was doubtful if Plowden would stay long:

Mr Plowden went down yesterday to Bristol to take charge of that
place, but he seemed to be uneasy about the management of the temporal concerns there, that I am much afraid he will scarcely be prevailed upon to remain there.\textsuperscript{54}

Robert Plowden arrived in Bristol on 25 October 1787, and over the next twenty-eight years he was to become one of the most distinguished of the priests to serve there. Without doubt he was the most controversial.
NOTES TO CHAPTER III

1. *AHSI*, (Rome: Institutum Historicum SI, 1992), XLI, 154. This volume contains the forty-six letters of ‘La Correspondance de Pierre-Joseph de Clorivière, SJ, à Charles Fleury, SJ de 1759 à 1815’. There are occasional expressions of regard for their compatriot, John Fountain, throughout.


3. It is likely that in the West Country the Protestant Associations at Bristol and Bath attempted to raise petitions but they were never presented, although one was sent from Plymouth. See Colin Haydon, *Anti-Catholicism in Eighteenth-Century England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), pp.209-210n.


8. CDA, *Correspondence 1772-1788*, Walmesley to Clergy, 12 June 1780.

9. CDA, *op. cit.*, Walmesley to Clergy, 3 July 1780.


12. ‘Oral tradition has it that it came from the mob at Bristol’ (Caraman, *op. cit.*, p.17). The Jesuits have served at Wardour since the time of Elizabeth; it is the oldest Catholic church in the Clifton diocese.

14. CDA, Correspondence 1815, Hayes to Collingridge, 25 March 1815.


16. Bishop Walmesley to Bishop Sharrock: ‘My library was destroyed’ (CDA, op. cit., 5 October 1782). Again: ‘... but my papers giving an account of these and other things were burnt by the Rioters in Bath, June 9th 1780.’ (CDA, op. cit., Visitation to Stourton, near Bath, 1781).

17. CDA, Correspondence 1789-1790, Fontaine to Walmesley, 15 October 1780; Walmesley to Fontaine, 5 December 1780.

18. BRO and CRS III (1906), 182-193.

19. BRO.

20. ABPSJ, Old College of St Francis Xavier 1743-1847, Part I, f.115.


22. CDA, op. cit., Walmesley to Hall, 24 October 1780.

23. BRL, Felix Farley's Bristol Journal, 25 April 1792: ‘The prebendal stall of Finsbury in St Paul's Cathedral alone provided him with £1500 a year.’


25. CDA, op. cit., 30 May 1786. Bishop Walmesley's Visitations, f.40. The indexer of this volume of correspondence at the Clifton Archives incorrectly identifies the ‘Mr Brewer’ as John Brewer of Shepton Mallet with the result that the mistake is inadvertently repeated by others. (See J.A. Williams in Bath and Rome: The Living Link (Bath: St John's, 1963), p.56). The date in Bishop Walmesley's note shows that ‘Mr Brewer’ at Bristol was, in fact, John's younger brother, Thomas, who was priest at Bristol from 1780 until his death on 16 or 18 April 1787. cf. Bishop Walmesley's remark to William Strickland on 9 April 1787: ‘Mr Brewer of Bristol, who was lately with you and has since been with me …’ (CDA, Correspondence 1772-1788, f.56). John Brewer of Shepton Mallet served at Bristol during the six months of the interregnum between Thomas's death in April 1787 and the arrival of Robert Plowden in October of that year.

27. BRO, C.D.A., Box 7, 35721, ‘Statement by Frederick Charles Husenbeth of Bristol re. Jesuits and Trenchard Street, 21 April 1840’. Husenbeth was a great admirer of the Jesuits and indignant at the way Plowden was later treated by Bishop Collingridge.

28. The unnamed ‘most respectable gentleman’ to whom Dr Oliver is referring and from whom he got his information is almost certainly Frederick Charles Husenbeth, who came to Bristol in 1786.

29. ABPSJ, Foley MS 5, p.133.

30. George Oliver, *Collections* etc. (London, 1857), p.109. A visit to the capital was clearly advisable if funds were to be raised. cf. Foley, *op. cit.*, V, 396n: ‘The first stone of St Wilfrid’s Church [Preston] was laid in 1793. Father Dunn was then in London, on a begging tour.’

31. ABPSJ, Foley MS 5, p.133.


33. There were about fourteen Catholics in the neighbourhood of Shepton Mallet, but John Brewer also attended the people at Stone Easton, Liford, Axminster and Wells, numbering some sixty or seventy in all. He died at Shepton Mallet of apoplexy in 1797. His remains were brought to Bristol and buried in St Joseph’s, the new Catholic chapel. He was also a benefactor to his own mission and the one at Exeter. See Foley, *op. cit.*, VII, 82.

34. CDA, *op. cit.*, Walmesley’s Lenten Pastoral, 1 March 1783. See Bossy, *op. cit.*, pp.110-121, on the importance in the English Catholic tradition of fasting.


37. CDA, *op. cit.*, Walmesley’s Lenten Pastoral, 1 March 1783.

38. At the suppression of their Society the English ex-Jesuits moved their school on the Continent from Bruges to Liège where they continued to train men for the priesthood. The prince of Liège, Mgr Francis Charles van Welbruck, was well disposed to them and in 1778 obtained from the new pope, Pius VI, a Brief enabling the academy to continue as a pontifical college. But he made no financial commitment to it.


CDA, op. cit., 6 January 1782. For further evidence of Bishop Walmsley's pessimistic fatalism see also his letter to Lady Arundell, 30 December 1791 (CDA, Correspondence 1791). After Walmsley's death John Preston, priest at Abergavenny, in a letter to the Rev. Pembridge remarked: 'I had once or twice heard in London that he [Walmsley] was of opinion that Antichrist is to be born some time towards the year 10 or 18 of the next century' (CDA, Correspondence 1798, April 1798).

CDA, Correspondence 1772-1788, Walmsley to Strickland, 11 September 1786.

Ibid., Walmsley to Strickland, 25 September 1786.

Ibid., 13 July 1788.

Ibid., Walmsley to Sharrock, 11 August 1787.

Ibid., 6 March 1786.

Bishop Walmsley said Bishop Sharrock's income of £110 a year would be insufficient to support him if he moved to Bath.

See Basset, op. cit.

Foley, op. cit., V, 895.

CDA, op. cit., 21 April 1787. Among the signatories were: Thomas Keefe, Patrick Forehan, Peter Haly, Will. Butler, Andrew Carew, Gabriel Stringer and Thos. Reading.

CDA, Correspondence 1791, Petre to Sharrock, 28 November 1791.

CDA, Correspondence 1772-1788, Walmsley to Sharrock, 3 August 1787.

ABPSJ, Foley MS 5, p.158.

CDA, op. cit., Walmsley to Sharrock, 26 October 1787.
4.1 **The Rivalry between the Laity and Regular Clergy**

In the eighteenth century the Plowdens were one of the three most prominent recusant families in Shropshire.¹ Robert was the sixth son of William Ignatius Plowden and his wife, the Hon. Frances Dormer, daughter of Lord Dormer of Buckinghamshire; there were, in all, fifteen children.² By the time of Robert’s birth on 16 January 1740 seven Plowdens of previous generations had entered the Society of Jesus and seven daughters had become nuns.³ He was sent at the age of eleven (doubtless with the encouragement of the Jesuit chaplain then at Plowden Hall, Fr John Parker) to St Omer’s College on the Continent, where his father had been before him.⁴ His mother had died when Robert was thirteen and, as though knowing he was destined for Holy Orders, in her will bequeathed him religious items including ‘my little Mass book, my wooden cross inlaid with mother of pearl, and a brass image of our Saviour upon it, and my picture of our Blessed Saviour on ye Cross, now in Mr Parker’s room at Plowden’.⁵

At the age of sixteen Plowden entered the Society of Jesus and began his novitiate at Watten. He studied theology at Liège and was eventually ordained priest on 7 October 1763. He remained on the Continent as confessor to the Teresian nuns (Discalced Carmelites) at Hoogstraten in Flanders. In 1769, his younger brother, Charles, later to become provincial of the Society, was engaged by Sir Thomas Gage of Coldham Hall, Suffolk, to accompany his eighteen year-old son, Tom, on a study
FATHER ROBERT PLOWDEN.
tour in Europe. Charles wrote regularly to Robert about the progress of their Grand Tour, at the same time conveying interesting news concerning the Society. Although the Brief for the suppression of the Jesuits in 1773 was promulgated swiftly, rumour and speculation about it had been rife for some years previously, and it was this information, seen as it were from the other side, that Charles was able to pass on to his brother. Early in 1771 he was reporting on Jesuit fortunes from Rome: ‘Our affairs still are likely to continue in the same fluctuating state in which they have long been. The world still thinks we are hovering between life and death.’ Later in the same year he pondered the question: ‘Will the Pope sacrifice the Society for the sake of better relations with Spain?’ He thought Clement would not. In October 1772, writing from France, he informed Robert that the Jesuits had been deprived of the English College in Rome: ‘News from Italy is bad,’ but then by way of encouragement added, ‘You know we have prophecies on our side.’ But suppression was only months away.

Robert Plowden had been on the Continent as student and priest some twenty-six years when in 1777 he took up his first post in England at Arlington, near Barnstaple, Devon, as chaplain to the Chichester family. Concerning one of his visitations to Cannington and Calverleigh near Tiverton in 1784 Bishop Walmesley remarked: ‘I was attended there by Mr Plowden of Arlington.’ The duty would have called for an all-round journey along country ways of some fifty miles; Plowden, like many chaplains of the Catholic gentry, also served several scattered congregations within his large ‘riding circuit’.

In the last decades of the eighteenth century various systems were adopted by the Catholic congregations of England for the management of the new town chapels,
particularly in Lancashire, although in the towns of the North-Eastern part of the country and in the Midlands (with the exception of Birmingham) the clergy were able to resist lay pressure for shared control. In London only at Warwick Street and St Patrick’s, Soho, did the laity have a predominant voice in the management of the chapels.¹¹

The origins of the problem confronting Plowden when he arrived at Bristol may be seen in an indignant letter which Fr John Brewer, the priest from Shepton Mallet temporarily in charge, had written from his brother’s house in Dighton Street to Bishop Walmesley on 30 April 1787, barely a fortnight after Thomas’s death:

This morning I have been waited upon by two Irishmen of this troublesome congregation, who told me they were deputed by the rest to demand certain papers relative to they really did not know what. One said they wanted the Title Deeds of the purchase that had been made of the house etc.; the other said, no: they wanted only the papers relative to the monies that had been laid out: that they might lay them before yr. Lordship, when they waited upon you, which they intended to do out of hand.¹²

So began one of the most determined attempts in the country by members of a Catholic congregation to assume lay control of their church; the struggle between priest and laity was to last for several years.

As Brewer saw the situation their intentions were clear: ‘They want to be men of consequence and to have the sole management of the House, Chapel etc.’ He refused to let the title deeds leave his possession and was exasperated to think that the malcontents, through their attorney, already had the deed of conveyance: ‘How my brother came to let them get hold of the Conveyance Deed I cannot tell; but they should never have had it out of my possession had I been the incumbent.’ He intended passing on all the relative documents to his successor and advised the bishop to give the troublemakers short shrift ‘or your Lordship and the incumbent, whoever
he may be, will be perpetually perplexed with them'.

Following this rebuff by their priest, four members of the Bristol congregation - John Keefe, Patrick Forehan, William Butler and James Mullowney - acted swiftly. On the same day as the meeting with John Brewer they came together, probably under the leadership of James Mullowney, a merchant, and wrote to Walmesley referring to 'the uneasinesses [a favourite word with their spokesman] that subsisted among the Catholics of this city', expressing a desire for a small deputation to wait on his Lordship the following Thursday, and requesting him to procure for our perusal and inspection such books, accounts, papers, conveyances and other documents as did or may relate to the old chapel, the house and ground purchased; amounts of Sunday collections and expenditures etc. the better to enable our giving the business a full investigation and fixing matters on a solid basis to prevent future murmur or complaint.

In a postscript they explained that they had earlier made a similar request to the Rev. Mr Brewer, but it was 'contemptuously refused'.

It was unlikely that Walmesley, a fair-minded man but by temperament fiercely opposed to any form of innovation, would look favourably on what he doubtless considered impertinent lay demands; he had moreover already been briefed by William Strickland vis-à-vis property the Jesuits considered their own. In a letter from his office at 22 Edgware Road, London, dated 19 January 1787, Strickland wrote:

> We considered, my Lord, the Society as our common parent and on the demise of that parent, we thought the property could descend nowhere with so great propriety as to the children of that parent... We consider ourselves at full liberty to convey it to such Trustees, Individuals or Bodies as we shall with impartiality judge will answer best the ends of its original intention.

Walmesley in reply said he could reasonably presume that a society distinguished for
GENTLEMEN, &c.

If these just and equitable Regulations meet your Approbation, as I confidently trust they will, I can desire no greater Reward for the small Endeavors I have used to promote your Service, than to be able under your Sanction, to propose to you for the Officers of the present Year, to be terminated at Michaelmas next, the two following respectable Gentlemen,

Mefirs. (THOMAS KEEFFE, Senior. CHARLES WAKEMAN.

I am with the most sincere Regard,

And earnest Wish of your general Welfare and Happiness,

Gentlemen, &c.

Your most obedient humble Servant,

ROBERT FLOWDEN.

BRISTOL, Nov. 28, 1787.

P. S. If any Gentleman, who hath contributed or promised to contribute to the intended Chapel and Buildings in Tranchard-Lane, should not be wholly satisfied with the above Plan of Regulations, as soon as the general Sense of the Congregation concerning the Appointment of the above-named Officers is known, and duly ascertained by waiting eight Days after the Nomination, they shall immediately upon commencing their Office, refund whatever Sum he has contributed, and at his own Desire strike his Names from the Congregation, hoping they shall thereby be utterly well satisfied in the peaceful Prosecution of their just and laudable Design.

Agreed to by
its long and constant labour in the service of religion would act in the disposal of its property with judgment and justice for the benefit of the missions, and 'upon that foundation the matter rests with me'.

Plowden had arrived in Bristol towards the end of October and in the following weeks worked hard to resolve the dispute with his congregation. He produced what he called a 'Plan of Regulations' and on 28 November 1787 printed it in the form of an address 'To the Gentry and others of the Catholic Congregation at Large, in and about the City of Bristol'. In it he stated his intention of having a copy made of a Deed of Trust relating to the property bought in Trenchard Lane which would be available for inspection, but the original, together with other essential papers, would be deposited in a strong box under the security of three different keys, 'one of which shall always be in the custody of the two yearly officers of the congregation now to be mentioned'. He then named Thomas Keeffe and Charles Wakeman as the two 'Officers or Churchwardens'.

So that there should be no misunderstanding as to their duties he listed them precisely. The churchwardens were to attend to the common course of business of the year, but particularly to what relates to the raising and expenditure of monies necessary for the Chapel rent, repairs, service of the altar, wine, candles, washing etc. They shall let out the benches for the gentlemen of the congregation and collect the rents of the same, for the common service; they shall pay quarterly a decent and honourable salary to the priest appointed and approved by the Bishop ... they shall keep a regular account in a Vestry book to be kept for that purpose.

The practice of 'seat rents' or paid sittings as a means of raising income for the payment of the clergy was widespread, both in England and on the Continent, and continued in some cases into the twentieth century. In the Catholic chapel at neighbouring Bath, for instance, the 'subscription' for a seat in the gallery was two
My Bro. 

I have just time to send you the printed regulations made for my congregation, the establishing of which has cost me greatly as much trouble as canvassing for a cornish borough or almost as much for the city of Bristol itself could have done. I cannot yet say, that I have completely carried my election. At present there are great appearances of unanimity, and of several violent opponents pulling into the substance of my scheme. As soon as all is settled, I shall have the liberty to apply to patron in favour of Bristol, and I hope as in all where.

Robert Plowden's letter to his brother, Charles, at Lulworth Castle.

(Jesuit Archives, London)
guineas a year and on the floor of the chapel half a guinea a year, while some years later Warwick Street Chapel in London, patronised by the Catholic aristocracy, came to be known as the 'shilling opera', arising from the price of the best seats and the excellence of the church music.²⁰

But Plowden's proposals specifically barred his churchwardens from engaging in what he termed 'extraordinary affairs', without first obtaining the written approbation of the priest - for example concerning themselves with plans for the house and chapel in Trenchard Lane, general contracts for the property, and in raising any sum of money necessary for completing the buildings. Describing the regulations as just and equitable Plowden then added a postscript offering to refund contributions to any person who did not approve of them. He had thus offered the dissenters, amongst whom he saw what he considered the 'levelling spirit prevailing', an active role, but had reserved to himself responsibility for major decisions, particularly concerning the ownership of the proposed chapel. Two weeks later he wrote to his brother, Charles, then at Lulworth Castle as chaplain to the Weld family, enclosing a copy of the document and expressing some satisfaction at the way it had been received but exclaiming that the affair had cost him a deal of effort, almost 'as much trouble as canvassing for a Cornish borough or even for the city of Bristol itself'.²²

Bossy points out that in Liverpool where the Jesuits were maintained by a congregational subscription there was a formal agreement between the congregation and the local Jesuit superior that trustees for the bench-holders should assess and collect the bench-rents, pay the priest and take control of the financial side of the mission. Bristol was more akin to Preston, however, where no matter who collected the bench-rents, the financial control of the chapel remained with the priest and the
chapel remained the property of the Jesuits. At least that is how the Jesuit authorities wished it to be, but we shall see later that Plowden, while adamant in claiming and exercising clerical control of the Bristol chapel, nevertheless saw fit later to vest ownership of it in his bishop, much to the anger of William Strickland, the ex-Jesuits' administrator in London.

The members of the self-appointed committee in Bristol were now in touch with their bishop, Charles Walmesley, remarking on the 'extraordinary conduct of [their] deceased pastor' (Thomas Brewer) and protesting that notwithstanding the bishop's assurance that when the new incumbent was settled in Bristol matters would be arranged to their satisfaction, Mr Plowden had in an underhand manner and without their knowledge got 'a parcel of names, mostly of the lower order of people, to his printed paper, and some ladies, non-residents unacquainted with the nature of our disputes'. They considered themselves slighted, neglected and unhandsomely dealt with by the bishop in that he approved of their priest's 'arbitrary system', and they announced their intention of buying land themselves and building a chapel on it. Moreover, they said, they would put their case in print, and send one copy to his Lordship 'and others to the Catholic Nobility and Gentry of Great Britain, Ireland, Spain etc. etc. [sic] when [they had] no doubt of meeting many friends'.

Before moving to the international stage, however, they presented Walmesley on 13 December 1787 with a petition signed by 343 people claiming that the subscriptions for building the intended chapel had been originally vested in the hands of a committee at a General Meeting of the principal Catholics of the city in the presence and with the sanction of the late Mr Brewer, and asking the bishop therefore to give sanction and effect to the plan laid down by the committee.
Walmsley's reply came two days later. There was no point in their building their own chapel as he could not approve one 'set up by a private party of persons in opposition to the chapel that is fixed for the whole congregation'. Besides, he would never allow any priest to minister there. He characterised their endeavours as unchristian and against the wishes of most of the congregation, which he felt entitled to say in view of the numbers who had signed their approval of Fr Plowden's plan.26

In the New Year he wrote to Plowden assuring him that his plan had his approbation and sanction, and 'desiring therefore to be no further notified about it'.27 But the dissidents held a trump card: the congregation had yet to agree the priest's salary. With great difficulty Plowden persuaded the wardens to call a meeting to settle the business, which they finally arranged for the evening of 2 July 1788. Little progress was made. The old arguments were rehearsed once more, the sticking point again being the priest's right 'to negative what he might think prudent'. Not knowing where Bishop Walmsley was at that time Plowden reported matters to Bishop Sharrock, his coadjutor, speaking of the insufferable insults that had repeatedly been offered him and hoping he could depend on Bishop Walmsley 'to force them at this moment into order' otherwise it was evident that as not a farthing was allowed him he must quit the mission.28

Almost at the time Plowden was writing his letter Bishop Sharrock was being visited by the two wardens complaining of the harshness and stiffness of their priest's conduct, and on their return relating - no doubt with suitable gesture and much satisfaction - how Sharrock had raised his hands and exclaimed that 'there never was such a stretch of power as in Mr Plowden'.29

The 'private party', led by the spirited James Mullowney, were determined
REV. ARTHUR O'LEARY.

From an old print at St. Patrick's, Soho.
not to give ground. On the instructions of the bishop, Robert had pressed them to fix his salary - '£80 a year, which was all I asked both from the benches and public contributions' - but they refused. The following day, on meeting his priest, Mullowney arrogantly (so Plowden described it) pointed up their success: 'Sir, you would not admit of a committee and now you shall see that there shall be one.'

Although Bishop Walmesley was staying at Lulworth Castle in Dorset with his friends, the Welds, news of the situation in Bristol followed him there for Plowden sent him a long letter exclaiming how the wardens had declared against him and had pretended to arrogate all authority to themselves. He had been hoping that, as the Deed of Trust showed that the land and intended chapel had been made over to the priest of the Bristol congregation for ever, they would have dropped a claim which they could never make good. Robert spiced his final paragraph with a touch of drama and the hint of conspiracy afoot:

There have been talks of late of Fr O'Leary's coming, and even we have some suspicion that he is actually in Bristol. Certain it is that a gentleman in black, a good deal of his figure (excepting the wig), came in a carriage to chapel on Sunday last and is as yet unknown to us. Should he appear again and be really the man, some of my good Irish are ready to blast him. 31

We are given no further information of the mysterious figure in black but from the manner in which Plowden speaks of him - as a man whose reputation was well-known, but whose appearance (since he was not local) was unfamiliar - it seems certain he is referring to the celebrated Irish priest, writer and preacher, Arthur O'Leary, a noted Capuchin Friar, then living in London, in which case some interesting parallels can be seen between the situation in Bristol and the work O'Leary was attempting in the capital. Towards the end of 1791 an association of laymen, business men of Irish descent, was formed in London to undertake the task of
establishing a church in Soho, to be called St Patrick. O’Leary became actively involved and helped to raise money from the Catholic public. The chapel opened in 1792 and was a centre for the Irish community in the city. For about twenty years a committee of laymen was responsible for the finances of the chapel and the appointment of priests, but in 1813 the members were willing enough to hand over all responsibilities to the bishop. Such a management scheme was, of course, quite contrary to the regulations Plowden had put forward in his printed letter to the congregation of 28 November 1787 which stated among other things: ‘They [the two officers or church-wardens] shall pay quarterly a decent and honourable salary to the priest appointed and approved by the Bishop;’ and in another letter we again read of ‘the priest appointed by your lordship to serve the congregation of Bristol’ [my italics]. The plans for the Trenchard Street chapel were, of course, a year or so ahead of events in Soho, but O’Leary, a man of influence in his native country before coming to England, was a well-known figure in London and Irish circles in the last decade of the eighteenth century, and we can see why Plowden’s opponents might have felt attracted to him as a priest sympathetic to their aims. Some too were undoubtedly aware of his anti-Jesuit stance - in 1786 he published in London and Cork a pamphlet whose title included the words a defence of the conduct of Pope Clement XIV (Gangnelli) in suppressing a late religious order [the Society of Jesus]. O’Leary died in 1802.

Plowden was now in touch with Walmesley again and, with that candour and boldness of speech which was characteristic of him, informed him of Bishop Sharrock’s meeting with the two wardens and of the coadjutor’s lack of firmness in dealing with them. Their sense of their own importance thus encouraged by Mr
Sharrock, as Plowden put it, they accordingly held a meeting at the White Hart Inn, in Old Market (the landlord, Mr White, being a member of the congregation), to record their demands and resolutions. Before the meeting could get under way Plowden had to agree to wait at Fargus’s house nearby as the warden refused to conduct any business in his presence. It was resolved that Plowden should be paid for his ‘past trouble’, but only on condition that he left the city.

The committee determined to send the two wardens, John Fargus and Charles Wakeman, to Bishop Walmesley with a letter signed by all sixteen members expressing disappointment at the way their protests had so far been handled. His Lordship ought to have sent an impartial man to investigate matters, they said. For their part they were determined not to pay Mr Plowden one shilling towards the rent for his house (he was then living at No.7 Dighton Street for which he paid £25 a year) or for the seats in the chapel (thus effectively not paying, or certainly making no contribution to, his salary). Moreover, they added, if the Bishop was thinking of appointing another ex-Jesuit in his place then he should first sound out the congregation for he would discover they would accept no one from that Order.

Plowden also kept Walmesley’s coadjutor, Bishop Sharrock, informed of events and did not hesitate to repeat to him personally the criticism he had already made of him to Bishop Walmesley and which had obviously reached Sharrock’s ears because Plowden apologised to him for any ‘imprudent expressions’ he might have used which caused his Lordship to be ‘considerably hurt’. But then with typical doggedness he renewed his charges:

It was natural, whilst I was exposed to the heat of the battle, to expect the most candid and explicit information from you of what Mr Walmesley’s intentions were... Firmness and steadiness [on your Lordship’s part] were absolutely requisite to stem the torrent of
scandal and imposition that were [sic] pouring in upon the congregation ... groundless and false reports which were brought to your Lordship by the wardens... It is disagreeable, I am sensible, for your Lordship to hear these things, but such are the necessary consequences of your Lordship's continually advising me to yield to the violence of their dispositions, and to forbear opposing them for making bad worse.37

While the 'private party' were pressing their case in person, Plowden for his part had decided to proceed by proxy. Lest people should think he was suggesting to the bishop what his course of action should be (as indeed he was), he had decided to communicate with him through an emissary, his friend, the Rev. William Coombs of Bath, Walmesley's vicar general.38 He advised that a strong letter of complaint be sent to the wardens, for their behaviour was encroaching on his Lorship's jurisdiction, and if necessary Mr Hutton, the bishop's lawyer, could send them a letter or even an Exchequer Writ, which would put an end to the affair at once.

The year 1788 was now more than half over and the building of the chapel had come to a standstill through lack of co-operation by both sides. Nevertheless as the months passed Plowden felt he was making some headway. Although most of his chief opponents were refusing to pay their bench money he found there were more than sufficient amongst those well disposed towards him to fill all the vacant spaces, so much so that he felt he would need to provide more seating, and he assured Walmesley that he still allowed those who refused payment to retain their places in the congregation.39 For the most part he tried to ignore his opponents and carried on his ministry normally, visiting the sick and 'instructing the ignorant'. He even thought the chief undertaker was beginning to get uneasy for fear of losing the minister's favour, and if that was so perhaps he would exert pressure and force the dissidents the sooner to comply.40
But Plowden was left in no doubt that the ringleaders had no intention of giving way. On one occasion when Charles Wakeman, the warden, was approached on the subject of the seat rents he retorted that he would sooner see Plowden hung up to a tree than pay anything. ‘Every malicious disposition is still remaining to destroy peace,’ Plowden informed his bishop. Walmesley made it clear to the wardens that peace could be achieved only on the terms set out in Plowden’s printed letter to the congregation, which they should agree to.

By the beginning of 1789 tempers had in no way cooled and Plowden declared himself ready (if only, he said, the bishop would permit him) ‘to speak to them, as circumstances and occasions serve, in a language which would not be suited to any but such complete villains as themselves’. At this time he was convinced that harsh speaking would show how resolute he and Walmesley were, whereas the slightest concession (‘condescension’) on their part or even common civility would ruin their cause. But he found that the wardens had a vigorous language of their own. When he sent an intermediary, Mr Farr, a conveyancer of Montague Street, to treat with Fargus over some business connected with the land which had been bought for the new chapel and to warn him in the name of Lord Arundel, one of the trustees, that it was at his peril if he continued in his course of action, Fargus replied, ‘his insolence redoubled’, that he cared neither for Lord Arundel nor anyone else and ‘threatened to kick Mr Farr out of the house if he ever came on such errands again’.

It was, of course, inconceivable that Plowden should not allude to these events in his sermons, though he was at pains to assure the bishop that on such occasions he did not refer to individuals but ‘exposed general vice’, and left it to his congregation
to draw their own conclusions; he did not pretend to arraign any of his congregation as guilty of the vices he condemned. But some of his opponents found an effective response to such attacks - they would walk out before the sermon began.\(^{43}\)

Plowden retaliated. He signalled out the sixteen members of the congregation who signed the letter of 18 July 1788 (in which they refused to pay him a single shilling and called for his dismissal) and refused to admit any of them to the sacraments, 'even at the hour of death', a grievous blow to any Catholic, whose religion is essentially sacramental. They could redeem themselves, he said, if they restored according to their power 'the whole of the damages occasioned to the congregation by this unjust retention of the public property'. In calling on them to hand over any legal documents and monies (for example, bench money) relevant to the intended chapel, he was in effect asking them to acknowledge his printed letter.\(^{44}\)

As an example of the effect this protracted dispute had on the lives of individual Catholics we may consider the case of John Winter, a comb-maker of Castle Street, who had contributed to the new chapel and had subscribed to letters of protest to Bishop Walmesley about Plowden's ministry. Winter, a convert and a married man with eight children, alleged he was debarred the practice of the Catholic religion 'through the abusive and insulting behaviour of Robert Plowden'. After he and his wife had signed one of the petitions to Bishop Walmesley, his wife had wished to make her confession ('go to her duty') the following Easter, and suspecting Plowden's feelings towards her had written him a submissive letter requesting him to hear her confession. In his reply Plowden asked what law obliged him to sit down and hear the confession of those who were 'teeming with vengeance' against him.\(^{45}\)

Winter himself then wrote to Plowden enquiring if he also was included in the
number of those forbidden the sacrament for signing a petition which Mr Fargus, the warden, had sent to the bishop. Plowden replied (according to Winter's wife) that he would not administer the sacrament to him if he was on his dying bed - until he had first paid him eight hundred pounds, Plowden's argument being that, since the congregation were unable to use the new chapel because the wardens refused to allow its completion, the money thus far spent on it (over £700) should be refunded.46

The day before the chapel opened Winter asked Plowden to let him have seven places at the same price he understood others were paying for their seats. But, he asserted, Plowden would not let him have a place for less than four shillings and sixpence a quarter for each sitting, which meant, he claimed, that he would be paying almost twice as much as others for the same number of places. He then heard from another source that Plowden was prepared to lower his prices if he would agree to have his name marked 'poor' on his books. His catalogue of complaints not ended, Winter recalled how one day the priest called at his house to tell him that if any members of his family sat on any of the seats in the chapel, whether by invitation of the owner or even if the seat was unoccupied, he would publicly expose them. Thus forbidden a place to sit unless he complied with Plowden's exorbitant demands (so he informed the bishop), and having no other place to go nearer than Bath, which must be attended with more expense than he could afford, he had resolved to spend the sabbath at home and rest his 'prospects of eternity on an allowing God'.47

On the evening of Sunday, 15 March 1789, in a state of some excitement, Plowden wrote a letter to his friend, the Rev. William Coombs, at Bath. Describing Fargus as a knave with whom he could do no business on account of his violence and 'heat', he related, as further evidence of the man's failings, how he had found a
discrepancy in his accounts (there were no vouchers) of between £90 and £100. In chapel that very Sunday morning at the end of his sermon he read the following statement to his congregation:

I am exceedingly sorry that notwithstanding the very serious admonition read two Sundays ago from our Right Reverend Lord Bishop to enforce the immediate restitution of the property belonging to this congregation, which is unjustly detained in some gentlemen’s hands, the said admonition has not yet had its full and desired effect. As in public scandals, such as this is, a pastor cannot hold his peace without conniving at the sins of his parishioners, I am obliged in the extraordinary circumstances to remind the said gentlemen again today of the indispensable necessity they are under of an immediate and adequate restitution. No power on earth can dispense with them in this obligation.48

If Plowden expected some disturbance to follow immediately upon this announcement, none came, and he was able to finish Mass without interruption. But he was not prepared for what came next. As he was returning to the vestry Fargus, who on this occasion had been present throughout the service, suddenly got to his feet and, as in the manner of his profession (he was a broker and auctioneer), stood on his bench and began to harangue the surprised congregation then about to depart. Mr Plowden, he said, owed him £50 and he would never deliver up any of the legal documents asked for until it had been paid. He continued with what Plowden called ‘a deal more stuff’ while the priest beckoned to him in vain from the vestry door in an attempt to silence him. At last, feeling impelled to remove the Blessed Sacrament from the noisy scene Plowden moved into the chapel, but by then Fargus had concluded his speech and left.49

One may well suppose that the events at the Bristol chapel were not to any such degree mirrored elsewhere in the country, where Catholic worship generally continued along seemly and dignified lines. But while orderliness prevailed at large,
Plowden, driven by conviction in all his polemics to fight to the uttermost, advanced a stage further. If he did not find peace established amongst his congregation before Sunday then, he confided to his friend Coombs, he would seek the approval of the bishop to apply to the mayor for constables to keep the peace and commit any man to the Bridewell (about a hundred yards away) who made a disturbance in the chapel. There is a curious gap in the archives at this stage and we have no further details of what threatened to be an imminent clash, although we know that the bishop was so concerned he was on the point of resolving things by interdicting the use of the chapel in St James's Back.

The struggle between the two parties continued until well after the new chapel was built. The heated language used by both sides bears witness to the bitterness felt. At different times the group led by Fargus, Wakeman and Mullowney referred to Plowden as 'arrogant, harsh, stiff, arbitrary and underhand' - one who refused their requests with contempt. Rather than give way, Wakeman declared he would sooner see him hung up to a tree. Plowden for his part labelled the dissidents 'Cromwellian, uncivil, mischievous, violent, malicious and complete villains, insufferable in their insults'. Fargus, he decided, was a knave. There was, as we have seen, triumphalism on both sides: 'Sir, you would not admit of a committee and now you shall see that there shall be one,' James Mullowney had once said; on another occasion Plowden had retorted: 'Some of my good Irish are ready to blast him [Fr O'Leary].'

The readiness with which the protagonists complained to the bishop meant that Walmesley sometimes received communications from both sides on the same day - and this at a time when he and his fellow bishops were, at a national level, also at
odds with the laity of the powerful Catholic Committee, led by Lord Petre and Sir John Throckmorton, during the negotiations preceding the Catholic Relief Act of 1791.  

While Plowden attempted to keep his antagonists at bay, subscriptions for the new chapel were sought, or were volunteered by well-wishers. Various local businesses, such as the Protestant wool merchants Vanderhurst & Co., Hill & Sons, Haythen & Co., and Powell Brothers & Co., gave considerable sums; and individual Protestants also contributed a total of £180 - for instance, a wealthy bachelor, Mr Piggot of Brockley Court (nine miles outside Bristol), gave Plowden £100 and subscribed two guineas a year for a seat which, as a Protestant, he never occupied.  

Amongst the Catholic aristocracy Lord Petre, the leading lay Catholic of the day, contributed £50, and Lord Arundell a similar sum. The Countess of Shrewsbury (who on an earlier occasion had told Walmesley she needed to live 'economously' lest she should exceed her income), also gave £50. Sums of £21 were donated by the Earl of Shrewsbury and the Countess of Shaftesbury, and the Earl of Newbury and the Duchess of Luxembourg gave £10 each. Other amounts ranged from £49.19.0 to one shilling. A Spanish Captain gave two shillings and sixpence. One of the largest sums from an individual was 100 guineas donated by Sir John Webb of Camford in Dorset who linked his gift with forty Masses to be said in three years for the soul of his daughter, Mary. Sometimes the money was given for specific purposes: £33 for windows, £10.10.0 towards ornamenting the chapel, £1.10.0 for a sconce, £20 for the pulpit, and ten shillings towards making the altar. There were no Catholic families of substantial wealth in Bristol (or in Gloucestershire) and the comparatively small sums the congregation had raised ('hardly sufficient to pay for
St Joseph's Chapel on George Ashmead’s Map of 1828. The Colston Hall now occupies the site of Colston's School.
the seats', said Plowden) they entrusted to the care of Patrick Fitzhenry, an Irish merchant of Queen Square and a signatory to the letters of protest. But he became bankrupt and the money was lost. Some half dozen members of the congregation, amongst whom we recognise leaders of the dissidents - Fitzhenry himself, James Mullowney, William Till Adams, William Heaney, John Fargus, William White - had each made donations of between £20 and £33, not inconsiderable sums. 

The largest donations came from individual ex-Jesuits. Fr Charles Neville (his mother was the daughter of the Earl of Lichfield) gave £500, for example; when he died, less than two years after the opening of St Joseph's, he was buried in the vault of the chapel. In all as much as £2,800 was given by ex-Jesuits and from the late Society's Office in London which William Strickland administered, a point the Society continually made in later years when asserting its right to serve the Bristol mission. 

To enlarge the site for the new chapel more land was purchased for £210 from William Trotman, a merchant tailor, but the ownership of the deeds of the new purchase became yet another cause of friction between the priest and the committee. Despite the sums which had been collected Plowden found he could not, within a reasonable time, find enough money to finish the whole project. Learning of his difficulty Strickland, the ex-Jesuits' administrator, loaned him the capital sum of £770 at four per cent which enabled the work to proceed and the chapel to be built, but the £770 was later to be at the centre of an acrimonious dispute between the two men and create further wounds.

Although Frederick Husenbeth, a member of the Bristol congregation in Plowden's time, described his fellow worshippers as mostly mendicants and poor
Irish, and named only five families as being able to contribute to the building of the chapel, money continued to come from elsewhere. From the will of a Mr William Heney, in 1792, Plowden was left £1,000 and a messuage on the South Parade, Bath. With the agreement of Bishop Walmesley the property was sold and all monies invested, so that one third of the income could be used for the poor of the Bristol congregation, one third towards paying a schoolmaster for the Catholic school which Plowden established, and the remainder towards the support of the incumbent of the Trenchard Street chapel who was appointed to serve the Catholic congregation in and near Bristol.56 Thomas More, the last provincial of the Society before its suppression, on his death in June 1795 left the residue of all his estate to 'my good friend, Robert Plowden ... for his own use and benefit'.57 Another benefactor of St Joseph's was the Rev. John Brewer, the ex-Jesuit who had established the mission at Shepton Mallet. In his will he left the interest on £500 for the benefit of the incumbent at Bristol, provided he was a member of the late Society of Jesus, adding that otherwise the sum should go to the General of the Society of Jesus in White Russia - an odd bequest it might seem until we recall that Pope Clement decreed that the Brief of Suppression should be subject to local, not general, promulgation and in Russia the Empress Catherine II had allowed the Jesuits to continue as before.58

In an effort to achieve some sort of peace at Bristol Bishop Walmesley dispatched his vicar general, the Rev. William Coombes, to treat with John Fargus and James Mullowney, foremost amongst the dissidents. Meeting at Fargus's house they agreed that Fargus should deliver to the bishop all the papers belonging to the foundation in Trenchard Lane and that in turn Plowden should release money for the building which had been deliberately withheld during the dispute.
This engraving of St Joseph's Chapel in 1790 appeared as the frontispiece to the reprint of Fr Plowden's sermon by M.F. Hickey on the centenary anniversary of 1890.
4.2 The Opening of the New Chapel

By May 1790 a letter bearing the address ‘The Parsonage, Trenchard Lane’, showed that the new house and chapel had been erected, and a month later, a year before Catholic churches were officially allowed, the Trenchard Street chapel was formally opened, but it was only on the eve of the ceremony that ‘the room’ (as Plowden put it) could be got into any state of readiness to receive the congregation. The building, in the style of many Catholic chapels erected in the last decades of the eighteenth century, was similar to those of the Nonconformists, their designs probably constrained by limited resources and perhaps an English reticence, created in part by the penal laws of the past. The architectural historian, Bryan Little, writing of a Nonconformist chapel, Hope Chapel, which had been built in the city two years earlier, remarks that the building oddly anticipated the design of Nonconformist chapels half a century later, and he continues:

An even simpler facade of a very similar type resulted when the Jesuits erected St Joseph’s Chapel. It was opened in 1790 and has only one simple room with an apse at the east end. The windows are Gothic of an even simpler sort than in Hope Chapel.

We may suppose too that the interior was like that of other Catholic chapels of the time (except those of some country houses, like Wardour, and the Embassy chapels of London), devoid of statues, ornament and confessional.

When all was ready, on 27 June 1790 - ‘on Sunday within the octave of St John the Baptist’ as Plowden recalled it - the chapel was opened. Before a congregation which included non-Catholics (for subscriptions had come from Protestants too) Plowden preached his sermon, taking as his text the twenty-fifth verse of the ninth chapter of Daniel: ‘And the street shall be built again, and the walls in troublesome times’ - words which Daniel had used to foretell the rebuilding of
Jerusalem. So Plowden alluded to Catholic endeavours and achievements of recent times in terms of the biblical past, when God determined to gather the Jewish people together again and to re-establish them in their former possessions. He then acknowledged the kindness of those, though of different religious beliefs, through whom they were enabled publicly to offer their vows to God that day - a day which was the more joyful and glorious in that 'brotherhood and friendship are renewed; and the more so, the longer time has passed since we were seen together under the same roof'. Plowden concluded with a word of reassurance to his fellow Catholics, saying they should not be afraid of sticking to the genuine maxims of their religion 'as there is not a tenet, or item in it, if duly understood, that can give the smallest occasion of suspicion or offence to any man'. Finally, they should all join heartily in the hymns and canticles of joy.

4.3 Worship in the New Chapel

St Joseph's Chapel, Trenchard Street, thus became the first Roman Catholic church to be built in Bristol since the Reformation. What kind of worship took place there? The Jesuit priest, Fr Ignatius Grant (though writing in 1890), is able to tell us something of the services Catholics were using at the end of the eighteenth century:

Besides Holy Mass and sermon, preceded by the usual prayers before Mass and the oblation, 'And now, O God, we prepare to offer Thee,' there was generally the Psalter of Jesus and Catechism in the afternoon. Even in London you would hardly have found Vespers. There was no evening service anywhere. There was only a rare Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. As yet the Rosary was rarely said in public ... I doubt whether the lovely office of Benediction was known. I can speak for Scotland, &c., there was nowhere Benediction until about 1830.63

We may compare this picture with Bernard Ward's account of Catholic Church
services in London some ten to fifteen years after the opening of the Bristol chapel. Besides the Mass and sermon on a Sunday morning there were, Ward says, Vespers in the afternoon, or sometimes Evening Prayers at a later hour instead. The excellent bibliography recently published (1996), *English Catholic Books, 1701-1800*, shows that books containing Vespers were regularly available from 1762.

A favourite form of devotion (and one that was used at Bristol) was that known as *Bona Mors* (devotions for a happy death) where a pall would be put on the ground to serve for a catafalque and there would be recitation of the office for the dead. The Confraternity of the *Bona Mors* was founded at Rome, 2 October 1648, in the Jesuit church of the Gesu 'to honour the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Dolours of the Blessed Virgin Mary, thereby to obtain the grace of a happy death'. Editions of *Bona Mors* were available throughout the eighteenth century, the earliest (probably published at the Jesuit college of St Omer's) appearing in 1706. From the 1760s the devotion of saying the rosary was also nearly always added to publications of *Bona Mors*, which by 1796 had reached sixteen editions. In his introduction to *English Catholic Books 1701-1800* Dom Geoffrey Scott speaks of the immense popularity of the *Bona Mors* manual and of the Jesuits as the inspiration behind this devotion.

Although remarking, in a footnote, that Benediction was given in some Catholic schools as early as 1753, Monsignor Ward states that he could find no definite mention of the service in the Catholic *Directory* till the year 1808 and then only in one church in London, Somers Town, and he observes that the office was not generally advertised in the *Directory* until about 1840. But he goes on to say that it took place in all churches [in London] from time to time. Grant, on the other
hand, suggests that the service of Benediction was little known. This seems surprising: there is evidence that the service might well have been familiar to Catholics in the Western District and therefore to Plowden’s congregation before this time. Writing in 1796 to an émigré clergyman, M. Rious, Bishop Walmesley said:

The prayers at Benediction are not uniform in this country; you may therefore fix upon such as you may judge to be proper on that occasion, among which let always be said the hymn ‘Pange Lingua’ etc. with the prayer of the B. Sacrament. 68

Again, on the death of Bishop Walmesley in 1797 Thomas Weld of Lulworth Castle wrote to his successor, Bishop William Sharrock: ‘I presume we may continue on those prayers, Exposition of the B. Sacrament and Benedictions which Mr. Walmesley ordered and approved of until such time as yr. Lordship may chuse to make any alteration.’ 69 Two days later on 19 December 1797 Bishop Sharrock received a letter from Charles Catrow, confessor to a community of nuns from Mechlin who had settled at Amesbury, asking for his approval of their religious practices and quoting regulations made for them by Bishop Walmesley: ‘I [Walmesley] approve of their custom of having Benediction every Sunday as they had abroad... In another [regulation] which I [Catrow] have misplaced, he [Walmesley] allows Benediction every Wednesday for the Conversion of England.’ 70 There is certainly the possibility that Catholics generally would have been aware of the service. The catalogues issued in 1790 and throughout the decade by J.P. Coghlan of London, the country’s main Catholic publisher, list Every Family’s Assistant, containing Compline, and the Office of Benediction, with ‘all the Hymns, Anthems, Litanies, and Prayers, which are made use of in the Chapels and Families of this Kingdom, in Latin and English’. 71

John Preston, the priest at Abergavenny and friend and correspondent of
Robert Plowden, sought Bishop Sharrock’s approval for Benediction to be held at Abergavenny ‘every Sunday and Holiday after Vespers’, and so desirous was he not to lose the service to the mission, once granted, that he asked the Bishop for a suitable letter which could be kept in the chapel informing priests who might later serve there that ‘the practise [sic] has been introduced under legitimate sanction and approbation’. Sharrock granted much of what he asked for:

Approved of Exposition and Benediction upon Easter-day, Ascension, Whitsunday, Corpus Christi, Assumption, All Saints, Christmas-day and Epiphany. Approved of singing [Preston wished to introduce the Gregorian Chant], but not to supersede instruction.  

The ‘Gregorian Note’ was to serve more than one purpose:

We conceive, My Lord, that adding this solemnity to our religious ceremonies would attract many of our people to assist at them who otherwise would remain at home... Twas not for nothing that our forefathers in religion introduced the singing into the Liturgy.

Fourteen years after the Rev. John Gother’s death in 1704, The Holy Mass in Latin and English (later entitled The Roman Missal in Latin and English), compiled by William Crathorne from Gother’s papers and other printed works, was published. It is described by C.D. Crichton as outstanding as the first complete translation of the Roman missal in this country. Gother’s Missal and his Instructions and Devotions for Hearing Mass were seminal works (his Spiritual Works were edited by Crathorne in sixteen volumes), and other books in his tradition continued to be published throughout the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth. The enduring and comprehensive nature of Gother’s writings may be seen in the ten and a half pages devoted to his works in Blom’s bibliography.

The other major religious author of the eighteenth century, perhaps the greatest, was Richard Challoner, later vicar apostolic of the London district, whom
Gother, when a chaplain in Northamptonshire, had instructed and received into the Catholic Church. Challoner's famous *The Garden of the Soul* was first printed in London in 1740 by Thomas Meigham, the main Catholic publisher of the day, and was described by the author as 'A manual of spiritual exercises and instructions for Christians who, living in the world, aspire to devotion'. Although in size only a slim pocket-book its contents were of such breadth and significance that Bossy is moved to write (though Crighton thinks his comment too sweeping): 'Almost everything we need to know about the private devotion of English Catholics during these decades can be discovered by consulting Challoner's *Garden of the Soul.*' Apart from instructions and devotions for the Mass there are Benediction, Vespers, Complin, Examination of Conscience, Confession, Morning and Evening Devotions and other religious exercises. Certainly the *Garden of the Soul* was the most popular of the devotional books of the eighteenth century. Since its first publication in 1740 it was printed twenty-eight times, and twice more at the turn of the century - ten editions in all. Of his other works Challoner's *Britannia Sancta* gives the lives of the saints, and his *Morality of the Bible* provides daily meditations on the word of God. Young children could be instructed through his *Abridgement of Christian Doctrine.*

Throughout the century, then, the Mass was available (though not performed) in English. But to what extent did illiteracy limit the usefulness of religious books? Robert Plowden's opponents claimed, for instance, that there were numbers of illiterate Irish in the Bristol congregation who needed special attention. That there were many Irish in the Bristol congregation had been noted in the earlier visitation returns of Bishops Secker, Newton and Wilson, a situation which would also be true of other prominent west-country seaports, such as Liverpool and Plymouth. The
Reverend Timings, the Catholic priest at Plymouth, reported to Bishop Walmesley in 1793 that his congregation numbered about eighty or ninety, almost all of them Irish, many keeping public houses, but only a few frequented the sacraments. He makes us aware that despite the Catholicity of their native land it did not follow that Irish men and women continued to practise their faith when abroad, uprooted as they were from a rural tradition and finding themselves immersed in an urbanised, industrial culture.

Although the great migrations from Ireland were still some decades away, nonetheless there was busy trafficking between Irish and English ports. At the time of the opening of St Joseph’s Chapel twenty-one coasters were sailing regularly between Bristol and the ports of Waterford, Belfast, Cork, Newry, Youghal, Dublin, Limerick and Galway; two packets plied between Bristol and Cork every fourteen days. Mail to and from Ireland was sent and received daily. The baptismal register for St James’s Back and St Joseph’s for 1790 lists seventy baptisms and at a conservative reckoning (I have counted only one partner in the case of each married couple) fifty per cent of the 170 parents and God-parents seem to have been Irish; very few foreign names are to be found. It confirms, too, the picture that can be drawn earlier from the petition to Bishop Walmesley of 1787 with its 343 signatures. It was a point made by the dissenters on more than one occasion that numbers of the Irish were illiterate and knew little English. How then could they make their confessions to a priest who did not know their native tongue? Many must, they reasoned, have died unshriven.

In his thesis, *The Cultural Life of Bristol 1640-1775*, Jonathan Barry states: ‘Figures suggest that at maximum 65 per cent. of men could sign in the 1660s, the
percentage rising smoothly but only slightly up to the 71 per cent. of the 1750s.'

Amongst the 343 signatories who in 1787 put their names to an early petition of protest against Plowden, there are only two who had to make their mark, though the picture is obscured somewhat in that occasionally whole groups of names (e.g. those of a family) are clearly in the same handwriting. As for reading ability Barry asserts: 'Even poor children usually picked up some reading skills in their early years,' and again: 'Educational evidence has shown that most Bristolians had some ability to read.'

Churches in general had few service books and congregations were expected to bring their own, but many people struggling to provide even the essentials for daily living would have found religious books too expensive to buy, though there were manuals written specifically with poor people in mind such as The poor man's posey of prayers (which by 1798 had reached a ninth edition), The poor man's manual of devotions, and The poor man's daily companion.

There was a daily Mass at the new Bristol chapel, but this was seen by Plowden's opponents as yet another cause for complaint. How could one Mass a day meet the needs of all the congregation, for many would find it impossible to attend at the time appointed? 'Near one third of the people are deprived of the benefit of so great a sacrifice.'

Bishop Walmesley was determined that the Catholic service in his churches should be 'purely' Roman: at no time did he entertain the idea that there might be an English form of Catholicism. When Lady Gerard of Garswood, Lancashire, wrote respectfully to him asking why he had condemned a book, The Devout Miscellany, in his District, he explained that the author had made use of the Protestant translation
of Scripture and the psalms, which was known to be 'unfaithful' and had always been rejected by the Catholic Church. Furthermore his Sunday prayers or collects were copied from the Protestant book of common prayers. 'All this is very improper and savours of that inclination which seems to prevail of late among some of our Catholics to approach as much as possible to the Protestant way of thinking, praying etc.'

4.4 The Trustees of St Joseph's Chapel and its Status as a Jesuit mission

Bossy identifies two types of trustees of the new Catholic chapels: on the one hand there were representatives of the congregational body itself, and on the other there were laymen acting on behalf of a body of clergy in the ownership of mission property - as was the case at Bristol.

A document in the Jesuit archives in Farm Street, entitled 'A Schedule of the Deeds and Writings belonging to the Catholic Chappell and Dwelling house in Trenchard Lane, St Michael's, Bristol', has its first entry dated 5 July 1612; there are thirty-three in all. The entry for 1787 names the six trustees to whom the site was conveyed - Lord Arundell, Sir John Webb, Sir John Lawson, Michael Blount, Thomas Metcalfe and John Jones. We can see why they were chosen: almost all came from old Catholic families with strong Jesuit sympathies and connections. Foley, for instance, in his Records of the Society, asserts: 'Few Catholic families in England have proved more faithful and attached to the Society than the Lords Arundell of Wardour.' Indeed their chapel at Wardour, in Wiltshire, has been served by the Jesuits since Elizabethan times. Sir John Webb had estates at Odstock, about twelve miles from Arundell Castle, and his family were also associated with the
Marshall, John, jr. & John, Master of one part; and Philip, freshmark of the other part.

15 Sep. 1704. Jn. Locke, esq.; John Bagg, Esq.; John Locke, junr. of the same house; John Bagg, Esq.; John Locke, junr. and John Bagg, mariner. John Locke, junr. and John Bagg, mariner of the same house; John Locke, junr.

22 Sep. 1704. John Bagg, Esq.; Philip, freshmark of the one part; and John Locke, Esq., freshmark of the other part.

30 Sep. 1704. John Bagg, Esq.; Philip, freshmark of the one part; and Matthew, freshmark of the other part.

22 Nov. 1704. John Bagg, Esq.; Robert Bayly, freshmark of the one part; and Matthew, freshmark of the other part.


25 Dec. 1704. John Bagg, Esq.; Robert Bayly, freshmark of the one part; and John, freshmark of the other part.
old Jesuit mission at Canford Magna in Hampshire where Fr James Parker, who was later to become Robert Plowden's staunch supporter in Bristol, was chaplain to Sir John's daughter, the Countess of Shaftesbury. Sir John Lawson, another trustee, lived at Brough Hall, a Jesuit mission near Catterick in Yorkshire; his family tree shows strong links with the Jesuits and Benedictines. Michael Blount was of Mapledurham in Oxfordshire, connected with the Blounts of Mawley Hall, one of the most prominent recusant families of Shropshire. Bryan Little, the architectural historian and writer on Catholic matters, suggests that the other trustees, Thomas Metcalfe and John Jones, may simply have been members of the Bristol congregation. Neither was. Thomas Metcalfe was a citizen of Bath and a donor to the new Bristol chapel; there are two entries in his name on the subscription list: 'Mr Thomas Metcalf £5.5.0' and 'Thomas Metcalfe Esq. £5.5.0'. He was, perhaps, related to the distinguished Metcalfe family of Yorkshire. John Jones was of a prominent Catholic family from Lanarth in Monmouthshire with whom Bishop Sharrock resided and whose address often appears on the bishop's correspondence. The name John Jones appears again in a later document relating to Trenchard Street, dated 1812, and this time is identified as being of Lanarth. In 1792 when it seemed that Bishop Walmesley would lose part of his annual income we see that John Jones arranged to contribute to him £10.10.0 a year, as did also his fellow trustee, Lord Arundell. All this suggests a man of some standing and independent means, as were the other trustees. At this time there were no congregational representatives; the Bristol chapel (it could reasonably be argued) was clearly part of the Jesuit (or rather ex-Jesuit) mission.

The new buildings had cost a total of £3,020 - the chapel and the presbytery.
These are to certify that by virtue of and in obedience to an Act of Parliament passed in the thirty-first year of the reign of the present Majesty, 'King George the Third intituled, The Act to Abolish prosecutions and under, restrictions the persons therein described, from certain penalties and disabilities to which persons or Persons professing the Popish Religion were subject,' Robert Robinson, minister of a certain chapel or building being called Vestry, situated in St. Michael's Lane in the parish of Saint Michael. In the City of London and vicinity of the same City, did duly certify to the justices of the peace at the general quarter sessions of the peace begun and held in and for the City of London and vicinity of the same City on Monday the thirteenth day of July in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and ninety-one, and from thence to be and held by adjournment on Monday the eighteenth day of the same July, the said chapel or building is intended as a place of congregation or a place for religious worship. Witness my hand this eighteenth day of the month of July in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and ninety-one. 

[signature]
appear to have accounted for about £2,500 while another £520 was spent on the site and an old house. At all times the Jesuits considered they had provided the bulk of the money and that the Bristol chapel was theirs; the claim is continually made. A letter from William Strickland (it is not known to whom) dated 2 May 1793 speaks of 'our house and chapel' in Bristol, and in 1816 Fr Marmaduke Stone, then English provincial of the restored Society of Jesus, remarked: 'Fr Plowden's accounts show that, except a few hundred pounds collected amongst the inhabitants of Bristol, all the rest was either Jesuits' money or money collected from distant quarters by persons who had been members of the Order.' We have noted how Frederick Husenbeth, a member of the Bristol congregation at the time the new building was constructed, asserted that very little was collected from the congregation which, with the exception of about five or six families, consisted of mendicants and other poor Irish. In a letter dated 26 April 1822 the Rev. James Parker states that he had secured for Stonyhurst (the Jesuit headquarters) the compact between Bishop Walmesley and Fr Robert Plowden that the St Joseph premises were the property of the Jesuits whilst they were able to supply the mission with an incumbent. Another document held at the Bristol Record Office entitled 'Memorial Concerning the Mission at Bristol' reasserts the Jesuits' claim to the Bristol mission and to the new chapel as long as they continued to serve there and, alluding to the trustees, states: 'The temporal trusteeship to the property is not admitted by our ecclesiastical authorities to confer any ecclesiastical right over the mission.'

The use to which the old building in St James's Back was subsequently put is of interest. I have attempted to identify the position of the old Catholic chapel which has never previously been shown. The building was bought by the Swedenborgians
Part of Matthews's Plan of Bristol, 1794. The position of the old Catholic Chapel in St James's Back.
and developed as their New Jerusalem Chapel. Matthews’s Bristol Directory of 1794 refers in a footnote to the New Jerusalem Chapel being on the site of the old Catholic Chapel. The new owners, it seems, enlarged it and gave it a gallery and an organ, and the size and character of the building (and the more tolerant religious attitude of the times) were then such that it could be marked on contemporary maps.

If, therefore, we are able to find the position of the New Jerusalem Church we have the site of John Scudamore’s Catholic chapel. Matthews’s Plan of the City for 1794 shows not only the new Catholic Chapel of St Joseph’s, in Trenchard Lane (‘a spacious gothic building’), but the New Jerusalem Church standing, as we would hope, in St James’s Back.

The old street no longer exists but the site of the old Catholic church is about forty yards along today’s Silver Street, from the direction of St James’s Church, and is roughly in line with the historic Wesley’s Room across the way. Subsequently the New Jerusalem Church building became used as a ragged school, run by the Church of England. Today the site, in Bristol’s busiest shopping area, is used as shop premises.

In the Bristol Directory of 1791 the city is described as the second in Great Britain and ‘the largest, the richest, and best port of trade, London only excepted… The opulence of this city is equal to any undertaking’. Robert Plowden is named as one of thirty-five priests resident in the city and is designated as ‘Priest to the Romish Chapel, Trencher [sic] -lane’. At that time Bristol - a strong centre of nonconformity - had twenty-six churches of the established religion and fifteen chapels for Dissenting worshippers, in addition to St Joseph’s. The Directory is prefaced by an introduction written with commendable civic pride:
The churches of Bristol are all neat, beautifully decorated, and worthy a traveller's attention. The monuments and inscriptions of those buried in them are carefully preserved; a practice scantly neglected almost everywhere else in England... It is a general remark, to the praise of its citizens, that they are strict in observing the sabbath, that no city keeps its churches neater, or takes more care of their funeral monuments, or has fewer vagrants and beggars.99

Catholic readers could also find an oblique reference to those Flemish workers whose insistence on freedom to practise their religion enabled the old Catholic chapel to be set up in John Scudamore's time: 'This [the Baptist Mills district of Bristol] was the first place where brass was made in England, and the original workmen were brought over from Holland for the purpose.'100

In his centenary lecture on the opening of St Joseph's, which he delivered in 1890, Fr Ignatius Grant, one of the Jesuit priests in Bristol, remarked on the architectural style of the Bristol church and of the Jesuit chapels which were built in England in and around 1790 - those such as St Anne's, Leeds; St John's, Norwich; St Peter's, Liverpool; St Wilfrid's, Preston; and others at Lulworth, Havant, Monmouth, Stafford, Carlisle and Yorkshire:

There was no Pugin, no Scoles, no Goldie, no Hansom or Street yet in existence. Our practical old priests built for the essential wants, and not for adornment. A good quadrangular building, good solid work, with as much gallery-room as possible, with a priest's house at the altar end, was all that was aimed at. That Fr Plowden got.101

In London, Fr Grant continued, the ambassadors of foreign courts did not get more. The churches then erected were not 'early pointed', 'flamboyant', or 'perpendicular' churches, but in the 'ambassadorial' style. If we look at a print published in 1808 of the Sardinian Chapel in Lincoln's Inn Fields, perhaps the best known Catholic church in London at that time, we may see an example of Grant's 'ambassadorial' style, and also find in its external appearance a resemblance to St Joseph's and other
Catholic chapels being built in the country at that time. The fabric of the Sardinian Chapel was overhauled and repaired, and it was reopened on 13 August 1799; the absence of any forecourt and even the narrowness of the street recalls the setting of the Bristol church in Trenchard Street. Bernard Ward, alluding no doubt to the many makeshift and anonymous centres of worship of the past, described the new buildings as ‘regular churches’, citing as his two examples St Peter’s at Birmingham and Bristol’s St Joseph’s Chapel.  

4.5 Opposition to Plowden and the Jesuits Continues

Plowden’s foes, though defeated in their efforts to frustrate the building of a chapel not under their own control, and though failing to remove Plowden or secure their preferred priest, Fr O’Leary, remained implacably opposed to him and saw the possibility of the struggle continuing - indeed assuming epic proportions. They were now ready, they declared, to advance beyond local boundaries and to expose to the nation some of the ‘most daring depredations’ committed ‘on any congregation of Christians in the annals of history’.  

The leaders of the ‘private party’, the third estate who so harassed him in their struggle for control of the chapel, were business men - shopkeepers and merchants or in some way of commerce. From the Bristol Directories of the time we are able to discover the precise occupations of some of them - merchant, shoemaker, horn worker/comb maker, auctioneer, bookseller, peruke-maker, slops-seller, linen-draper, grocer and lodging-house keeper. Though self-employed and enjoying a measure of independence it is unlikely that any had considerable wealth, though they were not the less self-assured on that score. Jonathan Barry asserts:
The leading merchants, retailers and professional men considered themselves gentlemen, despite aristocratic sneers at bourgeois philistianism, while the ordinary artisan or trader established his identity as a respectable and honourable member of society through his civic position and social attachments.105

But it is doubtful if, as a body, they could have found the resources to carry out their intention (announced to Bishop Walmesley) of purchasing land and building their own chapel, though they claimed that had they been allowed to proceed in this, their chapel would have been opened two years earlier than St Joseph’s. Francis Edwards, the Jesuit historian, speaking of the building of St Wilfrid’s, Preston, in 1793, similarly comments: ‘Local congregations were rarely able, as far as Jesuit missions were concerned, to set themselves up from their own unaided resources.’106 The cost of building the Preston church and presbytery was about £3,500 - more costly but not unlike the sum involved in erecting the premises at Bristol, suggesting that that was not untypical for the time.

The opening of the new chapel had changed nothing as far as Plowden and the dissident laity were concerned. In his manuscript Foley relates how after the service Plowden invited some of the Protestants who had contributed towards the building fund to come to his house ‘to take a dish of chocolate’, but they had no sooner left his parlour than he was visited by a member of the congregation (not identified) who said that an ‘advertisement’ would appear in the Bristol Mercury the following day unless Plowden made certain (unspecified) concessions. On Monday, 28 June 1790, a letter duly appeared on the inside page expressing the hope that some correspondent would point out ‘some method whereby a congregation of Christians [might] free themselves from the yoke of a pastor, who, by his tyrannical conduct, [had] rendered himself obnoxious to the greater and more respectable part of his community’.107
The correspondent spoke of his overbearing and intolerable spirit and urged him to withdraw in order that some one more worthy might fill his place. The writer signed himself 'Candidus', but by cloaking both himself and his subject in anonymity he encouraged speculation with the result that in the next edition 'Justice' demanded to know the identity of the said pastor so that others might not be mistaken for him. 'A Friend to injured Merit' rushed to Plowden's defence. 'Candidus' then mockingly reported seeing the 'obnoxious' pastor 'dunning about the Exchange with the paper in his hand to justify himself to every person he had the least knowledge of; but fortunately no man of sense would attend to him'. 'Candidus' continued in similar vein, pretending that Plowden (though he did not name him) had intimated to a friend his inclination of leaving the city and trying how far he could succeed with the National Assembly of France, as he found his flock in Bristol were determined not to be priest-ridden. So the quarrels again surfaced in the summer of 1790 and, as was intended by the publication, tongues were set wagging throughout the city and beyond. The correspondence eventually petered out. When referring to this episode Foley remarked in his manuscript: 'Inveighing against the tyranny of the priesthood... was the favourite topic of harangue among the reforming Catholics at that time.'

Fourteen of the leading dissidents wrote to Walmesley on 9 August 1790 saying it was impossible for them ever to be reconciled to Mr Plowden and that through his extraordinary conduct the Catholic religion in Bristol was very much in decline. They claimed general support, alleging that whole families formerly attached to the chapel now seldom visited it and that even strangers were disgusted with Plowden's continual declamations against his opponents from the pulpit. Moreover,
they were threatened with the civil power if any of them should sit on any of the
benches. If only, they said, they had another priest:

What an allurement it would be to the young men in this city, whose
parents were in religious union with us, and who are now ashamed
through this man's misconduct to own the religion of their ancestors
and are absolutely become Latitudinarians!109

This letter (the handwriting seems that of James Mullowney) was followed by
another by Patrick Fitzhenry informing Walmesley that Fr O'Leary was willing to
come to Bristol and the committee for their part would find him most welcome. The
bishop rejected the scheme outright: 'You have a pastor and a good one, to whom
you ought all to unite.'110 At no stage did Walmesley waver in his support for
Plowden, whom he described as renowned ('notorious') for his assiduity and
exactness in his pastoral duties, and he praised him for his great achievement in
building the chapel. He made it clear to the dissenters that he considered them to be
few in number and urged them to submit - as most of the congregation had submitted
- to the rules respecting the benches which were no different from those observed in
all chapels.

Walmesley received one further letter of complaint from the wardens on 4
September. They sensed they were making no headway and threatened that if their
wishes were not met they would take their case to the court of Chancery where it
would be determined whether the chapel belonged to Mr Plowden, as he frequently
claimed from the pulpit, or to the Catholics of Bristol. If they were forced to take
such a step, they said, they would publish a statement of facts which would be
'dispersed all over the kingdom'.111 Faced with this posturing Walmesley simply
referred them to the answer he had given previously, urging them to accept Plowden
as their priest and show the respect and deference due to him as their pastor. He
concluded brusquely: ‘As you have here my final answer, I desire I may be no further troubled on the subject.’¹¹² He responded to letters which displeased him with terse, astringent replies.

4.6 The Catholic Committee

Bishop Walmesley, sensing danger if clerical authority were not upheld, remained unmoved by all protest at Bristol. Priest and bishop were in fact mutually supportive, for Plowden was at pains to unite with Walmesley in another dispute in the country at large between the vicars apostolic and the Catholic Committee over the wording of an oath of allegiance which could be acceptable to both Catholics and government.¹¹³

Both Plowden and Bishop Walmesley were finding in their own experiences the traditional authority of the Catholic Church in England threatened by an aggressive, presumptuous laity. Aware of the challenge to the vicars apostolic from the work of the Catholic Committee Plowden reacted unequivocally - he hastened to support Walmesley, for he saw the bishop’s situation as his own writ large.

The Catholic Committee, whose members were originally entirely from the aristocracy and gentry, was first set up in 1778 to work for relief from some of the sanctions long imposed on Catholics. It was a committee of men long accustomed by their social position to be regarded (as they themselves thought proper, for their country seats had long supported Catholic worship), as leaders of the Catholic community, with whom government ministers were prepared to treat.

The Committee was enlarged in 1787 with the addition of three clerics - Bishop James Talbot of the London District, Bishop Charles Berington, coadjutor in
the Midland District, and Joseph Wilks, a Benedictine monk and priest of the chapel at Bath, where Walmesley resided. It was around Wilks in particular that the dispute between the Committee and Bishop Walmesley was to centre, and to draw into the debate Robert Plowden and his brother, Charles, and the administrator of the English ex-Jesuits, William Strickland of London.

An Encyclical Letter of 1789 showed that the vicars apostolic were opposed to the new oath to be included in the Catholic Relief Bill; on the other hand Strickland, writing to Charles Plowden, found it no stumbling block:

I have not seen their [the bishops'] publication on the occasion but am told that many of our principal Men have seen it & are much discontented with it... I hope therefore that they [the bishops] have not made a wanton use of their power which will infallibly lessen the respect for their character. Moderation is always amiable.114

The bishops saw the wording of the new oath as encroaching on their spiritual authority, whereas Strickland, like the Committee, felt the government were requiring their assurance on political matters only, and that religious issues were not involved. The discussion, and disagreements, continued at length.

Walmesley's anger focused particularly on Joseph Wilks, a member of the Committee whom he saw as especially insubordinate not only in that he was a member of his own religious order, but from his own District, and indeed a close neighbour for he was priest of the chapel at Bath where both resided. He regarded Wilks, who signed the Blue Books (as the official manifestos of the Committee, produced with blue wrappers, were called), as deliberately denying his episcopal authority and as responsible for the theological errors of the Committee (for they looked to him for advice on theological matters), and he required a retraction of his support for them and a submission to him as his bishop. Wilks, though
acknowledging Walmesley as his bishop and confessing submission to him as such, nevertheless persisted in explaining his role in the proceedings, an attitude which Walmesley regarded as qualifying his apology. Eventually, in February 1791, he suspended him from duty.

In a letter (described as 'curious' by the Jesuit writer, Geoffrey Holt) dated 2 May 1791,115 William Strickland urged Walmesley to remove the suspension from Wilks arguing that no bishop had the right to require submission in temporal concerns and that in so doing he was co-operating in a papal claim to civil jurisdiction in England. Robert Plowden joined the fray informing Strickland that his letter had given Walmesley great offence and in correspondence with Walmesley himself the following month he remarked (referring to Strickland) 'but I hope we shall conquer him'.116

By 16 May 1791 Bishop Douglass of London, who had succeeded on the death of Bishop Talbot, was writing to Walmesley that 'the Oath is tolerable and may be taken',117 but Plowden and his friend Coombs (who commented dismissively to Walmesley that Bishop Douglass 'forms his judgment from the last opinion he hears')118 met in Bristol and individually wrote letters to the Archbishop of Canterbury asking for his support against the bill.

A satisfactory wording for the oath was eventually found (with a few alterations) in the oath the Irish Catholics had subscribed to in 1774, and this enabled the vicars apostolic to commend it to the English Catholics. From the pulpit of St Joseph's Robert Plowden read Bishop Walmesley's Pastoral of 28 June 1791 announcing that the oath first presented to Parliament, and which seemed 'derogatory to our Religious Principles', had been replaced and adding:
You may safely and conscientiously take the Oath prescribed in the said Act of Parliament... Be faithful in your duties to your God, withdraw yourselves from the pleasures and boundless dissipation of the world, and be careful to employ your time in such occupations as may be acceptable to your Sovereign Master.\textsuperscript{119}

Walmesley himself took the Oath at the Quarter Sessions on 22 August 1791, at the Guildhall in Bath.

The support that Robert Plowden had given his bishop over the question of the Oath and the Catholic Committee did not go unnoticed by the other vicars apostolic, and Bishop Gibson of the Northern District in a letter to Walmesley asked him (on more than one occasion) to give his compliments to Coombs and Plowden when he next saw them and to ‘congratulate with them’.\textsuperscript{120}

But the matter of Joseph Wilks was still troubling the Catholic scene. In the Clifton Archives there is an interesting letter of 18 July signed by Dr J. Hussey, senior chaplain of the Spanish Chapel in London, to the Rev. Cowley of Marlborough, Wiltshire. Hussey, a supporter of the Committee, relates how William Strickland had told him that Bishop Walmesley ‘had never answered his letter upon that point’ (concerning Wilks) but had deputed Robert Plowden of Bristol to answer and Plowden had written five or six ‘very abusive’ letters to him (Strickland) which Strickland had answered. ‘Thus the matter rests, and a very valuable missioner [Wilks] is unjustly oppressed and may be lost to the mission.’\textsuperscript{121} Two inferences may be drawn from the remarks of Bishop Gibson and Dr Hussey: first, it would be a mistake to suppose that all the Catholic clergy supported the bishops in their opposition to the Catholic Committee - many, including Dr Hussey, sided with the Committee; and, second, it was clear that Plowden’s own role in the controversy was known far beyond the boundaries of Bristol.
Robert Edward, sixth Lord Petre.
Wilks renewed his promise of canonical obedience and his suspension was removed on 10 September 1791, but he made the error later in the month of printing the correspondence on the issue in a letter he wrote from Weston to Thomas Clifford, Chairman at the last meeting of the Committee, and adding explanations of his own role. Plowden saw this printed manifesto as a tongue-in-cheek apology and condemned it to his friend Coombs as a 'most impertinent printed letter'. Walmsley himself, suspecting Wilks's letter to be a piece of self-justification, especially since he had been at pains to conclude it by expressing his appreciation of the unanimous resolution in his favour at the last meeting of the Committee, characterised it as captious and ambiguous and reserved his position. Plowden pressed home his attack by informing Walmsley that he had visited the Bishop of Léon (whom he was consulting in London about the marriage of a French couple at St Joseph's) and that the bishop 'seemed horribly shocked' when he read him Wilks's letter and thought he should be prevailed upon to quit the Kingdom.

The situation was complex: battle lines were not clearly drawn. Many of the regular clergy were very unhappy that a bishop had the right to suspend one of their number without proceeding through the superior of his order. For their part not all the influential Catholic laity agreed with the Committee. Thomas Weld of Lulworth Castle remained loyal to his old friend, and learning of Lord Petre's withdrawal of the £50 he contributed to Walmsley annually (Petre intended giving it for the support of John Wilks instead) wrote to the bishop:

My Lord's withdrawing his annual bounty on account of your discharging the high and necessary duties of the Pastoral charges, shows no small degree of malice and at the same time makes him act a paltry mean part which will ever be a blotch in escutcheon and an indelible mark of infamy in his character [sic].
Nor were the ex-Jesuits at one in their attitude to the Catholic Committee and the issues of the Oath and Joseph Wilks. Strickland’s sympathy for the Catholic Committee worried some. John Thorpe, a respected ex-Jesuit, resident in Rome for thirty-two years and a frequent letter-writer and commentator on Jesuit affairs, though an admirer of Strickland, expressed his reservations in a letter to Charles Plowden:

I lately told him [Strickland] that his friends wished his name as an abettor of Mr Wilkes to be less known here [Rome] & elsewhere. To his complaints about B[ishop] Walmsley I applied the words of the A[rch]b[iishop] of Florence ‘that M. de Rama’s [Walmsley’s] great age did not promise time hereafter to repent of neglect of duty while younger B[iishops] perhaps flattered themselves with now having time enough before them.’125

Strickland, who saw himself as endeavouring to bring about peace between those Catholics who were for and those against the proposed oath, was angered by the Plowdens and their unyielding support of Walmsley. Though admiring his gifts as a missioner Strickland thought Robert quarrelsome and wrong-headed, and he was disappointed that Charles, a man of influence with ex-Jesuits at large, should use his persuasive powers in the way he did. Bernard Basset, the Jesuit writer, aptly called the two brothers ‘Sons of Thunder’.126 Bernard Ward in *The Dawn of the Catholic Revival in England* saw Charles Plowden as defending in his various works many doctrines at that time considered ultramontane, while most English theologians, like the laity, held opinions which would later be considered Cisalpine in tendency.127

The principle on which some of the laity were acting in Bristol - a wish to have control, or a degree of control of their Catholic church - was displayed elsewhere in the Western District. Again the catalyst was the Wilks affair. Bishop Sharrock attempting to raise money for the building of the chapel at Monmouth discovered ‘a ferment’ amongst some of the Catholic gentry and ‘a design of
attempting alteration in our church government’, and a wish for ecclesiastical government to be regulated by certain known rules. Just as the dissenters at Bristol refused for a time to approve Plowden’s income or to contribute bench money towards it, so some of the Catholic gentry initially withheld their donations to the Monmouth chapel, though it was completed in 1795.128

In this clash of wills between the lay Catholic Committee and the vicars apostolic no clear picture emerges as to the position adopted by the ex-Jesuits generally. Some followed leading ex-Jesuits like William Strickland and Joseph Reeve (chaplain to Lord Clifford at Ugbrooke, Devon) who tended to side with the Catholic Committee, whose approach they thought was reasonable, whilst others were warm in their support of the orthodox bishops (as they called them),129 particularly of Walmesley whom they saw as the chief actor in suppressing the innovations which at that time had crept in among Roman Catholics. They were able to particularise in the case of Bristol and Robert Plowden, and commended Walmesley for his part in the proceedings there, speaking of his prudence and sturdiness throughout.

Of this turbulent episode in Bristol’s Catholic history Foley, the Jesuit chronicler, remarks, with no sympathy for the laity’s wish to be effectively involved: ‘Another useful lesson too, may be learnt, amongst so many in the history of the Province, of the great evil and danger of lay interference in our affairs.’130
NOTES TO CHAPTER IV

1. In the nineteenth century the Plowden estate extended to between 3,000 and 6,000 acres. See The History of Shropshire, ed. by G.C. Braugh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 111, 311n. The other prominent recusant families in Shropshire were the Blounts of Mawley Hall and the Talbots of Albrighton and Longford.

2. DAL. For details of the Plowdens’ family life see Barbara Mary Plowden, The Plowdens of Plowden (London: Heath, Cranton and Ousley, 1887). Only a limited number of copies were printed, intended for private circulation.

3. The family tree of the Plowdens can be seen in Foley, op. cit., IV, 537.

4. See William Price, ‘Three Jesuits at Plowden Hall’, Recusant History (CRS), 10 (1969), 165-172. Almost all Catholic priests in Shropshire in the eighteenth century were chaplains of recusant gentry and served large areas. The Jesuit Superior was at Holywell in Flintshire.

5. Barbara Mary Plowden, op. cit. John Parker’s name occurs as one of the witnesses to the will of Robert Plowden’s mother and to three codicils. He was upset later that he was not remembered in William Plowden’s will.


Thomas Gage died in Rome in 1820 at the early age of thirty-nine. He was buried in the Jesuit church of the Gesu and Charles Plowden composed the Latin inscription on his former pupil’s monument. See The Great Return, ed. by Dom Aidan Bellenger (Downside Abbey: South Western Catholic History), 12 (1994), 66.


8. Ibid., p.172.


10. CDA, Correspondence 1772-1788, Visitation 1784.


12. CDA, Trenchard Street Chapel 1787-1845, Brewer to Walmerley, 30 April 1787.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid., f. 3, Committee to Walmerley, 30 April 1787.
15. When, for example, Bishop Sharrock proposed excluding from his services those who neglected their Easter duties, Wamesley remarked: 'The remedy is too violent and too dangerous... Argue, observa, increpa, but in omni patientia, et doctrina' (CDA, Correspondence 1772-1788, Walmesley to Sharrock, 8 May 1785).

16. Ibid., Strickland to Walmesley, 19 January 1787.

17. Ibid., Walmesley to Strickland, 31 January 1787.

18. CDA, Trenchard Street Chapel, Plowden to the Catholic Congregation of Bristol, 28 November 1787.

19. Ibid.

20. CDA, Correspondence 1772-1788, Public Notice, 15 January 1787; Bernard Ward, Catholic London A Century Ago (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1905), p.130. cf. also Jesuit and Friends, 37, 1997, p.17: 'This [1927] was the age of bench rents and the sittings were indicated by small name plates,' referring to Corpus Christi, Boscombe.

21. ABPSJ., Old College of St Francis Xavier 1743-1847, Part 1, 2 March 1818.

22. Ibid., 14 December 1787.


24. CDA, Trenchard Street Chapel Correspondence 1787-1845, Committee to Walmesley, 4 December 1787.

25. Ibid., 13 December 1787.

26. Ibid., Walmesley to Committee, 15 December 1787.

27. Ibid., Walmesley to Plowden, 8 January 1788.

28. CDA, Correspondence 1772-1788, Plowden to Sharrock, 3 July 1788.

29. Ibid., 6 July 1788.

30. CDA, Trenchard Street Chapel 1787-1845, Plowden to Walmesley, 16 July 1788.

31. Ibid. In the context Plowden would have said 'good Irish'.

32. Ibid.

33. See Bernard Ward, op. cit., pp. 116-121; DNB; and Bossy, op. cit., pp.311-312, 340. It is interesting to see that O'Leary's earliest biographer, T.R. England, dedicates his The Life of the Reverend Arthur O'Leary (London: Longman, Hurst, 1822) to Francis Plowden, one of Robert Plowden's
brothers. Francis, eminent as a legal and political writer, was a friend of O'Leary's. At one stage Francis had been a Jesuit novice, but on the suppression of the Society of Jesus he returned to secular life.

The Warwick Street Chapel, which had a committee of some of the most powerful Catholic laymen in the country, including Lord Petre, Sir John Throckmorton and the Earl of Shrewsbury, was London's only other Catholic church not controlled by the clergy.


35. Catholic meetings in Bristol (in the absence of a church hall) were often held at the White Hart Tavern in Old Market, a fairly central location. The landlord, William White, a Catholic himself, had contributed £20 towards the building of the new chapel. See ABPSJ, Old College of St Francis Xavier, Part 1, f.58, and cf. 'The Ship] was one of the places whither the Catholics of London used to repair to hear the sermon, which could not be preached publicly, even at the embassy chapels, on account of the penal Laws. It has often been told how Dr Challoner would preach at The Ship, and the hearers would sit around the tables, with pots of beer before them as a precaution' (Bernard Ward, op. cit., pp.137, 138). cf. also William Mawhood, op. cit., passim. Bishop William Poynter of London painted a more dignified picture. In his address to Cardinal Litta, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation de Propaganda Fide, on 15 March 1815, he referred to a meeting of two hundred leading English Catholics (at which he was present) at the St Alban's Tavern on 1 February 1815: 'Taverns of this description in London, are large houses, full of magnificent rooms, in which the inhabitants of London, are frequently assembled for public business, there not being, in private houses, rooms sufficiently spacious for such meetings.' (Poynter, The Apologetical Epistle (London: Murray, 1815) p.2, par.12. See also C.D.A. Correspondence 1815). But when in 1818 the Rev. Richard Thompson, Bishop Gibson's vicar general addressed a meeting of Catholics at The Eagle and Child inn in Wigan, Charles Walmesley, a prominent lay-member of the congregation, ridiculed the practice of addressing 'true Catholics' in such a setting. See Charles Walmesley, A Short Address to the Catholics of Wigan occasioned by the Rev. Richard Thompson's "Case Stated of the Wigan Catholic Chapels" (Wigan: J. Brown, 1818) p.23.

36. CDA, Correspondence 1772-1788, f.11b, Committee to Walmesley, 18 July 1788.

37. Ibid., Plowden to Sharrock, 30 July 1788.
The vicar general is a prelate who is appointed by the bishop to assist him in the administration of the diocese by exercising ordinary jurisdiction in his name (New Catholic Encyclopedia). The Rev. William Coombes, a Somerset man, was chaplain to the Chetwynd household at Meadgate and never attached to a mission. He was not a Jesuit. The Rev. W.H. Coombes, was his nephew; he had been a professor at Douai and was later appointed to the staff of Old Hall Green in Hertfordshire. He too served the Western District.

CDA, Correspondence 1772-1788, Plowden to Walmesley, 14 October 1788.

Ibid., 11 November 1788.

Ibid., 20 November 1788.

Ibid., 26 January 1789.

Ibid., 8 February 1789.

Ibid., 23 February 1789. See also ABPSJ, Foley MS 5, ref. 22/1/3/3.

CDA, Correspondence 1789-90, Winter to Walmesley, 26 November 1790.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid., Plowden to Coombes, 1 March 1789.

Ibid.

The vicars apostolic were at odds with the Catholic Committee, consisting mostly of prominent lay persons, over the wording of the proposed oath of allegiance, which they felt encroached on their spiritual authority. Bishop Walmesley was further vexed by the part played by one of his missioners, the Rev. Joseph Wilks of Bath, who was a member of the Committee and sided with them. The bishop eventually withdrew his faculties. Plowden, supported Walmesley, declaring the need to uphold episcopal authority.

ABPSJ, Foley MS 5, p.133; BRO, CDA, Box 7, 35721: 'Statement by Frederick Charles Husenbeth of Bristol re. Jesuits and Trenchard Street, 21 April 1840'.

When in 1778 Lord and Lady Petre were visited at their home in Thorndon, Suffolk, by George III, they were the first Catholics to receive such royal favour since the Reformation. For some Protestants it was further evidence that the King had papist inclinations.

See ABPSJ, Old College of St Francis Xavier, Part 1, 17 June 1807, ff. 58, 59, 60, 63, 64.

55. Plowden claimed that the money for the purchase of the land came partly from what he gave Fargus, the churchwarden, and 'partly from the lead that was sold off my premises' (C.D.A. *Trenchard Street Chapel 1787-1845*, undated, c.July 1788). See also Sarah Levitt, *The Red Lodge* (Bristol: City of Bristol Museum, 1986) pp.4, 25.

William Trotman had a drapery shop at the corner of Clare Street and St Stephen's Avenue. He also speculated in property and when the Red Lodge, Bristol's famous Elizabethan house, came on the market he borrowed money and bought it for £2,500. He then rented it out for £60 a year and began to sell off plots of the extensive grounds, for example for the site of St Joseph's.

56. BRO, CDA, Box 7, 35721.


58. Ibid., George Oliver's MS. By 1776, three years after Clement's decree of Suppression, Rome was permitting the ordination of Jesuit students in Russia. The Society was not suppressed in Poland either.

59. CDA, *Correspondence 1789-1790*, Greenway to Sharrock, 7 May 1790.

60. Andor Gomme, Michael Jenner, Bryan Little, *Bristol: an architectural history* (London: Lund Humphries, 1979), p.176. All the pews in the Hope Chapel were for sale.

61. The clergy were accustomed to hearing confessions in their rooms or the sacristy.

62. On the fiftieth anniversary of St Joseph's, in 1840, the sermon was reprinted in a booklet of sixteen pages by E.J. Lacy of Upper Arcade, Bristol. On the centenary anniversary, in 1890, it was reprinted by M.F. Hickey of Colston Street, Bristol. This edition contains an interesting engraving of St Joseph's in 1790, as a frontispiece.

63. Ignatius Grant, op. cit., pp.16-17.


65. See also *Catholic Evening Services* ed. by F.M. de Zulueta (London: The Manresa Press, 1937) pp.3, 73. C.D. Crighton (see note 75 below) refers to William Crathorne's *The Daily Companion* published in 1743 and again in 1822 which contains a Litany for a Happy Death. 'Bona Mors, or Art of
Dying happily’ was listed in the 1790 catalogue of J.P. Coghlan of London (the country’s main Catholic publisher), price 6d.

66. See Blom, op. cit., pp.34, 35.


68. CDA, Correspondence 1796-97, Walmesley to Rious, 13 February 1796.

69. Ibid., Weld to Sharrock, 17 December 1797.

70. Ibid., Catrow to Sharrock, 19 December 1797.

71. Coghlan’s catalogues for the 1790s are contained in Ordo Recitandi Officii Divini (London: Coghlan, 1799).

72. CDA, Correspondence 1798, Preston to Sharrock, 3 March 1798.

73. Ibid., Sharrock to Preston, 9 March 1798.

74. Ibid., 3 March 1798.

75. J.D. Crighton, Worship in a Hidden Church (Dublin: The Columba Press, 1988), p.67. By 1796 Gother’s Collects, Epistles and Gospels had been out of print for several years; see CDA, Correspondence 1796-97, 9 March 1796.


79. Ibid., p.32.

80. Ibid., p.69.

81. See Barry, op. cit., p.86: ‘In 1773 Stonhouse’s Explication of the Sacraments was advertised [Bristol Journal, 18 December] as principally designed to be given away by well-disposed persons to common people who cannot afford to
buy books nor spare much time to read them.’

82. See Blom, op. cit., p.250.

83. CDA, Trenchard Street Chapel 1787-1845, Committee to Walmsley, 4 September 1790.

84. CDA, Correspondence 1792-93, Walmsley to Lady Gerard, 6 March 1792.

85. See Bossy, op. cit., p.351.

86. ABPSJ, Old College of St Francis Xavier 1743-1847, Part 1.

87. Foley, op. cit., V, 825.

88. Ibid., p.797n.

89. Ibid., p.708.


91. ABPSJ, Old College of St Francis Xavier 1743-1847, Part 1, F.60.

92. CDA, Bristol Record Office, ref.35721, ‘Memorial Concerning the Mission at Bristol’.

93. CDA, Correspondence 1792-93, 20 July 1792.

94. Ibid., Strickland to [unknown], 2 May 1793.

95. ABPSJ, Foley MS 5, p.158.

96. BRO, CDA, Box 7, ref.35721.

97. Ibid.

98. The followers of the Swedish philosopher, scientist, and mystic, Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) were organised in London in 1778 as the ‘New Church’ - thus the name of their church in Bristol, ‘The New Jerusalem Church’.


103. CDA, *Trenchard Street Chapel 1787-1845*, James Mullowney and others to Walmesley, 4 September 1790.

104. The two slops-sellers, who lived by the harbour, sold ready-made clothes, especially, it may be supposed, those suitable for seamen. When, as shown in a later Directory, one of them moved his business away from the Quay he took the opportunity to acquire a new dignity, describing himself as a 'Taylor'.


109. CDA, *Correspondence 1789-90*, Committee to Walmesley, 9 August 1790.


111. CDA, *Trenchard Street Chapel 1787-1845*, Committee to Walmesley, 4 September 1790.

112. CDA, *Correspondence 1789-90*, Walmesley to Plowden, 8 September 1790.

113. The complexities of the relationships between the bishops and the Catholic Committee have been traced in such works as Bernard Ward's *The Dawn of the Catholic Revival in England*.


116. CDA, *Correspondence 1791*, Plowden to Walmesley, 6 June 1791.

118. Ibid., Coombs to Walmesley, 23 May 1791.

119. Ibid., Walmesley's Pastoral Letter, 28 June.

120. Ibid., Gibson to Walmesley, 30 June.

121. Ibid., Hussey to Walmesley, 23 July.

122. Ibid., Plowden to Coombs, 18 July.

123. Ibid., Plowden to Walmesley, 6 October. Monseigneur François de la Marche, Bishop of St Pol de Léon, a seaside town in Brittany, was the most distinguished of the French émigré bishops who fled to England in 1791 during the Revolution. He died in 1806. For interesting vignettes of La Marche and other exiled French bishops see Dominic Bellenger, 'Four Gallican Bishops in Exile: Concepts of Episcopacy in the Face of Revolution' in Recusant History, 18 (1986).

124. CDA, op. cit., Weld to Walmesley, 2 January 1792.

125. Geoffrey Holt, op. cit., pp.38-39. In his study, William Strickland and the Suppressed Jesuits, Geoffrey Holt, SJ, attempts to answer the question: Why did William Strickland give his support to the Catholic Committee and to Joseph Wilks? Amongst the points he makes Holt suggests that although the vicars apostolic had behaved humanely towards the ex-Jesuits at the time of the suppression, Strickland was aware of the situation abroad where Jesuit property had been seized and plundered, and he believed it could not be taken for granted that authority would always be wisely or justly used; Pope Clement XIV had failed to stand up to the Bourbon powers.

126. ‘Sons of Thunder’ (Basset, op. cit., p.354). See also Mark iii, 17 and Luke ix, 54.


128. CDA, op. cit., Sharrock to Walmesley, 20 March 1792.

129. ABPSJ, Foley MS 5, 22/1/3/3, p.154. By ‘orthodox bishops’ they meant those bishops whose sympathies were not nationalistic and seemingly anti-papal like the Catholic Committee’s. They disapproved, for example, of the views of Charles Berington, a member of the Committee, who was Bishop Talbot’s coadjutor and succeeded him. The Holy See refused him his faculties for the vicariate unless he recanted, which after three years of negotiations he reluctantly did.

130. Ibid., p.135.
CHAPTER V

Robert Plowden and the Jesuits in an Age of Uncertainty

Although Robert Plowden has left abundant evidence of his opinions and activities in his writings, this material has not hitherto been subjected to any historical evaluation, yet the problems Plowden faced can give us a useful insight into the issues which concerned the Catholic Community at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth. In addition to the ongoing organisational problems which the Jesuits faced at this time, the events of the French Revolution and the arrival of large numbers of French exiled clergy created fresh challenges.

5.1 Plowden's Writings on the Catholic Question

Jesuit and other Catholic writers reflecting on the quarrels and disputes of the time, although condemning the extreme lengths to which some of the laity went, were at pains not to pass harsh judgment. Thankful there was no schism, they used words of mitigation: it was acknowledged that those very people who sorely tried their bishops over the oath of allegiance, over the Wilks affair and ecclesiatical government, included in their number men of principle, devout in the practice of religion. The troublesome gentry, part of that Catholic aristocracy which had kept the faith in penal times, continued as benefactors of their Church. When Foley (thinking of the difficulties at Bristol) singled out Robert Plowden as being in a particular manner, through his different publications, instrumental in exposing and refuting 'the multiplicity of those errors which at [that] time nearly proved fatal to the Catholic cause in England', he observed that his writings indicated that it was not so
THE ELEVATION OF THE SOUL to GOD,
BY MEANS OF
Spiritual Considerations and Affections.

Translated from the French of Mons. L'Abbe L....

By R. P. H....

VOLUME I.

EXETER:
Printed and Sold by B. THORN and SON.
Sold also by J. P. Coghlan, Duke-Street, Grosvenor-Square, and J. Booker, LONDON; and by most other Bookstellers.
much malice as deception and illusion that led the discontented astray.¹

The three publications of Plowden’s to which I shall refer are listed in Coghlan’s catalogues for the 1790s: they were a devotional work and two booklets—one a critique of his brother Francis’ *Jura Anglorum* (a defence of the English Constitution), and the other a response to two propositions. One of the propositions was contained in the Catholic Committee’s third Blue Book and the other was made by a group of Catholic clergymen in Staffordshire in defence of Joseph Wilks. The principles which informed Plowden’s writings (and won the approbation of the bishops) were Catholic orthodoxy and the authority of the Church as vested in the vicars apostolic.

The Catholic Relief Acts of 1778 and 1791 and the availability of established Catholic publishers such as J.P. Coghlan of London engendered a growing optimism and confidence amongst Catholic writers. Between the years 1776 and 1796 the works of Robert Plowden and his brothers, Charles and Francis, were printed on twenty-eight occasions. The most prolific of the three brothers was Charles, later to become provincial of the Society.

In addition to his sermon preached at the opening of St Joseph’s Chapel in 1790 and published in Bristol that year, Robert Plowden had published four years previously, in 1786 in Exeter and London, a translation in two volumes of *The Elevation of the Soul to God, by means of spiritual considerations and affections*, by the French Jesuit, Barthélemy Baudrand. Plowden’s translation was subsequently also published in Edinburgh in 1792 and a third edition in Dublin in 1795. During the later years of the eighteenth century and early into the nineteenth Baudrand’s book, *L’Ame Elevée à Dieu*, was a popular religious work which was published four times.
between 1786 and 1809 - in Rouen, Lyons (twice) and Angers. It took the form of a series of readings (e.g. On the Spirit of Penance, On Sufferings, On the Manner of Sanctifying Ourselves etc.) and meditations, for the purpose (as Plowden put it) of inculcating to the faithful the strongest sense the author could of the important truths of Christianity. Each of Plowden's two volumes contains seventeen lessons, each lesson followed by a meditation; and to every lesson Plowden himself prefixed a text of Scripture suited to the subject.²

In 1786 the lawyer Francis Plowden (Robert's brother) published *Jura Anglorum. The Rights of Englishmen; being an historical and legal defence of the present Constitution*. For this the University of Oxford conferred on him, at the Encaenia on 5 July 1793, the degree of D.C.L. - a notable distinction at that time for a Catholic. But it was a treatise which did not commend itself to Bishop Walmesley of the Western District, nor to Robert Plowden who in 1794 wrote a critical pamphlet of 230 pages entitled *A Letter to Francis Plowden, Esq. Conveyancer of the Middle Temple on his work entitled Jura Anglorum. By a Roman Catholic clergyman*.³ (It was Plowden's practice to designate himself in his writings by the expression 'A Roman Catholic clergyman' or the initials 'R.P.'.) 'It is to be wished,' said Walmesley, writing to Bishops Gibson and Douglass after studying *Jura Anglorum*, 'that Mr Plowden [Francis] while eminent in the knowledge of the laws of the State, had abstained from the discussion of the nature and laws of Religion, as not belonging to his department.' He accused Francis of confounding the civil law with the divine so as to give superiority to the former, and of confounding the spiritual power with the civil, whereas, he said, the power of the church of Christ is independent of the civil power. Accordingly Francis Plowden, reasoning upon principles of a false
nature, had ‘deviated into many errors, and deduced many inferences hurtful to Religion and highly censurable’. Walmesley wrote at some length, listing specific examples of the faults he found. A few months later on the eve of setting out for Confirmation services in Somerset and Devon he was in touch with Bishop Douglass again: ‘It would be well if Mr F. Plowden could be prevailed upon to make another edition of his book and to confine himself to what belongs to his department, the civil laws, and not to meddle with the Laws of Religion.’ In reply Douglass informed Walmesley that Francis was indeed thinking of writing another pamphlet and making this distinction, and planned to go to Lulworth to persuade Charles, his brother, to accompany him to Bristol ‘that he might settle the matter with his brother [Robert] there’, but Bishop Douglass thought the whole subject too delicate and begged him to abandon the idea.

Robert Plowden’s own response to Jura Anglorum was to approve of Francis’ support of an established government under which millions considered themselves happy to live, but to regret the means he used to argue his case. The first principle Robert considered ‘blameable’ was the ‘pretended’ right Francis attempted to establish in man to choose his own religion. Man has no right to choose any other than the true Catholic faith of Jesus Christ. Nor has a community the right, as Francis maintained, to support with its civil laws and sanctions whatever religion is adopted by the majority of the state, for if this right were maintained it could extend not only to any of the different sects of Christianity but also to paganism and idolatry themselves.

Robert Plowden devotes much of his letter to a defence of James II, concluding that in no case whatever can Christians of any denomination claim the
right to depose a sovereign ‘when it is possible for them to obtain relief, even from
the most grievous and tyrannical oppression by peaceable and lenient measures’. 11
Since Francis was a Catholic he should not approve of the establishment of the
Protestant religion by whatever means it was introduced into the kingdom. 12 In the
latter part of his letter Robert deals with what he sees as the inconsistencies of Jura
Anglorum, but finally, with a tactful postscript seeks to mollify his brother by
commending him for his account of the conduct and principles of the French émigré
clergy, and for exposing the illiberality of those in authority who will not allow
thousands of Irish Roman Catholic soldiers and sailors who fight for England to
worship in uniform. 13 Such ‘staunch Catholicity’ fully convinces him of what he has
all along believed - that the errors of Jura Anglorum are ‘the flights of an exuberant
imagination, but in no manner a deviation of heart from Catholic principles and
rectitude’. 14

Robert Plowden’s A letter to a Roman Catholic Clergyman upon Theological
Inaccuracy, is dated 27 August 1795, and was published in Bristol and London that
year as a booklet of 168 pages. 15 It concerns itself with two documents - one issued
by the Catholic Committee and the other by a group of clergymen in sympathy with
them. The ‘Roman Catholic Clergyman’ to whom the letter is addressed is not - as
might be supposed from the title - himself guilty of theological inaccuracy but has
drawn Plowden’s attention to two propositions which he considers dangerous and
erroneous and asks his opinion of them. Plowden begins his critique disarmingly
enough by avowing that those who have subscribed to the false propositions have
done so simply because they have not understood the meaning of them. He for his
part has always been convinced that a plain explication of the abstruse points of
religion is the surest method of precluding wranglings and disputes, and he
determines to proceed on this principle.\textsuperscript{16}

The first of the propositions (to be found on page forty-six of the Catholic
Committee's third Blue Book of 21 April 1792) states that the Church through its
spiritual authority should not attempt to regulate the civil and temporal concerns of
subjects and citizens, but to 'direct souls by persuasion in the concerns of everlasting
salvation'. Amongst the signatures attached were those of Charles Berington and
Joseph Wilks. Plowden condemns the proposition as false and heretical, saying that
if civil and temporal concerns are at any time made to run counter to the laws of
nature and revelation then the governors of the Church have an inalienable right 'to
enforce the observance of the natural and revealed law by the use of those spiritual
arms which God has placed in their hands'.\textsuperscript{17} Bishop Walmesley himself, who along
with Bishop Douglass of London particularly objected to this proposition in the third
Blue Book, felt that Plowden's publication had correctly shown that it was heretical
and that the Church had powers of ecclesiastical censures.\textsuperscript{18}

The second proposition with which Plowden takes issue is in the \textit{Address to
the Catholic clergy of England, by their brethren of the county of Stafford} dated 26
January 1792, a document of twenty-four pages signed by Thomas Flynn and twelve
others in which they make a formal declaration of faith and present the case of Joseph
Wilks from his own point of view. The Rev. Joseph Berington (the cousin of Bishop
Charles Berington, for whom it seems Joseph had little respect) is believed, Plowden
maintains, to have had the chief hand in the Staffordshire address.\textsuperscript{19} In a letter to
Bishop Walmesley dated 26 March 1792 Lord Petre described the Staffordshire clergy
as most eminent and respectable characters for learning and piety, declared the
suspension of the Rev. Joseph Wilks unjust, illegal and null, and claimed that the clergy in general joined in the same sentiments.\textsuperscript{20} Plowden and his brother Charles, on the other hand, saw the address as a challenge to orthodoxy and the vicars apostolic.\textsuperscript{21}

The passage which Robert Plowden had been invited to comment upon as erroneous ran: ‘We believe the bishop of Rome to be supreme in spirituals by divine appointment, supreme in discipline by ecclesiastical institution.’ This can only mean, he says, that except where the Pope is issuing infallible decrees concerning matters of faith, he ‘is not by divine appointment possessed of any supreme spiritual jurisdiction, to which Catholics according to the principles of their religion are bound to submit’.\textsuperscript{22} This doctrine, Plowden continues, is plainly contradictory to the Catholic faith and (in a clear reference to the Catholic Committee and their supporters) in the late reforms that have been attempted it has not only not been disavowed but openly countenanced by many. For some 168 pages he argues vigorously against the two propositions before ending, as before, with conciliatory words: ‘I am convinced that far the greater part, if not all the gentlemen, who gave occasion to our present dissensions, were led into their mistakes from upright motives and an intention of doing good.’\textsuperscript{23} He urges them to abjure their errors that the blessings of peace may be restored to the Catholics of the kingdom.

Bishop Carroll of Baltimore welcomed Plowden’s defence of orthodoxy against such writings as those of Joseph Berington, a man he considered to be of extreme vanity and self-consequence. That Bishop Douglass should think Berington’s apologetical explanations were satisfactory seemed to suggest, Carroll confided to Plowden, that he was ‘not a very competent Divine’.\textsuperscript{24} Carroll was particularly
impressed with Plowden's publication *Upon Theological Inaccuracy* and wished that all the priests in England would read and study his work in order to learn the true principles of their religion. "I do not recollect that my opinions varied from yours in any point therein treated; but I am sure that I gained an insight into some which I had not considered before but very slightly." But if we are to believe Bishop Charles Berington (who like his cousin Joseph would be pleased to see the Plowden brothers meet with some rebuff) there was small likelihood of there being a wide readership for the *Theological Inaccuracy*, and though acknowledging that Walmsley's judgment was guided by it Berington declared that it was little read and little known, and could not therefore be thought to have sufficiently excited any public notice.  

5.2 Robert Plowden and the Beginning of Catholic Schooling in Bristol

But the literacy of his own flock, particularly of the younger members, was also a matter of concern for Plowden - an immediate problem to be dealt with.

Teaching has been part of the Jesuit apostolate from its earliest days. The principle is enshrined in the Constitutions and is one of the original distinguishing features of the Society:

> Regard being had not only to the progress of our own Scholars in literature, but to the progress also of those not of our Society in literature and morals, whom we have admitted into our Colleges to be instructed, let public schools be opened, wherever it may conveniently be done, at least for Polite Learning.  

But there must be an essential spiritual dimension, giving the school its *raison d'être*:

> In these schools let that method be pursued by which the external Scholars may be well instructed in all that relates to Christian Learning; and let care be taken, as far as possible, that they may attend the Sacrament of Confession once a month, frequently hearing
the word of God, and in short imbibe, together with learning, morals
becoming Christians.\textsuperscript{28}

In recent times Fr Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, General of the Society of Jesus, has
restated the principle: ‘No aspect of education is neutral, not even pure science. All
teaching transmits values.’ The transmission of Gospel values to the student body is,
he says, ‘the distinctive mark of a Jesuit education’.\textsuperscript{29}

Originally Jesuit scholastics had resided in the university towns where they
attended classes, but from 1545 the Society began to set up its own colleges and
schools for secular students. In that year the Society established a college for its
scholastics at Gandia in Spain, but when the public were given the opportunity to hear
some of the disputations in philosophy certain families were so impressed that they
enquired about the possibility of instruction for their own children too. So began the
formal education of secular students by the Jesuits; three years later, at Messina in
Sicily, they opened a school, their first in Europe. \textit{Puerilis institutio renovatio mundi}
was the enthusiastic cry of some, reflecting the importance the Jesuits attached to
education and their faith in what their schools could achieve.\textsuperscript{30}

In England during the first half of the seventeenth century the Jesuits
occasionally attempted, with varying degrees of success, to set up schools, both boys’
and girls’, while during the brief reign of the sympathetic James II (1685-88) they
established free schools (which Protestants too could attend) in places as far apart as
London, Bury St Edmunds, Wolverhampton, Welshpool, Pontefract, Lincoln, Wigan,
Durham and Newcastle-upon-Tyne.\textsuperscript{31} In 1794, Stonyhurst in Lancashire became the
Jesuits’ principal school and college. But it continued to be their policy to cast their
net widely - to educate the poor as well as the rich - particularly since in so doing
there was the possibility of more vocations for the priesthood.\textsuperscript{32} Today, Fr Peter-
Hans Kolvenbach makes the point again: since, he says, the Jesuit mission is 'closely linked to our preferential option for the poor ... Jesuit education should be available to the underprivileged, but not exclusively'.

In Bristol, as elsewhere towards the end of the eighteenth century, there were humble beginnings. When Robert Plowden built his chapel in Trenchard Street he established a school, at a cost of £1,000, which he maintained at his own expense together with contributions from members of the congregation; the management of it was then entrusted to members of three respected Catholic families of Clifton: Mr & Mrs Thomas Weld, Mr & Mrs George Blount and Mrs Bodenham. John Smith, a master at the school in Plowden’s time, remarked that other benefactors were Mr F.C. Husenbeth and a Mr Keeman. Thomas Weld was a key figure in the development of Jesuit education in England for it was he who gave Stonyhurst to the Society for their college and another of his properties close by, Hodder, for the training of novices.

Unfortunately contemporary references to the earliest days of the Bristol school are few. John Smith, in a disputatious pamphlet written in 1845 entitled Jesuitism and Friarism in Bristol, speaks of the founding of the school:

[It] was established by the Rev. Robt. Plowden in 1789, and supported by him, with comparatively small contributions of the congregation, till 1816, at the expense of £1,463, besides the expenses of erecting the old school rooms, which were rebuilt in 1811-2.

The boys’ school, he said, was committed to his care in 1809. A fierce supporter of the Society of Jesus, and one who resented the presence in Bristol (at the time of his writing) of the Franciscans whom he looked upon as usurpers, Smith was eager to speak of Jesuit achievements. He remarked on Plowden’s new school, of which for seven years he had been master, and said how several of the boys under his care had
proceeded to college, their fees being paid by Thomas Weld and other leading Catholics. He spoke of the ‘attention paid to the clothing and improvement of the scholars by several distinguished Catholics of Clifton and Bristol’, and was able to give personal testimony of ‘the indefatigable zeal of the Rev. Robert Plowden in the discharge of all his missionary duties, at all times and at all hours’. Indeed, the author could relate ‘many edifying anecdotes ... of his zeal and charity’. 36

Bishop Sharrock, with Bishop Douglass’s consent, later launched an appeal in the London District for funds for the education of young men in the Western District who wished to become secular clergy, for there was, he said, a great scarcity of missioners in England but nowhere more so than in the Western counties. He had for the previous three years solicited a contribution of a penny a week ‘from charitable persons’ in his District, but found this method too slow. 37

Plowden had also made provision for the girls’ schooling. Their mistress was Mrs Mary Burke and when she died on 16 January 1811 Plowden wrote to the bishop that same day describing her loss as ‘considerable’ and - perhaps feeling the weight of his seventy-one years (‘Since her death he has been unsettled,’ 38 wrote Ann Hippisly) - adding: ‘If God gives me grace to put another in her place before I am called forth myself, perhaps it will be one of the last services I shall be able to do for this congregation.’ 39

The person he appointed as the new mistress was Ann Hippisly, who, we have noted, remembered her parents walking the twenty miles from Shepton Mallet to Bristol, and sometimes to Bath, to attend Mass when they had no Catholic church of their own. Ann (who for some eighteen months previously had tried her vocation as a nun) within a day of her arrival at Trenchard Street on 4 June 1812 wrote to friends
in London on behalf of the school - 'a charity school for the poorest cath. children' - to see if they could send her the titles of books used in their own 'admirable' school, even if you please to the very least; because it appears they will be most advantageous here for those poor dear little creatures whom good Mr Plowden terms 'wild Irish', but whose innocent souls are truly precious in the eyes of our common Master. I write for the titles ... tho' I cannot as yet send for them ... because the undertaking ... is very poor & really very so. 40

She was succeeded by a lady whose appointment was interesting in that she was not a Catholic but a 'sister of the Society of Friends - an appellation which she justly merits by her unceasing attention and industry, in her laudable undertaking'. So wrote 'J.P.' (most likely James Parker, Plowden's Jesuit colleague living in the city) in a letter published in the Bristol Mercury, 2 January 1815. The occasion for his piece was the dinner (part of the Christmas celebrations no doubt) given to the children of the Trenchard Street school by one of the committee members, Mrs Weld of York Place, Clifton, the wife of Thomas Weld of Lulworth Castle. 41 We learn that more than a hundred boys and girls attended - suggesting the numbers on the school register - and that they were regaled with 'a bounteous supply of roasted beef, potatoes, plum pudding, and good ale'. Afterwards, Mrs Weld gave each of them a loaf of bread 'for themselves and their indigent friends'. 42 The letter concluded with a tribute to Plowden and his 'Plan of Education'.

We learn that it was the custom for the pupils to have regular instruction in the catechism and for a public examination in it to be held 'at the foot of the Altar, which gave so much edification to Catholics and Protestants, so as to be much attended, and frequently spoken of by the latter'. We hear too how the schoolmaster purchased 'a copy of Gobinet's Instruction for Youth' for use in the school. 43 Charles Gobinet's Instruction de la jeunesse en la piété Chrétienne, a work in two
volumes, had already reached a third English edition by 1741, whilst in Plowden’s
time in the last decade of the century fifth and sixth editions followed in quick
succession.\footnote{44}

A useful context in which to view the Trenchard Street school and the public’s
attitude to education is provided by the observations of a correspondent in the \textit{Bristol
Mercury} on 21 November 1814. Writing about juvenile crime in the city and his
wish to see the streets freed from the swarm of petty young thieves which infested
them, he proposed that there should be a parish school-room where every boy or girl
not in employment should be compelled to attend, and where they might be taught ‘to
read the Scriptures, and sand-writing, and any kind of work it might be found
practicable to instruct them in’.

I do not mean that they should have a superior education to fit them
for counting houses; to displace those whose province it is to fill such
situations, or (as they learn to think) to be idle gentlemen. Any that
shewed superior talents, industry and integrity, and were proper
objects for it, might be removed to some of the excellent charity
schools with which this city abounds.\footnote{45}

We see from Jeremiah Maher’s outline plan of the premises in Trenchard
Street, drawn in 1856, that there was a school room (and ‘one over’) to the rear of
the church, and a yard.\footnote{46} During the temporary absence of the Jesuits after 1815
and again after 1830 the school, according to John Smith’s somewhat partial account,
did not enjoy the ‘prosperity’ it knew under the Jesuits. On one occasion, for
instance, the boys, many of them barefoot and poorly clad, could not endure the
extreme cold, and coal had to be supplied from the nearby house. There were neither
books nor slates and only four catechisms with which to instruct the boys.\footnote{47}

All in all, then, we may assume that Robert Plowden’s school was, like many
others of that time with slender resources, an unpretentious establishment with
modest, worthy aims. *Renovatio mundi* could be left for another day.

5.3 **Internal Tensions within the Catholic Community**

We have seen how in his writings Plowden had once again joined his bishop to defend orthodoxy. Indeed, disputatious clergy with their unsettling opinions had no place in the Western District; and Thomas Weld of Lulworth Castle, Walmesley’s influential friend, was certain he knew why:

> We are more indebted to your lordship (Under Heaven) than any one else. See how much better your clergy behave than that in other districts. Your putting them and us under the sweet protection of Our Blessed Lady by the quarterly devotion which you have established throughout your District is the cause of it. 48

Faced in the final decades of the eighteenth century with challenges from the Catholic Committee and its successor, the Cisalpine Club, and from independently-minded priests such as Charles Berington, his cousin, Joseph, and the Benedictine, Joseph Wilks, the vicars apostolic continually stressed the need for orthodoxy, even seeking approval on that score for themselves, particularly from their senior, Bishop Charles Walmesley. Writing to Walmesley on 15 March 1793 Bishop Milner of the Midland District, for instance, remarks: ‘It gives me the greatest satisfaction to learn that you find my late work orthodox and that you are able to give your approbation of it in general.’ 49

An occasion occurred when Plowden was able to give public demonstration of his disapproval of Bishop Berington and his (Berington’s) support of the Catholic Committee. Bishop Talbot, in poor health, had been at Bristol for a week taking the waters at Hotwells and was apparently improving when, a little before midday on 24 April 1795, he collapsed (in Plowden’s words ‘with an apoplectic fit’) and died. He
was later buried under the new chapel in Trenchard Street, but although Dr Charles Berington, his coadjutor, was accompanying him, Plowden himself presided at the requiem Mass, refusing to allow Berington, whose name had been affixed to several of the Catholic Committee's manifestos (and who for this had received a reprimand from Rome), to officiate in his church. Two months earlier Bishop Milner had complained to Walmesley of a recent publication containing

the whole system of the Beringonian Heresy [such as is to be found] in the different works of Joseph Berington. The book condemns celibacy, the Breviary, the litanies of the B.V., the practice of confession, the precepts of the Ch. in general, and above all, the necessity of submitting our opinions to the judgment of the Ch... Most of these notions have been heretofore published under the eye and in the very house of B-p B-n.50

Less than a month later Walmesley, too, charged Bishop Berington with having subscribed his name to the Blue Books 'which [had] offended and scandalised the Catholic world', and advised that he publicly retract.51 Plowden himself felt Charles Berington's cousin, Joseph, to be particularly hostile to the Jesuits. Certainly his friend, the Rev. William Coombes, saw him in this light:

Mr Jos. Berington has obtruded another pernicious work upon the public. His chief aim seems to be to vilify the regulars especially the Jesuits... I am sorry he has brought forward the Jura Anglorum in a note with a studied commendation to patronize his opinion respecting the oath of supremacy.52

Bishop Douglass later recalled Bishop Berington saying to him that he was sure Walmesley was not an enemy to him though they differed in opinion, but 'the Plowdens were his enemies'. Some months later he had discovered more who were against him and 'talked much' against the 'Bishops, and the people at Rome who are influenced, he [said], by the Plowdens'.53 It is doubtful if Walmesley ever thought as kindly of Berington as Berington himself professed to believe, and by 1797
Plowden and other priests in the Western District had instructions from the bishop not to allow any clergyman who had signed the Blue Books or the Staffordshire clergymen's 'Appeal to the Catholics of England', to exercise any ecclesiastical functions until they publicly withdrew their signatures; and even at the point of death no sacrament was to be administered to them until they retracted 'if possible ... in the presence of two or more respectable Catholic witnesses'.

Bishop Douglass of the London District thought highly of Plowden's polemical skills; speaking on one occasion to Bishop Walmesley he remarked: 'Mr Plowden reasons with accuracy and perspicuity.' Plowden was, indeed, considered an authority by some. When Joseph Berington, for example, wrote a dismissive pamphlet entitled *An Examination of Events termed Miraculous, as reported in Letters from Italy*, the Rev. George Bruning, a neighbour at Abington in Buckinghamshire, intended replying and consulted Plowden on the subject. Walmesley himself when writing to Thomas Weld numbered Robert Plowden amongst the 'learned divines', and later sought his advice on a matter of canon law in a complex case concerning an inheritance. On another occasion when Walmesley met in London with Bishops Douglass and Gibson in 'a sort of Synod, the Divines for him were Robt. and C. Plowden'.

At one time it would appear that Robert Plowden was under consideration as vicar apostolic of the Midland District: 'If another person is to be chosen for V.A. of that District as Messrs Milner and Plowden and Mr Coombes are objected to by Mgr Erskine, whom would you think of?' enquired Bishop Douglass of Walmesley in 1795. The extent of Walmesley's indebtedness to Plowden for the latter's defence of Catholic orthodoxy may be imagined when we read the bishop's
melancholy reflections on the state of contemporary religion in his occasional letters to Lady Arundell. In one such missive on 21 August 1794 he exclaimed: ‘What doctrines have been here lately published by pretended Catholics against the Catholic Church! what strange declarations and oaths set up contrary to what our faith professes!’ 61 Foley, too, regarded Plowden as a keen theologian and an unflinching defender of the purity of Catholic faith and doctrine. 62 But it was when he was engaged in such theological controversy that, in later years, his career was to founder and his mission in Bristol brought to an abrupt end.

The relationship between Robert Plowden and William Strickland, the administrator of the ex-Jesuits, was always an uneasy one. Whilst others recognised Strickland’s skills when president of the Liège Academy and as the ex-Jesuits’ agent in England, Plowden had resented his sympathy for the Catholic Committee and had not failed to express his views to him in letters Strickland called ‘abusive’. 63 Strickland for his part, although acknowledging Plowden to be a gifted missioner (‘there is perhaps not a better missionary in England,’ he once wrote 64), was angered by his entrusting the deeds of the Bristol chapel to Walmesley, his vicar apostolic, when, Strickland said, the building could rightly be considered the Society’s property, for so much money had come from Jesuit sources. He charged him, moreover, with failing to repay a loan of £770 which had been made to him for its construction from the funds of Office. Strickland interpreted such conduct as falling short of the sort of commitment that an ex-Jesuit should give.

Plowden’s view was that on the suppression of the Jesuits the property belonging to the Society fell by law to the vicars apostolic or, failing that, the sovereign in his own right would lay hands on it. He argued, too, that the document
of conveyance at Bristol made no specific reference to the Jesuits. Certainly the terms of the two Declarations of Trust prepared when land was bought made no reference to the Society of Jesus, but this was hardly surprising since the Society no longer officially existed. But it was Strickland’s contention that Plowden had acted contrary to the spirit of things since most of the money had come from ex-Jesuit sources and the trustees had been appointed precisely because they were supporters of the former Society. So Plowden and Strickland accused each other of misrepresentation. Bitter words were spoken and each was unyielding.

When Strickland assumed office as administrator he made the reorganisation of the financial affairs of the ex-Jesuits a priority. He was driven always by the belief that one day the Society of Jesus would be restored, towards which end he worked tirelessly and thought it essential, meanwhile, to secure and safeguard their property through some central control - the Office. In this way, he no doubt felt, the body of ex-Jesuits would be strengthened and ready against the day when Rome would once more declare them a religious order, and with financial resources at their disposal they could at once resume work. It was necessary, therefore, to resist all claims on their property, whether from the vicars apostolic or indeed their own brethren, for Strickland was aware of the dangers to their survival from any kind of fragmentation. The Society had derived strength from their highly centralised order: ‘The late Body of the Jesuits from their unanimity flourished to admiration,’ wrote John Warmoll, the Southern Provincial of the Benedictines to Bishop Sharrock in 1797.65

Strickland was naturally much concerned about the situation in Bristol where, it seemed to him, the Society’s property had been disposed of in a most improper
way. To resolve the conflict between priest and dissidents which had bedevilled the Bristol mission in the early years of their new chapel Bishop Walmesley had sent his vicar general, William Coombes, to restore peace on threat of an interdict, and as part of the ensuing pact it was agreed that documents relevant to the new property should be entrusted to the vicar apostolic. As Plowden recalled the occasion, his opponents were so averse to him and all ex-Jesuits that they refused to allow him to pass on the papers himself but went to the lengths of employing a Protestant attorney to make sure they were given directly into the hands of the bishop. 66

An outraged Strickland saw Plowden as acting irresponsibly, contrary to his brethren's interests. In 1787, three years before the chapel was opened, Strickland (having taken the opinion of the distinguished lawyer, Charles Butler, secretary to the Catholic Committee) had sent a letter to each of the vicars apostolic and their coadjutors setting out the ex-Jesuits' rights to the property belonging to the former Society. 67

Plowden vigorously defended his position, complaining to Strickland that when the latter lent him £750 (the final figure was £770) there was not a word in Strickland's accompanying letter concerning a promise on Plowden's side of securing to Office the new house and chapel at Bristol. Besides, he added, the papers had been handed to the Bishop on 19 March 1789, before the transaction concerning the loan had taken place and therefore 'it is not possible that I should have made you the promise that you pretend of engaging the Bp. to make over the premises to us'. 68 He had in his possession a deed from Bishop Walmesley and Bishop Sharrock 'of employing only our élèves at Bristol as long as we can furnish a proper person for the place', which gave the flat contradiction to the possibility of such a promise.
Unmoved, Strickland replied that Plowden had made ‘a solemn promise’ that he would make over the house and chapel in Bristol to Office in trust for his brethren. In fairness to Bishop Walmesley it must be said that there was never any indication on his part that he would use ex-Jesuit property entrusted to him other than for the ex-Jesuit mission.

To Strickland’s chagrin Plowden further aggravated matters by claiming that he had been deprived of the property of the South Wales district which came under his control, and demanding its restitution. William Horne, the ex-Jesuit at Hereford in charge of the College of St Francis Xavier (the district in question) had died in November 1799 and in his will named Strickland with two others as his heir and executor. Strickland thereupon assumed control of the property of the South Wales District saying that, as Plowden had been serving on the Continent at the time of the suppression of the Society when the original trust was set up, he was not, consequently, one of those on whom the property of the South Wales District devolved. To Fr John Couche at Soberton in Hampshire who had asked his advice on the suitability of Plowden as a trustee in another matter he wrote:

Mr Horne ... bequeathed the trust to those whom he confided were the most able & willing to fulfill the original intentions of the trust... Mr Rt Plowden is a very improper person to be named a trustee for any part of the property belonging to the late Socy of J.

Plowden protested that the salary allowed for the service of the Glamorganshire mission was the undoubted property of the Jesuit South Wales District (which included Bristol) and that Horne intended the agent living in the District (namely Plowden) to have the administration of it. But to Plowden’s repeated letters Strickland made no reply; it was his belief that Plowden thought the only proper trustees for ecclesiastical property were the vicars apostolic, and that just
as he had handed over the Bristol premises to Bishop Walmsley so he would with
the South Wales property if once in his possession.72

On 20 November 1797, Bishop Walmsley, declaring himself guardian of all
the ecclesiastic establishments in his district, ordered Plowden to lodge in his hands
one of the three keys of a box which was to contain the original deeds ‘relating to the
settlements made for the Bristol establishment’.73 The box, which contained the
deeds and also a declaration signed by Bishops Walmsley and Sharrock that the
Jesuits should serve the Bristol Mission as long as they were able to, was kept in
Plowden’s house, but the key requested by the Bishop was handed over not to him
but to his coadjutor, William Sharrock, for five days after making his request Charles
Walmsley, vicar apostolic of the Western District for thirty-one years, was dead.

Strickland, exasperated by Plowden’s complaints, wrote to Sharrock, the new
bishop, to apprise him of the state of affairs between the Bristol priest and his
brethren. He spoke of the coarse language and illiberal conduct he had received from
Plowden who had on many occasions manifested intentions totally different from and
even hostile to the views of other ex-Jesuits. Strickland hoped the bishop would make
him sensible of the impropriety of his language and behaviour: if so he would do
Plowden a most essential service. Plowden, it seemed to Strickland, was threatening
to make an appeal to the Catholic public by which he would undoubtedly give a good
deal of scandal.

The ex-Jesuits were not alone at that time in striving to keep their property
under some form of central control. Plowden found himself consulted on an issue
involving another religious order by the Franciscan priest in charge of the mission in
Abergavenny. The latter thought his superiors were interfering in his ministry in an
arbitrary way in transferring money specifically given for the Abergavenny mission for the use of a Franciscan house and school in Yorkshire:

Tho the mission is a Franciscan and [the] house and the chapel was given to that order to serve here, twas given for the use of the poor Catholics and not solely to extend the Franciscan order as such.74

The provincial and procurator of the Franciscans should not consider themselves masters of the mission’s funds, he complained, ‘as if given generically to their Order in England’.75 A collection had been attempted amongst the congregation at Abergavenny towards defraying the running expenses of the chapel, but as was the experience also at Plymouth (and when the congregation so chose, at Bristol too), little was given so that the priest was left without adequate resources. The difficulties attending the birth of the new chapels at Bristol and Abergavenny, although not following the same pattern, could doubtless be reconstructed to fit wherever tensions over property rights and control existed in other emerging churches.

5.4 The Impact of the French Revolution

The education of young Catholics and the establishment of a seminary in England in place of Douai on the Continent, where English secular priests had been trained, were matters much on the minds of the vicars apostolic during the middle years of the 1790s. There was the need to find a suitable location and the intentions of the religious orders had also to be considered. Bishop Douglass, with the support of Bishop Walmesley, was eager to establish a general college at Old Hall Green in the London District, while Bishop Gibson of the Northern District was particularly concerned to fend off any separatist plans of the ex-Jesuits and the Benedictines. He argued that a college and seminary - preferably for the formation of all priests for the
Lulworth Castle, painted by Theodore de Bruyn in 1781

When the advance of the French Revolutionary armies in 1794 forced the Jesuits to move their academy from Liege, the Welds of Lulworth Castle gave them Stonyhurst, in Lancashire, for a college.
whole country - should be set up in his district where provisions would be cheaper and the young men distanced from the dissolute life of the capital.76 But events overtook him. In 1793 Thomas Weld of Lulworth Castle had told Bishop Walmesley how necessary he thought it was that there should be a Catholic school in England for boys over the age of twelve or fourteen, for the situation at Liège, where the ex-Jesuits had a college, was dangerous and he was personally at a loss as to where to educate his own sons.77 Just over a year later events on the Continent played into his hands. In July 1794 the advance of the French revolutionary forces compelled the staff of ex-Jesuits and their pupils at Liège Academy to leave and by the end of the month Weld was writing to Walmesley: `I have offered my large house in Lancashire to the President of the College of Liège for him to set up his College... If the Jesuits from Liège should set up again at Stonyhurst I shall send them [my sons] there.'78

He was soon able to give his friend more news of Stonyhurst:

Ex-Jesuits from the Academy at Liège are now completely settled at my seat at Stonyhurst [sic] near Clitheroe in Lancashire ... they have now 36 scholars, and will do very well if Bishop Gibson does not set his face against them; which he rather does at present.79

William Gibson was, of the four vicars apostolic, perhaps the least sympathetic towards the ex-Jesuits (though Marmaduke Stone the President of Stonyhurst claimed he always received the greatest kindness and friendship from him),80 considering them intruders in his district who were claiming special rights. One of his complaints was that he had heard the ex-Jesuits planned to send their priests, ordained at Stonyhurst, to serve in other English districts without any reference to his wishes although the College was within his vicariate.81 The problem of independent action on the part of the ex-Jesuits was a real one because as secular priests their obedience was no longer to a provincial but to the vicar apostolic under whose jurisdiction they
came. But Bishop Walmesley, a Benedictine, and by inclination sympathetic to religious Orders, encouraged his fellow bishops to support Stonyhurst, saying that the College was intended for the good of the whole Catholic Church in England. We may add that the significance of Stonyhurst extended beyond its role as college and seminary since it was also looked to as the headquarters of the Jesuit organisation in England.

But Strickland's own vision went beyond the needs of the moment and here again he came into conflict with Robert Plowden. How, he asked, could the problems besetting Stonyhurst in its early years best be resolved and the future of the College and the ex-Jesuit community generally be secured after the present generation had gone, so that 'the élèves of Stonyhurst will, under certain restrictions, be associated to us, and form one body with us, and after our death will continue to form a distinct body of clergy'? He proceeded to set out his ideas in a circular distributed to the English ex-Jesuits on 5 July 1795. Almost inevitably, seeing Strickland as the author, Robert Plowden in Bristol felt drawn to intervene.

He professed to see weaknesses in the scheme and on 12 December 1796 issued a document of his own - four closely-printed pages (twelve pages of manuscript) addressed from Bristol 'To the Gentlemen of the Late English Province of J...s'. He did not think Strickland's letter proposed any effectual means for uniting all the ex-Jesuits together in one body for their mutual benefit, but rather tended to postpone to some future date the forming into a congregation of secular clergy those who were educated at Stonyhurst. What was needed was a common head whom all obeyed. If this could be achieved then, though they would owe the exercise of their faculties to the bishop in whose district they worked, they would
otherwise be independent of him. A formal and explicit engagement needed to be freely entered into by the youths at Stonyhurst to spend their lives as a distinct society of missioners in England; they must be supported by the funds of the former Society and must be permitted to share in them. This was ‘indispensably necessary’ otherwise they could not be associated with the ex-Jesuits.

But besides offering suggestions for the future of the ex-Jesuits and the pupils of Stonyhurst Plowden’s printed letter served another purpose - it was a vehicle for a covert attack on Strickland’s administration. Since the dissolution of the Society their affairs had been, he complained, solely in the hands of the Agent and a small group comprising the deputies of the fourteen Jesuit districts in England and the officers of the Liège Academy. ‘Such extraordinary partialities!’ If they did not become a more open organisation, sharing their resources with their brethren, ‘our reserve and illiberality will ruin ourselves and them [the young people at Stonyhurst]’. The ex-Jesuits in England were no longer one congregation, he observed, but divided into many little communities with their own interests, failing to communicate with a common superior. He spoke of the anarchy and confusion of their government. They were not informed of resolutions, and some did not know how to obtain relief for themselves in moments of greatest distress. Pensions were withheld from some individuals. The members of the late Society should be under the direction of a President elected by all the ex-Jesuits, and he should hold office for only three years, so that - an oblique reference to Strickland - it would ‘be impossible for him to arrogate undue power to himself, and to lord it over the other persons’.

There is, unfortunately, no record of the response to Plowden’s proposals, nor the reaction of Bishop Gibson in whose district Stonyhurst was situated, but if the
latter was suspicious of Strickland and his plans, which he saw as bypassing his authority, he expressed admiration for his adversary. On 17 December 1796, five days after the date of Plowden’s printed letter, he wrote to Bishop Walmsley: ‘I hope our friend at Bristol of that name [Plowden] is well. I have a great regard for him.’

The setting up in England of Stonyhurst as a college and seminary was not the only consequence for the Jesuits (and, as we have seen, for the vicars apostolic) of the French Revolution. While Stonyhurst was still in its early formative years there was a shortage of Catholic priests, and increasingly missioners like Robert Plowden looked to the French émigré clergy (at one time there were as many as 5,000 in the British Isles) for assistance. Although the vicars apostolic were reluctant to appoint French priests (Bishop Sharrock thought they were ‘in a general way not well calculated for our Mission’), yet at a time when there were fewer than three hundred other clergy available to serve the English Catholics they had an essential role to play. Of about fifty-five missions in the Western District half were supplied by French priests. They were particularly useful at ports, where foreigners and sometimes French prisoners-of-war might form part of the Catholic community, and they were often instrumental in setting up chapels. In the West Country, for example, Père Gabriel Grézille was in charge of the mission at Falmouth from 1818 to 1820 and raised £500, mainly from the French Royal family, which enabled him to build a chapel. When Thomas Flynn wrote his letter from Bristol in 1803 resigning the Plymouth mission he was succeeded there by Abbé Jean Louis Guilbert who in 1806 laid the foundation stone of St Mary’s Chapel.

We have seen how in John Scudamore’s time an annuity of £30 was granted
to the Jesuit priest at Bristol to visit Glamorgan (which came within the district of the College of St Francis Xavier) every month or six weeks to minister to the Catholics there. In practice this could mean no more than several times a year, and Thomas Brewer, his successor, probably received Bishop Walmesley’s permission to reduce the number of visits firstly to four and then to three. It was an obligation which Plowden continued to fulfil (though ‘I never could make the journeys required every year ... without being considerably out of pocket’), and like his predecessor he travelled as far as Milford Haven, on the western coast.93 The journey to Swansea was described by Bishop Collingridge as being ‘at the distance of 50 miles and by crossing a branch of the sea subject to delays and casualties from wind and tides’.*4 In Plowden’s absence it is likely that his duties at Bristol were performed by Charles Thompson, a Jesuit, born in Maryland, who had previously served in Suffolk and on suffering ill-health retired to Bristol. He died in 1795 and was buried in Bristol in St Joseph’s churchyard.95

Plowden’s efforts in South Wales bore fruit and he succeeded in establishing a chapel in Swansea, a town he considered the most suitable for a mission in South Wales perhaps because it was central for the Catholics living between Monmouthshire and the coast of Pembrokeshire, and was a place much frequented by the Irish. He saw, moreover, that it would grow in population, developing through commerce and industry. He arranged for the Rev. James Richards (not a Jesuit) to serve there and passed on to him his own annuity for the South Wales mission (scarcely £25 a year, he said, after property tax) and, though there had been a falling off in his own funds in the previous two or three years,96 he increased it so that Richards, who had been trying to support himself by teaching a few scholars and was in the utmost need, had
an income of £40; this Plowden sought to improve further from Provincial sources.

Plowden also secured the help of French priests for the South Wales mission for which he was responsible. Although when he visited Swansea at the beginning of 1804 he was encouraged by the progress being made, he found the priest in charge, Mon. Séjean (formerly of Paris and reputed to have been Confessor to Louis XVI) 'so dreadfully tormented with the gravel' that he could neither ride nor endure the motion of a carriage for long, although he was able to say Mass on Sundays. Mon. Denmat, who had been appointed to assist him, and who also looked after the few Catholics at Cardiff and Cowbridge, had been imprudent: he had not lived within his income and had been quarrelsome with his landlord who then 'swore his destruction, which he effected'. He brought him before the magistrates who declared him no longer welcome in the town. Mon. Denmat had left and Mon. Séjean thought it most unlikely that the magistrates would allow another Frenchman to replace him, or if they did he would need to be most circumspect in his conduct or the Catholic cause in Swansea could be adversely affected. Plowden urged Bishop Sharrock to look out for a permanent replacement who, he hoped, would be a 'British subject'.

Perhaps by 'British' Plowden was intimating not only that the man should not be French (which was Mon. Séjean's wish too) but that he might also be Welsh-speaking. Plowden reported to Bishop Sharrock with some satisfaction that before leaving the town he had heard a dozen confessions and would have heard more if he had been able to stay longer - and, he might have added, the number might have been greater still had he been able to speak Welsh.

Certainly the failure to find priests who could speak the native language had hampered, and continued to impede, the development of Catholicism in Wales.
Writing to Plowden on one occasion John Williams, a priest at Brecon who sometimes assisted at Swansea, observed:

Yet I think there would be an increasing congregation if there were a person fixed there [Swansea] capable of instructing them and preaching to them. Mr Séjean indeed does all he can but they tell me his reading and instructions are not intelligible to the most ignorant part of his congregation.98

There was talk of abandoning the chapel at Swansea and setting it up elsewhere in the town. Plowden himself on his last visit had experienced some of the difficulties being encountered there. Smoke and 'sulphurous effluvia' were rising from the shops of a blacksmith and wheelwright under the floor of the chapel so that 'all the chapel things [were] considerably soiled and the stench [was] sometimes hardly bearable'.99 Added to this was the constant noise on weekdays. By the beginning of 1807 the chapel was established in another house, for where else, said a priest who sometimes served at the mission, could a place be had suitable for a chapel together with 'a lodging room always ready for the English chaplain who will occasionally go there, for less than £10 a year'?100 Eventually sufficient money was raised to build a proper chapel (the first post-Reformation chapel to be built in Glamorgan) on a site held on a ninety-nine year lease in Nelson Place.101 A paragraph in the circular issued at the time appealing for subscriptions stated: 'A mission was established at Swansea, some years ago, by the Rev. Robert Plowden, of Bristol, but for want of a proper Chapel and of want of support for a resident Chaplain, the Mission has languished.'102 Plowden was still being consulted about affairs at the Swansea mission as late as 1814.
5.5 The French Exiled Clergy in Bristol

Plowden also wished to have one of the French clergy to serve the Catholic prisoners-of-war at Stapleton, some three miles from the centre of Bristol, a prison which had extensive buildings and which had been in use since 1792. He had little success. The Bishop of St Pol de Léon, effectively leader of the French émigré priests in England, informed him that the ‘board of transports’ would not allow him to appoint any French priest to serve the inmates at the prison. There then came an order from the Lords of the Admiralty to Captain Baker, the commissary at Stapleton, not to admit any clergyman to the prisoners but those of the Established Church. Plowden urged Bishop Sharrock to protest. A few months later Plowden again attempted to gain admittance to Stapleton but, by his own account, many of the Catholics - even the French - showed no interest in receiving the rites of the Church, and certainly none of the German and Dutch Protestants was willing to accept his services. 103 He continued to press hard for Bishop Sharrock and the Bishop of St Pol de Léon to find a French priest to serve at Stapleton, saying he was prepared to offer him a bed and board at his house in Trenchard Street for which he could pay what his circumstances would allow. If the priest appointed for Stapleton would also learn English and be prepared to ‘render himself serviceable’ after the prison duty was over then, thought Plowden, two problems would be solved, but he feared that the distance from Trenchard Street to the prison might deter anyone from coming.

On a further visit to Stapleton, Plowden met the commissary, Captain Baker, who told him that his orders were the same as those received by the prison authorities at Plymouth - to admit any French priest appointed by the Bishop of St Pol de Léon to those who were dying, but to no one else. One of the turnkeys was to attend at
Great surprise, very little linen, at all.

Chairs, tin saucepans, 2 plates, some basin of black clothes not good. The old Gent

a silver watch, breviary, beads, loose silver

I had yesterday from the house where he slept

e night where they are Catholicks

- But now for the best part: & I most

wish for your Lordship's sake, it were do

much._Here follows what, thank God, we

in gold: 26 Guineas £17/6. — in silver £4

in 5 £ Notes 65 £ one 10 £ note. The

25 one pound Notes, Bank of England. And 25

pound Notes, of Country Banks. 2 1/2

Guinea each — Half a new 10 £ bank of

half a 5 £ Do. Do. — & half a one pound,

we make £223. 5. 6

This, & all

is safe, in my possession, until I hear from

Lordship — but had you not better con

Lord? Mr. Green, if Mr. Plowden, de

serve the funeral, & I intend it shall be a

diplomatically cheap as it can. It is supposed

will be on Saturday. I could not give you for

information. Begging your Lordship's

I have the honor to remain with the

respect & esteem my Lord y' most obt. hbl

Ann Hippis
all times to prevent any communication with the rest of the prisoners, even those in hospital. But despite the strict rules, while he was there Plowden was given permission to visit a 'poor lad from Bordeaux' who was dying, to whom he gave the last rites.\textsuperscript{104}

Plowden eventually secured the services of a French Lazarite, Mon. Duval, who acted as chaplain at Stapleton for many years until he died on 9 March 1814 at the age of eighty-four.\textsuperscript{105} The details of his death were given in a letter to Bishop Collingridge by Ann Hippisly, a teacher at Plowden's Catholic Poor School, who on missing him at Mass enquired after him and found him dead in his bed. When she and a companion searched his lodgings in Stapleton in order to bring back his belongings they found 'in the most unlikely places in the room' gold, silver and notes to the amount of £223.5.6, 'and', said Ann, 'I most heartily wish for your Lordship's sake it were double as much.'\textsuperscript{106} But Plowden expressed some concern about the ethical issues involved, thinking that some of the money might be due to the government by way of restitution 'for the ordinary secours, which he [Duval] received as a poor and indigent émigré from Government; which one would suppose he could not be entitled to whilst he died possessed of the sums he had'.\textsuperscript{107}

Two of the émigré priests living in Bristol towards the close of the eighteenth century, Monsieur Dr Lubois and Monsieur Dr L'Aborde, rendered occasional assistance to the mission. Plowden wanted Bishop Sharrock to give Lubois permission to hear confessions in Italian, for the benefit of Italian sailors who frequented the port, but when put to the test the curé, who, Plowden thought, seemed to have learned his Italian from a grammar book, was unable to cope and asked to be relieved of the duty. L'Aborde on the other hand proved more competent, and since
he knew Spanish as well Plowden asked Sharrock to empower him to hear strangers of any denomination he thought he could understand. Then, revealing something of the political climate of the day, Plowden observed: ‘Possibly ... these Italians may be real Spaniards, and only adopt the name of another country for fear of being imprisoned.’

One who helped Plowden occasionally from 1800 onwards was Père Amator Valentin Le Villain, a thirty-six year old curé from the diocese of Avranches, who whilst in Bristol supported himself as a teacher of French to ‘the élite of the gentry in the city and neighbourhood’. From 1813 to 1814 he ministered to French prisoners of war at Dartmoor before returning to France.

The longest-serving French priest to assist at Plowden’s chapel was Père Jean Marc Moutier, who was ordained in Paris and settled in Bristol in 1797. Like so many of his compatriots he became a teacher of French, but the assistance he could render the Catholic community was to an extent restricted by his lack of English. In 1823 he went as chaplain to the Chichester family at Calverleigh near Tiverton and in his will endowed the mission there with the money - ‘a competent fortune’ - which he had acquired from his teaching in Bristol. In his Collections, Dr Oliver - always a generous commentator on his fellow clerics - described Père Moutier as acquiring whilst in Bristol ‘universal esteem and respect by his attention to his professional duties and most exemplary conduct’.

A collection was made in 1793 at all chapels in the Western District for the relief of the French émigré clergy. The French exiles were particularly numerous in the London District, and according to Bishop Douglass two thirds of them lived on alms and many families were reduced to beggary. A collection was made among
Bristol's Catholics, but Plowden was keen that it should not be added to the general fund. He had not forgotten his fellow ex-Jesuit, John Fontaine, priest at St James's Back at the time of the Gordon Riots, who had since become chaplain to the nuns at Montargis on the Continent. He had come over with the nuns (thirty-six in all) whilst on their way to Flanders, and Plowden, thinking they would be in distress sought to relieve them with the Bristol contribution. Walmesley had intended the money should go to the French clergy but acceded to Plowden's wish.

The numbers of the French and other foreigners in England at this time is remarked upon by Bishop Douglass of London in a letter written to Bishop Sharrock of the Western District, in January 1803, on the subject of the forthcoming Lenten observances, it being the practice of the vicars apostolic to consult one another on the regulations they should issue for fasting and abstinence. They had to consider what was needful in the interests of religion, but also what was practicable, and Bishop Douglass saw no hope of enforcing the law of Abstinence, certainly in the London District. The reason, he was sure, was Catholics' intercourse with Protestants, which at that time was 'much greater than formerly', while the influx of foreigners was 'truly amazing'; and since in their own countries - France, Flanders, Germany, Spain and Italy - very few days of abstinence were observed they would be little inclined to follow a more rigorous practice in England. He also thought it worth mentioning that missionaries in London were experiencing 'much uneasiness' in that so many people were paying little regard to abstinence on Saturdays throughout the year. 'As little regard, they say, is paid to it in Bath,' and presumably in nearby Bristol, though we have no word on this.

The more sophisticated pleasures of some of the French clergy had certainly
not escaped Bishop Walmesley's attention. It had come to his notice that some of the French clergy at Bath were attending balls. A Mandate from him promptly ordered an end to such Continental goings-on in his District, forbidding the émigré clergy ‘d’être présent aux Balles, aux Concerts, ou au Théâtre; sous peine de suspense, ipso facto, d’entendre les Confessions et de célébrer la Messe’.115

Wherever the French clergy settled they tended to live their lives apart from the local community, whilst the English Catholics themselves, despite a common religion, saw the exiles as foreigners to be treated with reserve. Indeed, in his study of the French émigré priests, Dom Aidan Bellenger claims that ‘the feeling against the French seemed as strong among Catholics as among their Protestant countrymen’.116

5.6 The End of the Eighteenth Century

1798 saw prayers offered in St Joseph’s Chapel, Bristol, and elsewhere throughout Catholic England for the safety of the pope and the Church as French armies took possession of Rome. The following year worshippers at St Joseph’s sang a solemn Dirge and Requiem to mark the death of Pope Pius VI at Valence on 29 August 1799. There was a marked change too in the fortunes of ex-Jesuits worldwide. The eighteenth century had hardly ended when news was brought that Pope Pius VII, in a Brief entitled Catholicae Fidei, dated 7 March 1801, had given juridical approval to the existence of the Society of Jesus in White Russia, where the Empress Catherine had refused to allow the suppression of 1773 to take effect. The Russian Father General received verbal permission (the Pope was not at that time prepared to go further) for ex-Jesuits outside the country to affiliate (‘aggregate’) themselves to the
Society in Russia and the English Jesuits received such permission on 27 May 1803.

Bishop Gibson, not surprisingly, claimed that the order could not be restored in England until the vicars apostolic had been officially notified by the Sacred Congregation of the Pope's wish. There was considerable confusion amongst the English ex-Jesuits as to what move they could make without the authority of a Papal Brief, but William Strickland, although urging the need for secrecy until the clear intentions of his Holiness should be made known, determined to seize the opportunity and wrote to the former members of the English province inviting them to rejoin the Society. A name he deliberately left off his list was that of the `difficult' priest at Bristol, Robert Plowden, who continued to write complaining of his treatment over the South Wales foundation, though, said Strickland to the provincial Marmaduke Stone, I answer none of his letters. His last, dated the 20th [January 1800], is rather less abusive than the former letters.' He later intended to exclude Plowden from the restored Society and, as we shall see, it was only after Plowden (on the instructions of the Society's Father General) had written a letter to the provincial asking 'pardon for all past offences' that he was finally invited to renew his vows and received 'with open arms'.

5.7 The 'Restoration' of the Jesuits in England in 1803 and the Effect on their Order of the Paccanarists

During the first two or three years of the nineteenth century the ex-Jesuits' agent, William Strickland, busied himself with petitions to Rome for the restoration of the Society in England and to this end he was also frequently in touch with Gabriel Gruber, General of the Jesuits in Russia. On 27 May 1803 the Pope gave verbal
permission for the English ex-Jesuits to aggregate\textsuperscript{119} themselves to the Society in Russia, and at Strickland’s suggestion Gruber nominated Marmaduke Stone, the president of Stonyhurst, as provincial. At a ceremony that month Strickland confirmed Stone in office.

In 1801 the surviving members of the former English Province numbered eighty-eight priests and three brothers.\textsuperscript{120} On the aggregation of the English ex-Jesuits to Russia, Strickland invited the ‘ancient Jesuits’ to renew their vows. Not all did. Some felt they were too old and would be a burden on their brethren, whilst others, uncertain of the canonical position of a \textit{vivae vocis oraculum}, were unwilling to commit themselves without the authorisation of a Brief or Bull. Nor, without such confirmation, were the vicars apostolic willing to accept the new arrangements. Many ex-Jesuits, therefore, did not rejoin until the general restoration in 1814. Bishop Carroll of America was one who advised caution, and Charles Plowden himself hesitated before eventually joining the first group - nineteen ‘ancient Fathers’ in all - who were readmitted in 1803. Of these the following had West Country connections: Thomas Lewis (Culcheth) of Chideock near Bridport; Charles Forrester (Fleury) of Wardour; John Fountain (Baptist de la Fontaine), priest at Bristol from 1777 to 1781; and Peter Briant (Brian or O’Brien), who was briefly at Bristol with Robert Plowden in 1800. Plowden himself did not renew his vows until 1807.\textsuperscript{121}

Plowden’s quarrels with William Strickland and the provincial over the way the Society was administered meant that he was not at first invited to renew his vows along with other ex-Jesuits. Jesuits like Joseph Reeve felt that his mistaken zeal in holding to his own opinions was incompatible with the spirit and letter of their Constitutions, and that until he chose to submit to the terms the provincial laid down

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he should not be readmitted. Plowden petitioned the General, but on the latter’s instructions he eventually wrote to the provincial, Marmaduke Stone, on 26 January 1807 apologising and promising not to renew in word or writing the past disputes. Stone replied that he had consigned all the past disagreeable correspondence between them to the flames and, as we have seen, received him into the Society ‘with open arms’.

The Jesuits’ General hoped to ‘obtain something satisfactory’ for the vicars apostolic enabling them to recognise the Society in England, but despite this note of optimism nothing ‘satisfactory’ emerged from the Holy See. Rather, on 3 December 1803, a letter to Bishop Douglass of London from Cardinal Borgia, Prefect of Propaganda, instructed him that the Society had not been restored in England and the vicars apostolic were not to recognise priests as Jesuits until authorised by the Congregation de Propaganda Fide. Outwardly, relations with the bishops, particularly Bishop Milner of the Midland District, were cordial, but the ordination of those trained at Stonyhurst was still as secular priests (titulo missionis) and not as religious (titulo paupertatis) and remained so until the rescript of Pius VII on 24 December 1813.

The relationship between Strickland and Robert Plowden had not improved. Describing Fr Horne’s bequeathing the property of the South Wales district to Strickland and other trustees as a most unwarrantable act and as a glaring injustice, Plowden expostulated strongly in letters which Strickland largely ignored. Then in May 1801, particularly resentful of the agent’s charge that he had broken his promise over the Bristol property in handing over the deeds to the vicar apostolic, he retorted in a letter of remarkable acerbity:
You have so publicly stigmatised my character amongst my Brn ... such notoriously false pretexts destroying all the confidence that would otherwise subsist between them... Thorough and adequate reparation is due and till it is made neither your offerings at the altar nor any other act of religion can be pleasing to God.\textsuperscript{125}

In fine, Plowden said, Strickland had acted neither as a religious man nor as a gentleman.

At this time Strickland was not his only antagonist. Joseph Berington had been taken to task by the vicars apostolic as the author of two small tracts in defence of Joseph Wilks which they considered offensive, particularly to Bishop Walmesley who had banned Wilks from ministering in the Western District. Anxious to make his peace with Walmesley's successor, Bishop Sharrock, Berington assured him that he renounced every expression of his which was thought to give scandal, but considered his views had been misrepresented and he laid the responsibility firmly at Plowden's door. In one of his publications, Berington said, Plowden had distorted the passages to a meaning which Plowden himself wished to make them bear, and Bishop Walmesley had allowed 'his own superior understanding to be seduced'.\textsuperscript{126}

The position of the ex-Jesuits at this time might well have been further complicated if the Paccanarists, members of the Society of the Faith of Jesus, had been successful in their mission to England a few years earlier. In 1800 their Society, which had been founded in Rome about 1795 by the Italian, Niccolo Paccanari (at the time a cleric in minor orders), and which espoused the ideals of Ignatius Loyola and sought the restoration of his order, despatched two of their members, the Abbé de Broglie and Jean Louis Rozaven, to England to make contact with prominent Catholics and the ex-Jesuits.\textsuperscript{127}

In October 1800 de Broglie set out for various missions in the West Country
to expound the merits of the new society. At Wardour Castle he met Lord and Lady Arundell and their chaplain, Charles Forrester. In Bath he made contact with Anthony Simpson (Sionest, Sionet), another French ex-Jesuit, and then visited Robert Plowden in Bristol. Next he journeyed to Devon to the house of Lord Clifford at Ugbrooke, near Chudleigh and his chaplain, the influential ex-Jesuit Joseph Reeve (who was to serve there for fifty-three years), who afterwards felt the need to write to Stonyhurst advising caution in their dealings with the Paccanarists. Despite de Broglie’s eloquence, Plowden at Bristol and the other missioners remained unmoved, and indeed of all the ex-Jesuits in England only the Frenchman Charles Forrester (Fleury) at Wardour joined the Paccanarists - and then but for a short time, for as we have seen he was readmitted to the Society of Jesus in 1803. Although for a while spreading to many countries in Europe, where foundations were established in Germany, France, Holland and Italy, the Society of the Faith of Jesus gradually lost its members to the Jesuits after 1803, and by 1808 virtually ceased to be.

5.8 The Final Crisis
At a synod in 1803 the vicars apostolic drew up regulations for the conduct of the English mission and subsequently published them as the Observanda. They were essentially a revision of the monita for priests previously in force and contained regulations ranging from instructions for confessors to an order forbidding priests to go to the theatre. When a missioner was granted his faculties by his bishop a copy of the Observanda was always attached.

In the spring of 1804 a problem confronting Plowden at Bristol prompted him to write at length to Bishop Sharrock, ‘humbly’ submitting his remarks on two heads
of the Observanda for consideration by the vicars apostolic and by the priests in their districts. What particularly concerned him was the instruction that no missioner in England should marry any Catholics who did not first go to confession, and he spoke of the impropriety of enforcing such a regulation which he thought contrary to the express laws of the Catholic Church. He claimed that it was a received orthodox opinion and was the general practice of the Church that sacramental confession was not required as a necessary preparation for receiving any of the sacramenta vivorum except the Eucharist, but that an act of contrition was sufficient. Different popes, he said, had occasionally allowed Catholics to marry heretics who were out of the state of grace, and it could not now be said that they were wrong. Plowden argued for consistency: if the sanctity of the sacrament did indeed require priests at any one time to forbear assisting at the marriages of impenitent sinners then surely they must at all times forbear, 'for neither a Papal nor Episcopal dispensation can remove the internal malice of an act, which the law of God simply forbids'. The responsibility to confess should be left to the consciences of the faithful to perform it when it could best be done. The general practice in 'Germany, Ireland etc. etc.' was a safe and practical sanction of that theological opinion.

What Plowden considered of more importance was the sacrament of baptism, and he quoted Bishop Milner's observation that it was of infinitely less consequence that a matrimony should be invalid from an ecclesisatical impediment than that a supposed Catholic should live and die without baptism. This closely argued and well documented letter to Bishop Sharrock has a significance which bears on the events leading to Plowden's enforced departure from Bristol in 1815 which will be considered later.
The practical problem that Plowden had to deal with at Bristol concerned a request he had received from a member of his congregation, 'a gentleman in the Newfoundland trade', to marry him to another member of the congregation, 'a prudent, discreet widow'. He hoped, he told Sharrock, that the lady could be induced to go to confession though he did not think the man could be easily persuaded. Should they both refuse then it appeared, according to the instructions of the vicars apostolic, that he should not marry them, whereas prudence - necessity even - dictated that he should, for the man had two daughters by a former wife and no proper person to take care of them. He thought it a scandal if the woman should eventually sail for Newfoundland with a man she had not married.

He was not pleased with Sharrock's response which imputed that he (Plowden) would not allow 'the first pastors to guide their flocks', which suggested that he was rebellious and refractory. Plowden observed tartly: 'If priests who try to comply with their superior's orders are to be treated in this manner, your Lordship I apprehend will find some difficulty in finding the supply of missioners you may wish for.'

Allowing a good Catholic to marry a heretic but not permitting a good Catholic to marry a bad one, Plowden thought 'an incomprehensible subtlety' on Sharrock's part. If the vicars apostolic did not amend the wording in which the regulations concerning marriage were drawn up in the Observanda then it would always be a subject of contention between the bishops and their priests, the more so as they could now expect a greater influx of Irish Catholics into England following the Act of Union in 1800. What was needed in every District was an authority that in certain exigencies would permit a priest to administer the sacrament of marriage.
even to two 'bad' Catholics.\textsuperscript{133}

The uneasy concord between Robert Plowden and his bishop was shattered when Plowden sided with Bishop Milner of the Midland District in his dispute with the other vicars apostolic, and again in 1813 when Plowden took issue with Bishop Collingridge on two theological matters. The first concerned a catechism which Robert determined to produce for use in his school and which he persuaded Bishop Collingridge to allow, provided it first secured the approbation of Dr Rigby.\textsuperscript{134} In 1813 the catechism was published and Collingridge was angry to find it contained an instruction on confession maintaining that the state of grace can always be acquired by contrition without confession and that this could, for example, be a sufficient preparation either for confirmation or marriage.\textsuperscript{135} Collingridge described this teaching to Bishop Poynter of London as 'the exceptionable doctrine of the sufficiency of attrition declared to be practically secure'.\textsuperscript{136} Collingridge forthwith condemned the catechism (an 'absurd theological poor school catechism') and called on Plowden to withdraw it - but in vain. An embarrassed Dr Thomas Rigby, whom Plowden had consulted, feeling that Collingridge would think he had not been sufficiently rigorous in examining the catechism, and anxious to explain himself, assured the bishop that he had expressed surprise to Plowden at seeing a prospectus of the proposed publication of his catechism since he had previously assumed that it was intended 'only for the poor school at Bristol, to be hung upon the walls or put into the children's hands as reading lessons, to save books which they spoil so fast'.\textsuperscript{137} Seeing how 'tenacious' Plowden was on certain points he had, however, agreed that they 'might be suffered, tho' not approved' and recommended that nothing should be printed until the bishop had seen it.\textsuperscript{138} 'There must,' he had advised Plowden, 'be
a mistake in supposing every individual authorised to publish what he will.' As for his own writings, Rigby said, nothing would ever be published without the bishop's approbation.\textsuperscript{139} Plowden's colleague in Bristol, James Parker, considered his friend's catechism 'perhaps the best Catechism ever printed in the English language'.\textsuperscript{140}

To assist Collingridge in his difficulties Bishop Poynter sent John Carpue, a priest serving at the Spanish Chapel in London, to dissuade Plowden from publishing his catechism and to say that the Bishop of London and many of the London clergy agreed with Collingridge. It was an encounter which bore no fruit for Carpue reported to Joseph Hodgson, Poynter's vicar general, that Plowden had shown 'unrelenting obstinacy' and the 'zealot of Bristol ... with a sweeping sentiment [had sent] the whole body of proud London clergy with the Bishop at [their] head to Hell!!!' Carpue also observed that Plowden and Bishop Milner were in close correspondence and each approved of everything said and done by the other.\textsuperscript{141}

We see that the position Plowden had taken on the subject of contrition was consistent with the criticisms he had made eight years earlier to Bishop Sharrock about the \textit{Observanda}, which stressed the need for the sacrament of confession before marriage;\textsuperscript{142} he had made similar representations to his successor.

That Plowden was disposed to argue with Collingridge on theological matters is clear. On 12 July 1811 he wrote to the bishop announcing the arrival of his new assistant, John Reeve, and in the same letter in reference to another matter remarked:

\begin{quote}
Whatever your Lordship's particular sentiments may be, I should assume it would be more to the verification and benefit of English Catholics in general to protect and cherish those [missioners], who bring over orthodox principles with them, from whatever school they come, than to foment divisions and dissentions on account of particular opinions, which happen not to be your own ... without considering or
\end{quote}
PETER COLLINCIDGE, O.F.M.
Vicar Apostolic, 1809-1829
making any distinction whether they were Probabilists, Attritionists or not.143

Two days later he again spoke to Collingridge on the question of confession: 'Every Jesuit and Élève of Stonyhurst, I believe, will be glad to exhort their penitents to the love of God when they can; but when they cannot, the Church and Ben: XIV allows us to absolve them without it.'144 Then, pursuing the issues of probabilism and attrition he continued:

Moreover Ben: XIV cautions all Bishops and much more one would presume the immediate delegates of the Apostolic See not to determine any thing on the subject that may serve as a certain rule that Confessors are bound to follow in the Confessional... When Jesuits are obliged to absolve or Attrite for want of better dispositions [then surely it is better that they should do this and] try to rescue a man from the devil even [illegible] than send him headlong to him without absolution.145

Collingridge argued: 'We have not a probable but certain practical rule which all are bound to follow in the confessional,'146 but Plowden was unyielding over his catechism and found himself increasingly isolated as Collingridge assembled a list of theologians supporting him, and sought and gained the backing of Bishops Poynter and Gibson.

The relationship between Plowden and Bishop Collingridge worsened when the former objected to a passage in the bishop's pastoral letter sent to him towards the end of 1813. To understand the background we must go back to the latter part of 1809 when the English Catholic Board, in their continuing quest for full Catholic emancipation, prepared a petition to the House of Lords. The five resolutions of the document were passed at a meeting of some two hundred Catholic clergy,147 nobility and gentry at a meeting at the St Alban's Tavern in London on 1 February 1810, and it was the fifth of these resolutions which became the cause of dispute
between the vicars apostolic of the London, Northern and Western Districts on the one hand, and Bishop John Milner of the Midland District on the other. The details of this quarrel are given at length in *The Apologetical Epistle* which Dr William Poynter, vicar apostolic of the Southern (London) District, addressed to Cardinal Litta, prefect of the Congregation *de Propaganda Fide*, in Rome on 15 March 1815, on behalf of himself and his colleagues, Bishops Gibson and Collingridge, but we need consider here only the passage which was of particular concern to Milner:

> We ... are firmly persuaded that adequate provision for the civil and religious establishments of this kingdom may be made consistently with the strictest adherence on their part to the tenets and discipline of the Roman Catholic religion; and that any arrangement founded on this basis of mutual satisfaction and security, and extending to them the full enjoyment of the civil constitution of their country will meet with their grateful concurrence.\(^{148}\)

Like the Catholic Board, three of the vicars apostolic - Bishops Poynter, Gibson and Collingridge - agreed that the natural and obvious sense of this was that Catholics were prepared to recognise the rights of those holding religious beliefs different from their own and that it involved nothing to which a Catholic might not conscientiously agree. Bishop Milner, on the other hand, the Irish bishops for whom he acted as their agent, and many Jesuits (including Robert Plowden) construed the words as implying that as long as Catholics enjoyed their own rights then they did not mind what religion the state supported or allowed, but if this were so such a resolution could never be accepted. How, Milner argued, could he offer support to the making of 'adequate provision for the civil and religious establishments of this kingdom' when such provisions might be inconsistent with the safety of the Roman Catholic religion? He suspected the Fifth Resolution harboured conditions which would permit the exercise of a veto of some kind on the nomination of Catholic bishops.\(^{149}\) As
This miniature of Bishop Milner was painted at Fr Robert Plowden's presbytery in Bristol.
Bishop Poynter of London remarked to Collingridge, the tendency of Milner’s writings and conversations was to stress that by signing the Fifth Resolution the other vicars apostolic had betrayed the cause of the Church by agreeing to provide for a Protestant establishment without making any such provision for their own. The supporters of the resolution thought it was possible for the legislature to make adequate provision for the maintenance of the civil and religious establishments of the country without requiring Catholics to subscribe to any conditions inconsistent with the tenets and discipline of their faith. Emancipation would be thus founded on the basis of mutual satisfaction and security.

Plowden consistently supported Milner. In many ways the two were alike - in the strength of their convictions bordering on intolerance, in the strictness in which they upheld what they considered orthodoxy and in the strong language in which they expressed their views. Collingridge recalled an occasion one Sunday when he was visiting the Bristol chapel and was about to go to Mass: Plowden called him apart, threw himself on his knees and entreated him to cease giving scandal by his conduct in supporting the cause he and the other two vicars apostolic were embarked on against Dr Milner and the Irish bishops. Plowden saw the conduct of Bishops Gibson, Poynter and Collingridge towards Milner and the Irish bishops as leading to schism; for their part the three vicars apostolic felt that Milner was needlessly alarmed by the Fifth Resolution and that it was an English matter in which the Irish should not concern themselves.

In supporting Milner over the Fifth Resolution (‘I hear that Bp. Milner has been writing to Mr Plowden’) Plowden was again acting consistently. In A Letter to Francis Plowden, Esq. on his work entitled Iura Anglorum in 1794 Robert had taken
issue with his brother for attempting to establish in man the ‘pretended’ right to choose his own religion. He had argued that a community does not have the right to support with its civil laws and sanctions whatever religion is adopted by the majority of the state, for if this right were maintained it could extend not only to the different sects of Christianity but also to paganism and idolatry themselves. Thus Plowden saw the Fifth Resolution as importing a compact between the government of England and the Catholic body to give mutual support to the Catholic religion and an Established Church which Catholics consider heterodox.

Plowden urged his bishop to change course. He was dismayed, therefore, when on 3 December 1813 he studied Collingridge's pastoral letter prior to reading it to his congregation and discovered that it reflected (so he thought) the very sentiments he had objected to in the Fifth Resolution. The important secular issue it dealt with was: How might the Roman Catholics of Great Britain be liberated from the many penalties and disabilities which they undeservedly suffered? On the second page of the pastoral were the words of the Fifth Resolution which Plowden had previously found offensive: ‘Adequate provision for the maintenance of the civil and religious establishments of this Kingdom might be made (by the Legislature, to whose province it exclusively belongs)...' Bishop Collingridge, quoting more of the Fifth Resolution, defended and approved it, concluding that he could unhesitatingly express his confidence that a British legislature, in granting emancipation to Roman Catholics, would not even propose restrictions that would be painful or humiliating to them. On such a basis, therefore, he charged the clergy and laity of his District ‘to render to Caesar, the things that are Caesar’s; and to God the things that are God’s.'
The day after receiving the pastoral letter Plowden wrote to Collingridge protesting at 'the apparent impropriety in Catholics pledging themselves to concur in the maintenance of the religious establishment of a Church which they deem heterodox' (a reference to the 'mutual satisfaction and security' of the Fifth Resolution), and he took particular exception to an expression in the pastoral which echoed this: 'By the Legislature to whose province it exclusively belongs'. The argument, he said, that a government had the right to establish in its country a religion other than 'the religion of Jesus Christ' had been put forward by Francis Plowden in his Iura Anglorum, and he, Robert, in his Letter to him had vigorously answered it. Until, therefore, Collingridge dealt with 'these difficulties' he presumed his Lordship would excuse him from his mandate - 'from reading to the public what I look upon to be strictly erroneous'.

James Parker, who occasionally acted as Plowden's assistant, also found fault with it and wrote to Collingridge on 4 December to say that he considered the passage respecting the provision for the maintenance of the civil and religious establishment of the country by the Legislature 'erroneous and highly censurable'. He also referred in the same letter to an interview which had recently taken place between the bishop and Fr Plowden at the Trenchard Street presbytery when, Parker said, 'Your loud vociferation on the occasion and apparent violence gave much scandal to the servants. They said, what must we think of the example of our Superiors to whom we look up to for instruction and religious improvement?'

To resolve the impasse Collingridge sought the advice of others including Joseph Reeve, the well-known Jesuit at Ugbrooke, and Felix Vauquelin, an émigré priest also serving there. At the time Reeve was sick and it was Vauquelin who
replied. They saw nothing alarming in the pastoral, which could not, they said, bear
the sense Plowden had given it, and they took the opportunity to acknowledge the
bishop’s ‘Catholicity’. They also sided with the bishop over Plowden’s catechism
saying it contained a doctrine ‘infinitely dangerous’. It was one o’clock in the
morning of 10 December 1813 when Collingridge wrote to Plowden, supported, as
he informed him, by the impartial advice of other divines, and assured him that his
objections were ‘quite groundless’.

There then followed a series of meetings at Taunton (where Collingridge was
then living) on 14, 15 and 16 December. Something of the flavour of these
encounters may be gauged from Collingridge’s account of what occurred on 16
December during an interview lasting half an hour at the Bishop’s house.
Collingridge, to use his own words, ‘did use the most mild, pathetic and persuasive
entreaties in [his] power’ to win Plowden’s promise that he would read the pastoral
the following Sunday, but Plowden simply ‘sighed’ and ‘appeared interiorly agitated’
and could not bring himself to give the required promise, such was his ‘pride and
attachment to his own judgment’. The bishop visited him again later that evening,
but to no avail. Failing to get the desired promise before Plowden left him,
Collingridge placed in his hands a notice withdrawing his faculties and shortly
afterwards sent him an official letter: ‘You cannot be surprised at my withdrawing
from you, which I hereby do, all missionary faculties in this District.’ In later
years John Smith, who at the time of the dispute had been the master in Plowden’s
Trenchard Street school, gave the episode a different gloss claiming that Plowden was
the only man in the district who had the combined qualities of knowledge and
resolution to point out to the bishop his error. ‘For this act of sterling virtue he was
degraded by the suspension of his faculties ... unjust and tyrannical treatment.\textsuperscript{161}

In addition to Bishops Gibson and Collingridge, Bishop Poynter of the London District had issued a similar pastoral letter which had received no objections although Bishop Milner, Collingridge noted, ‘as usual had been criticizing it with acrimonious acuteness’. Plowden rebuked Collingridge and the other vicars apostolic for making use of ‘a most shameful and unbecoming equivocation’ and lamented that they should be ‘propagating such baseness and scandal to a Catholic congregation’. Collingridge regarded Plowden’s complaint as no more than a ‘quibble’; perhaps, the bishop thought, it could all be put down to sore feelings at his rejection of Plowden’s catechism.\textsuperscript{162}

Joseph Tate, Plowden’s assistant, acting on the instructions of the bishop, read the pastoral charge to the Bristol congregation on 19 December. Collingridge must have found Tate’s compliant attitude (‘a willing tool’ of the bishop, John Smith called him) a relief after his confrontations with Plowden. Tate found Plowden’s removal from the mission much to his satisfaction: on most subjects they had differed and he had found Plowden’s manner of acting ‘rough and overbearing’. The management of the Bristol mission would present him with no problems, he assured Collingridge, for (referring to Wigan) he had served bigger congregations.\textsuperscript{163} (A few years later he was to remark to the bishop that the mission at Wigan was ‘much more easy, palatable and comfortable than this [Bristol] is’.\textsuperscript{164}) With unknowing irony (for events would later leave him feeling a man ill-used by the bishop) he expressed the hope that in the discharge of his duty he would ever merit his Lordship’s approbation.\textsuperscript{165}

There were now sides to be taken, and factions again sprang up in Bristol.
William Green, a member of the congregation and the bishop’s wine merchant, wrote to Collingridge to say that James Parker had called on him with a petition to reinstate Mr Plowden. He had declined to sign it though he admitted that some of the congregation would, for Mr Parker was ‘capable of giving it a plausible [sic] preface’. Mr Parker, he said, had for some time past been making himself extremely busy in the congregation, which, he feared, had caused ‘ill blood, ill will, and trouble’. Mr Parker was abusing his Lordship and giving scandal by ‘lessening’ his character to the laity. If Mr Plowden’s faculties were restored, said Green, they would never be exercised in Bristol again with satisfaction, and the general feeling amongst the city’s Catholic community was that they were glad at his removal but sorry for his humiliation - though Green had no doubt Mr Plowden had brought it upon himself. Mr Tate on the other hand had been on the best footing with the congregation and would continue to be if only Mr Parker could be silenced from doing further mischief. Thomas Weld (later Cardinal) wrote to Marmaduke Stone, the Jesuit provincial, saying he thought the bishop’s treatment of Plowden was ‘harsh and imprudent’ and that Tate had been ‘stirring things up’. Plowden too wrote to Stone: ‘Both Messrs Coombes are of opinion that under the orders of Ben: XIV and Alex: VII the article of attrition [in his Catechism] should not be suppressed by the Bp.’ The provincial urged Plowden to be ‘submissive under the persecution’ and not apply to the Irish prelates for support:

[It would] represent us as a dangerous body of men to Church and state and enemies to all lawful authority. You cannot well be ignorant that we have already, though unmeritedly, been pointed out as not acknowledging the authority of our Ecclesiastical Superiors in this realm.

Plowden brushed his advice aside and urged a more robust approach towards the
bishop: 'More good will be done you by this very contest than all your acquiescence and passive cringing ever could obtain.'

Collingridge realised there had to be a proper and speedy resolution of matters at Bristol and instructed William Coombes to visit Plowden to inform him that provided certain conditions were fulfilled his faculties would be restored. Plowden promised to stop the circulation of his catechism in the Western District, though he intended sending it to other bishops who might not disapprove of it, for example Bishop Carroll in America. He agreed not to define in public or private instructions 'the nice limits between attrition and contrition', and he engaged to carry into effect the directions of the Observanda respecting matrimony as far as he was able. Plowden himself added a postscript to the letter Coombes wrote to the Bishop: 'My Lord, If there was any harshness or impropriety in any expressions I made use of I ask yr. Ldsp's pardon and am sorry for them.' But it was a qualified answer which Collingridge was not ready to accept.

Joseph Tate, anxious that Collingridge should hold firm, now levelled his fire at Plowden's ally, the Rev. Parker, characterising him as a man bent on raising in the congregation 'a flame of animosity' prejudicial to the Bishop and to Tate himself and his ministry. But for Parker's interference ('a pity his time is not better filled up') the wonder of Mr Plowden's removal would have been nearly over. Most who had signed the petition, Tate assured the Bishop, did not understand the merits of the case and simply intended that 'the old man might quit the congregation without disgrace'.

Attitudes hardened and the quarrel became more widely known. From Shepton Mallet Dr Coombes and his nephew wrote to Bishop Poynter of London.
expressing support for Plowden in condemning the paragraph in the pastoral which echoed the Fifth Resolution, and they sent Plowden a copy of their letter. He in turn sent it to the Rev. Peter Gandolphy of the Spanish Chapel in London, knowing it would be well received by him and its contents bruited abroad to the London clergy, for Gandolphy (like Plowden an admirer of Dr Milner) was busy with his own defiance of his bishop.\textsuperscript{174} He was anxious to publish his \textit{Liturgy} but Bishop Poynter considered it contained errors and theological inaccuracies and forbade it. In such wranglings, therefore, with their two contentious clerics the bishops found common cause. It became as Poynter feared: ‘It [the Plowden-Collingridge dispute] is now becoming as public in London as any paragraph in a newspaper... It will cause me no small degree of trouble here.’\textsuperscript{175}

Plowden was at his most outspoken when, as he put it, he chose to address the bishop not in his capacity as a Jesuit but as ‘a Roman Catholic Priest or a Roman Catholic Gentleman’. Collingridge’s behaviour was ‘the most unjust, tyrannical and scandalous that perhaps ever was adopted by a Catholic Bishop since the beginning of the Church’; there was a general outcry against him ‘both from Protestants and Catholics’.\textsuperscript{176} Plowden intended exposing his grievance to the public, not in print, for that would propagate the scandal wider than it was, but by handing round a copy of the letter he was then writing whenever he should think fit.

The flow of correspondence quickened throughout the month of January 1814, Collingridge claiming that matters that Plowden was talking about were not theological but practical and such as Benedict XIV, whom Plowden named as his authority, had distinctly asserted were within the province of episcopal jurisdiction. He accused Plowden of sophistry and quibbles, whilst Plowden charged Collingridge
with entertaining singular prejudices against the Jesuits. If, said Collingridge, Plowden was convinced that in enacting the regulations of the *Observanda* the bishops were acting on Bayistical principles why had he not denounced them to the Holy See? In a last bid to have his faculties restored Plowden asked Collingridge to refer his case to Bishops Gibson and Poynter, a surprising move for they would almost certainly have found against Plowden himself.

The only letter from Plowden containing promises and apologies which Collingridge felt able to accept was written on 21 February 1814. Plowden was clearly under pressure from his friend William Coombes (who as vicar general was negotiating on the bishop’s behalf) to compromise, and from Thomas Weld too. Three points of agreement were reached, carefully formulated it would seem so that nothing was included to which either side could take exception. The first condition, for example, read: ‘I promise diligently to inculcate to my Penitents that they cannot rely with security on being duly prepared for sacramental absolution unless they begin to love God, as the fountain of all justice.’ Plowden also apologised for anything he had said derogatory to the respect he owed his superior. What the bishop did not know was that he had privately written to the provincial saying he had accepted Collingridge’s conditions ‘tho’ completely absurd’, even ‘infinitely absurd’, and based on the rank Bayinistical principle that *actual* confession is necessary for recovering the state of Grace. On 22 February Collingridge reappointed Plowden to the Bristol mission and informed Joseph Tate of his action, thanking him for his service to the Bristol congregation during the previous weeks. The bishop clearly hoped, though probably with no great conviction, for calmer days. They were not to be.

On 23 February 1814, the day that Collingridge gave Tate the news that he
was reinstating Robert Plowden, he appeased him to a degree by taking steps to curb Plowden's ally, the outspoken James Parker. He withdrew Parker's missionary faculties in the Western District on the grounds that he had no mission to serve and had 'voluntarily avowed' himself 'to be a strenuous abettor of certain positions' contained in Plowden's suppressed catechism. If he wished to make amends he would have to accept the same conditions to which Plowden himself had expressed submission 'in a very edifying and satisfactory manner'. Protesting that he had enjoyed the confidence of Bishops Walmesley and Sharrock, and also Collingridge himself, for more than thirty-four years, Parker was in no hurry to comply.

In his letter of reinstatement to Plowden, Collingridge had expressed the hope that he would show Tate no disfavour. But if Plowden considered he was even-handed with his assistant, Tate himself alleged he was being deliberately harassed and his life made increasingly wretched. He was sure Plowden was trying all he could to 'tire' him out and 'force' him from the place: 'I cannot get any money from him for my clothes etc. The victuals are most wretched.' He instanced an occasion when the butter for breakfast had been so rank he had sent the maid-servant to buy fresh, but Plowden had refused to reimburse him and told him he had no authority to give orders to the household staff. As far as the congregation was concerned Plowden was totally unfit for the performance of his missionary functions, being deaf and inarticulate. 'This,' said Tate, 'is notorious, acknowledged and complained of by every one, that I hear speak on the subject.'

There was, of course, the other side: Tate's manner in dealing with him had been 'scandalous and infamous', Plowden complained to the bishop. Since last Michaelmas Tate had refused to hear his confession simply because he would not
allow his servant to buy him such things as he pleased, being above eating what he ate himself. Plowden went further, complaining of Tate's cavalier way of acting and of the unsatisfactory manner in which he taught the catechism and prepared candidates for reception into the Church. Nor would he ever give Plowden an account of the sick parishioners he visited. On one occasion 'the volley of insolence and abuse that was poured out against me surpassed all imagination', Plowden informed the bishop. In fine, he said, Tate was more a nuisance to him than a relief. 186

Collingridge had now been asked to declare for one or the other and it would have been disingenuous of Plowden to suppose that his past quarrels with the bishop would be forgotten. 'He has taken the most unaccountable prejudice against me,' said Collingridge to the Jesuits' provincial, Marmaduke Stone. 187 Seeing the rivalry between priest and assistant as inevitably leading to divisions amongst the congregation (Plowden, for his part, had spoken of Tate's 'gossiping and running abroad from morning till night'188) Collingridge sought to remove Plowden from office and wrote to Marmaduke Stone giving his reasons, in effect rehearsing Tate's own arguments. The bishop spoke of Plowden's inflexible obstinacy, saying Tate's complaints of domestic mismanagement - 'bad fish and rank butter' - led him to surmise that Plowden was trying to force Tate from the mission. Plowden's articulation had for years rendered him unintelligible to the congregation when he was preaching - 'a subject of repeated complaints' - and that duty should now be performed by Tate himself. The impression he got from the congregation was that Tate was beyond all comparison 'more proper' for the mission than Plowden at that time, 'and probably than he ever was'. Something, said the bishop, must be done - and done soon. 189

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But the provincial, determined to support his Jesuit colleague, told Collingridge he was reluctant to remove Plowden and leave Tate in charge. Plowden had served the mission for many years with great zeal and success 'to the greater glory of God', and in general Bristol’s Catholics were still greatly attached to him and would be distressed at his removal - and displeased with those they thought responsible. He attempted to turn the tables declaring that the reports he had received from other quarters about the way Tate discharged his duties in the chapel and in attending to the congregation led him to think it would be better if he were the one to be removed rather than Plowden. Moreover, if it was said Plowden was a difficult man to live with, then Tate was more so. Before going to Bristol Tate had attended three different congregations and everywhere disagreed with those he lived with. The provincial had told him beforehand that he and Plowden would not suit each other, but Tate had assured him he was willing to bear with Plowden's dispositions and arrangements, whatever they might be.

On 31 December 1814 Tate replied to what he considered the weightiest charges. As to whether he intended becoming a Jesuit, he had not attempted to deceive anyone, for before coming to Bristol he had told Marmaduke Stone he was not disposed to take vows. Whether or not Plowden thought he had been deceived over the issue mattered little: 'What business is it of his?'

Plowden informed the bishop that he hoped he would send Tate to another station or instruct him to provide for himself elsewhere, since he was obviously unwilling to accept the fixed and unvariable rule amongst Jesuits that where more than one person was employed in one of their missions there should always be one of them appointed to superintend the rest. Plowden met with a sharp rebuff.
Collingridge answered that he was happy 'for the honour of religion' that he did not find the charges against Tate substantiated. If the bishop's reply was blunt, Plowden's was dramatic: in future he would bar his doors at a certain hour each evening, and since Tate had threatened to break them open if he found them shut perhaps his lordship would issue necessary directions 'to prevent a riot in the street'.

A week later he was able to furnish the bishop with graphic details of Tate's defiance. He had advised Tate, Plowden said, to stay the night at a Catholic friend's house if he ever found himself out late, 'which would be preferable to his rioting in the street', but that very day Tate had not only insolently refused to join him at breakfast but in the evening had stayed out so late that he did not return to the presbytery until well after midnight. 'Drawing on upon one o'clock he made his attack, rung, knocked and kickt in so violent a manner' that had not the maid run downstairs and opened the door 'he would have been in danger of being arrested by the watchman or night constable'. Tate's own version of events was set out in two letters, both dated 30 January 1815, totalling twelve pages. He was not prepared to accept the code of behaviour which Plowden had laid down. Having no society at home he occasionally spent the evening with friends; on the night in question the people with whom he was dining did not have supper until after ten o'clock and he could not conveniently get away before midnight. As for talk of his kicking and storming the door and references to the night constable and the watchman, that was 'a figure of rhetoric called hyperbole... For shame old man!' He assured the bishop that when he first came to Bristol Plowden had told him they would be on an equal footing - a surprising claim considering the importance the
Jesuits attached to the role of a superior and in view of Plowden’s own assertive disposition. Indeed some years later Tate himself was to stipulate to a priest earmarked to assist him that he was in no way to interfere with his management and regulations of the house and chapel, and Marmaduke Stone later remarked to Collingridge that before taking up his appointment at Bristol Tate had repeatedly promised to ‘submit to what Mr Plowden might require of him’.

Tate then turned to Stone’s allegation that in his previous missions he was unable to get on with people. He assured the bishop that he had lived at Preston very happily and that his reason for leaving was ‘still a secret only known to [himself] and God’. How could Marmaduke Stone speak candidly when he was ‘governed, ruled and goaded by Mr Charles Plowden [Robert’s brother]’? If he were free to speak openly he would have enough to say about Robert Plowden’s overbearing, tyrannical and abusive conduct exhibited against himself and all the members of Stonyhurst. There was too, Tate continued, the matter of Plowden’s readmittance to the Society upon its restoration. Neither Marmaduke Stone nor William Strickland, the ex-Jesuits’ agent, were willing that he should rejoin and, said Tate, he was able to renew his vows only after appealing to the General of the Society.

As the long letter drew to a close, Tate delivered his most telling point. Hinting at a Jesuit conspiracy he professed to see hidden designs against the bishop himself. Was the bishop aware that for the most part Plowden’s opposition to him (Tate) arose owing to his siding with the bishop and his attachment to his ‘cause’, and that Plowden ‘and his party’ were equally as anxious to ‘unbishop’ Collingridge - if only they knew how? In Plowden’s eyes the bishop was no better than a Jansenist. ‘But’, Tate concluded, ‘I want not to criminate.’

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Plowden's brother, Charles, later to become the Jesuit provincial, wrote to Stone in August 1814 saying that Collingridge was taking Tate's part in hopes of obtaining the full mastery of the Bristol mission; Stone should tell the bishop that it was important that the Society retain possession there. A more independent assessment came from Thomas Weld at Clifton who said Plowden was universally respected by the congregation, 'tho' his peculiarities [were] not unseen'. Tate was considered a good preacher but did everything 'in such a hasty and slovenly manner'. The people would not take kindly to Plowden's removal, but the 'good old man' seemed much worn down with fatigue and Weld would not be surprised if Almighty God removed all difficulty in the near future.

Two days later, as though seeing no other escape from his problems, Tate sought the bishop's permission to offer himself for the new chapel at Liverpool about which his brother had recently told him, but he soon abandoned the plan for within a week a most unusual occurrence brought about a change in his fortunes and set his rival, driven by his convictions, doggedly on a path of self-destruction.

On Sunday, 5 February 1815, Plowden mounted the pulpit of the chapel in Trenchard Street and read the bishop's Lenten pastoral, 'To all the Faithful Clergy and Laity of the Western District'. Nothing seemed untoward, but at its conclusion all were startled when Plowden, now addressing the congregation in his own person, declared that it was the duty of inferiors to come forward and correct their bishops if anything was advanced contrary to the doctrines of the Catholic Church. He then launched what Tate, who was present, later described to Collingridge as a 'most infamous Philippic' against the bishop's tenets, 'with his proofs and invective'. It was a tense half hour: 'Mr Plowden was in violent agitation all the time and came
down quite pale with irritation.

The sentence Plowden had taken particular exception to was in the bishop’s second paragraph:

Secondly under the Gospel dispensation it is required that you should have recourse to that remedy which Christ has left in his Church, and through which the merits of his passion are applied to your souls; your penance therefore, will be illusory and fruitless, if, having it in your power, you neglect to comply with the precept of making a sincere confession of your sins, to whom Christ has said whose sins you forgive they are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain, they are retained.204

By now the merits of attrition and contrition were recurring themes in correspondence between Plowden and Collingridge, and on this particular occasion, convinced of the inaccuracy of the bishop’s pastoral, which seemed to him to smack of the condemned propositions of the sixteenth-century theologian Baius,205 Plowden felt unable to publish it without seeking further explanation. But, he said, time not allowing he complied with the bishop’s instructions by reading the pastoral at Sunday Mass though adding comments of his own. Supporters of Plowden were careful to say that he was explaining Catholic doctrine without casting any blame on the prelate.206 But Collingridge, armed with Tate’s account of the affair (‘I [Tate] would have read it instead of him but no, he was determined to attack, expose and condemn your Lordship’207) and outraged by what he saw as a second act of gross impropriety, demanded of the Jesuits’ provincial Plowden’s instant removal from the Bristol mission.208

In general, Jesuit relations with Collingridge were not good. On one occasion Collingridge had commented adversely on ‘their deficiencies in Dogmatical Divinity and ... the nature of their casuistry’, and he had suggested to Bishop Poynter that before being admitted to a mission they should be subject to a theological
examination. He recalled how he had once attempted to enforce that in the Western District and how as a result he had become 'quite a marked man'. These were criticisms - countered the Jesuit provincial - which neither Bishop Walmesley nor Bishop Sharrock, his predecessors, had felt the need to make, whilst Peter Gandolphy in a printed address in 1816 dismissed criticism of the theological schools of the Jesuits as 'urged by Jesuitphobia'. But some Jesuits were themselves critical of what they saw as deficiencies in their courses of study, and on occasions during the nineteenth century commented on what they felt to be the inadequacies of their teaching compared with the scholarship levels expected of them on entering the universities of London and Oxford. In general, however, the Jesuits considered Stonyhurst was necessary precisely because of the weakness of the colleges established by the vicars apostolic of the Northern and Southern Districts at Ushaw and Old Hall; on the other hand they commended Milner's seminary at Oscott. Plowden had further aggravated matters by preferring a petition to Collingridge (and also to Bishop Poynter) urging him to delegate his own power as apostolic vicar to their provincial, Marmaduke Stone, to act as his grand vicar over all Jesuits in the English mission as previously Bishops Challoner and Walmesley had delegated their authority to the then Jesuit provincial, Thomas More. Collingridge indignantly refused.

Tate's remark that Plowden's antagonism to him was but part of a wider Jesuit plot in England to undermine the authority of the vicars apostolic was not therefore, it seemed to Collingridge, without credibility. Others were making the same point. On 20 January 1815, Charles McDonnell, a Franciscan who had occasionally acted as theological adviser to Collingridge and who later that year was to be elected
provincial of his order, wrote to him referring to 'the attempts of your Jesuits, who leave nothing untried to get power paramount to those of the Bishops'. He spoke of Marmaduke Stone desiring to make the Jesuits independent of the British bishops, and of his connections with Bishop Milner who had described the Jesuits as 'the only respectable body of clergymen in England'. Stone, he said, had reciprocated by lavishing praises on Dr Milner whilst speaking of the other bishops as persecutors of the Society of Jesus, and he was 'particularly severe on Dr Collingridge'.

Joseph Hodgson, vicar general in the London District, informed Collingridge that while Bishop Poynter was in Rome he would have it in his power to 'explore the dangerous pretensions of the Jesuits to be admitted to a state or privileges independent of or paramount to those of the Vicars Apostolic', and a few months later he again spoke of Marmaduke Stone writing to Rome asking to be independent of the vicars apostolic, panegyrising Dr Milner and denouncing the other English bishops. Poynter himself was disappointed to find the Jesuits in favour at the Vatican.

The English Jesuits remained suspicious of what they considered attempts by the vicars apostolic to secure their property. In the Western District Plowden, Marmaduke Stone and Bishop Collingridge had recently been in correspondence with one another about the premises of the Catholic chapel in Swansea which the owner wished to sell. The Jesuits informed Collingridge that as their Society had lately been restored by papal Bull they hoped he would have no objection if they purchased the premises. But doubtless seeking to restrict Jesuit influence the bishop remarked that it made more sense for the Swansea mission to be served from Brecon rather than Bristol. Stone retorted that M. Séjean, who had been the priest at Swansea for many years, regarded Plowden as the 'Parent and Founder of the place', and it was the
intention of the original donors of the South Wales property to have a Jesuit employed in the mission. It would not be unreasonable, then, to require a promise that whenever the Swansea mission became vacant, the first offer would be made to the supervisor of the Jesuits to supply it with a missioner from amongst their members.\textsuperscript{218}

Most recently, as we have seen, Tate had suggested to Collingridge that the problem at Bristol was not simply a dispute between Plowden and himself but that others were involved with the aim of removing Collingridge as vicar apostolic. Against such a background of strained relationships the Jesuits might well have been disposed to side with Plowden - and, indeed, he had a powerful friend at Stonyhurst in the person of Charles Plowden, his brother ('It is a pity he [Mr Stone, the provincial] does not act for himself; he is completely ruled by Mr Charles Plowden,' Tate had complained to Collingridge\textsuperscript{219}) - but both Stone and Charles Plowden declared Robert was in the wrong. They could find no Bayistical principle in the bishop's Lenten pastoral, which appeared to them to be perfectly conformable to the doctrine of the Council of Trent and to what the catechism taught. The bishop was merely exhorting sinners to comply with the precept of confessing their sins to a priest at Easter.\textsuperscript{220}

There was, too, the issue of disobedience to a superior which could not be ignored. The Society's Constitutions particularly stressed the 'bond of obedience'. At its foundation the Society had willingly accepted a monarchical style of self-governance in which, for day-to-day purposes, all authority was vested in the General.\textsuperscript{221} The 1558 Constitutions also empowered the General to delegate authority to those he wished to be superiors and the regulations imposed on all
members a duty to obey readily their commands 'in all things, for the sake of Christ our Lord', and to persuade themselves that 'everything is just; suppressing every repugnant thought and judgment of [their] own in a certain Obedience'. By their Constitutions the Jesuits were required 'to exert every effort in displaying this virtue of Obedience first to the Pope, then to the Superiors of the Society', and would therefore find difficulty in ultimately condoning disobedience to a bishop, appointed by the pope himself, who alone could grant faculties to a priest to serve within his District.

Marmaduke Stone, the Jesuit provincial, informed Collingridge that he and all at Stonyhurst who were acquainted with the case, including Charles Plowden, were pained and distressed by Robert Plowden's 'rash, scandalous and unwarrantable proceeding' at Bristol.

Ask his Lordship's pardon [he urged Plowden]... This, be assured, the General of the Society will expect from you as well as myself... This affair is likely to do us more harm than all the slander, which is now dealt out in the papers, in order to prepare our projected ruin.

Meanwhile Collingridge, thoroughly unsettled by Plowden's charges of unorthodoxy, had been testing his Lenten mandate in London and elsewhere. He found the responses reassuring, but in the process was forced to abandon any possibility of confining knowledge of the affair to his own Western District. Writing from London Charles McDonnell, the well-known Franciscan, said he had read the pastoral letter to seven or eight of the clergy after compline at Moorfields and they had found nothing exceptional in it, the opinion of the majority being that Mr Plowden was 'in his dotage'. Some had said 'his conduct proceeded from a system of hostility of Episcopal Government' (thus repeating Tate's allegation), but even so a charge not without irony when one recalls that Bishop Walmesley had commended Plowden...
for his consistent support of episcopal authority during the long dispute of the vicars apostolic with the Catholic Committee. Later McDonnell dispatched another supportive message saying that Collingridge’s pastoral letter had become the topic of conversation at the monthly meeting of the Catholic clergy at Lincoln’s Inn Fields; he had even gone so far as to read to the company the seventy-first of the condemned propositions of Baius (to which Plowden alluded), but all present saw that Collingridge’s proposition ‘could not honestly be mistaken for that of Baius’. 228 For good measure Joseph Hodgson, vicar general of the London District, sent Collingridge a statement signed by himself and twenty-one other priests declaring that his mandate expressed nothing but what was perfectly orthodox and Catholic, and that they were astonished that any Catholic could controvert it. 229 Charles Plowden was sure that news of the affair would spread: ‘No doubt the Bristol business will soon figure in The Times and it will be bellowed throughout London,’ he remarked to the provincial. 230

Messages of support for Collingridge were sent from other quarters. The bishop was anxious to learn the opinion of Joseph Reeve, the respected Jesuit chaplain to Lord Clifford at Ugbrooke, but he was too ill to do more than mark his assent to a letter written by his French colleague, Felix Vauquelin. 231 In three pages devoted to the controversy Vauquelin and Reeve sided with the bishop, condemning Plowden’s ‘audacity’ and expressing amazement that he could not recognise that the bishop’s teaching was the doctrine of the Church as laid down in the Council of Trent. 232 Collingridge was also anxious to have the opinion of the distinguished émigré priest at Downside, Dr Jean Elloi, a doctor of the Sorbonne who taught theology to the Benedictine novices. He wrote approving the pastoral letter as did the Downside
Benedictines when they learned from him what had happened. In a brief note of twelve lines Bishop Gibson of the Northern District assured Collingridge that his Pastoral was not the same as the proposition condemned in Baius. On the other hand the independently-minded Peter Gandolphy (whom Joseph Hodgson described to Collingridge as 'the Reverend self-conceited, obstinate P. Gandolphy') wrote and spoke in defence of Plowden, and the Rev. Samuel Spooner of Chepstow suggested Plowden's old age should be considered an extenuating factor. At Rome itself Cardinal Litta, Prefect of the Congregation of Propaganda, in discussion with Bishop Poynter on other matters was asked to study Collingridge's Pastoral. He thereupon condemned Plowden's conduct, saying Collingridge's precepts did indeed express Catholic doctrine.

In Bristol Joseph Tate seized the moment, mobilising the support of his lay friends. William Green, the bishop's wine merchant in Bristol, was keen to stress the enormity of Plowden's 'scandalous' action exclaiming, 'I should suppose its parallel was never before heard of.' As though to ensure that the bishop should feel himself a man much sinned against he expressed his sympathy and that of his friends: 'We all sincerely feel for your Lordship in having been attacked in such an unjust and I believe I may say profane manner.'

Plowden himself refused to apologise or compromise. When he asked the provincial to declare in writing the reason for his dismissal he was told it was 'for having without necessity assigned two meanings to the Bishop's words.' But if Stone considered Plowden was finding difficulties where none existed, Plowden himself saw Collingridge's mandate as 'rank heresy as ever was uttered by Martin Luther and [would] corrupt the whole kingdom if not opposed'.

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In general Plowden's brethren thought as did their General and Marmaduke Stone - that he had been over-nice in his interpretation of the pastoral, and the resulting furore had been of his own making. He was much admired as missioner and theologian and as someone who for twenty-eight years had built up the Bristol mission almost without assistance, but he was known by his brethren as a 'difficult' man. On 28 February 1815 Charles Plowden himself advised the provincial that his brother must either admit his error or be ordered to quit Bristol immediately. Reluctantly Stone agreed to remove him. Joseph Hodgson in London, writing to Collingridge in a congratulatory mood, professed to be sorry to learn that 'Uncle Bob has refused to retract or to make satisfaction and that he is to be Stoned at Stonyhurst by his Provincial Mr Stone'. He was so delighted with his puns that he underlined them.

Stone, by nature cautious and reluctant to remove a missioner so respected (and so redoubtable) delayed his departure from Stonyhurst, but finally set off for Bristol only to pause en route to write to Stonyhurst suggesting that some Father should be sent to assist him. It was Charles Plowden, Robert's brother and a future provincial, who put steel in him: 'If all Stonyhurst should repair to Bristol the execution would still depend on you.

On 2 March Collingridge requested Stone to order Plowden to leave the Western District immediately. Plowden protested that Collingridge was excercising a usurped power which he was sure no bishop had, although he expressed satisfaction that at least the bishop acknowledged the authority of the Jesuit provincial to remove him. Plowden's departure from Bristol had to be delayed, Stone explained to the bishop, to enable him to settle all his financial affairs, but he assured Collingridge

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that all Plowden’s missionary powers and faculties of preaching, hearing confessions and catechizing had ceased.

Members of the congregation continued to petition on his behalf. Frederick Husenbeth, who claimed to have been acquainted with the Bristol mission since 1786 and to have collected subscriptions for the Trenchard Street chapel, wrote to Collingridge and while acknowledging that Plowden was a man of ‘a natural hastiness of temper’ stated that he was nevertheless also a man of great humility, ‘a pious, good old pastor whose excellent character [had] attracted the veneration not only of Catholics but of Protestants and his fellow citizens of every denomination’. Cornelius Hayes wrote to Collingridge declaring he was old enough to remember the ministry in Bristol of Fr John Fontaine, and identified himself as one of the class who had to depend on their labour and industry and who comprised ‘by far the greatest portion of the Catholic congregation here’. The proposed removal of Plowden would cause the ‘dispersion’ of a great portion of the Catholic community in Bristol. ‘It has excited the pity, and I may also add the contempt of our Protestant neighbours.’

On Monday, 20 March 1815 a letter appeared in the Bristol Mercury championing Plowden in his dispute over the Lenten pastoral letter and objecting strongly to his treatment by the bishop. It was written by ‘Philanthropist’, who declared himself a friend of Robert Plowden but ‘unbiased by prejudice, unsolicited and independent of any set or Society of Men of every description’. John Smith, Plowden’s ‘agent’ in Bristol after his departure, later referred to this letter in his pamphlet and named the author as the Rev. James Parker. Parker felt that ‘Mr Plowden [was] in the wrong, as [was] generally agreed on by the Clergy and Regulars of every Religious Order’, but the consequences for what amounted to an error of
judgment were too severe, especially in light of his great missionary service to the city:

His time spent in the hovels of the poor, enduring want, penury and sickness; his daily visits to the hospitals and prisons to give spiritual consolation to the afflicted and distressed; his indefatigable zeal in instructing the little children, adults and christians of every denomination in the duties of the morality of the gospel, bespeak volumes of praise, love and respect, to which his well-known character is entitled.  

It was, he concluded, an outrage that the venerable pastor should have been banished in the space of five days from his house, a building on which he had expended so much of his own money.

Others protested angrily at what they considered to be the unjust treatment Plowden had received. Frederick Husenbeth again wrote to Collingridge, echoing Plowden's allegation that 'he had taken a power which even the King had no right to, namely of banishing a subject without trial'. He was indignant that Plowden was not even allowed to have the sale of his furniture on his own premises but was obliged to remove it to sale rooms where, as authorised by Plowden, it was sold under Husenbeth's direction and the proceeds later remitted to him.

Collingridge was also the recipient of at least one anonymous letter which accused him of acting towards Plowden with insolence, cruelty and ingratitude: the bishop had made use of his power 'like a bad man'; all the congregation of Bath and Bristol thought likewise. More comforting for Collingridge was a letter from his Franciscan colleague in London, Charles McDonnell, who said he had recently received a visit from Plowden whom he found to be 'a most obstinate, self-conceited man'; and a little later McDonnell assured Collingridge that all the clergy he had spoken to were glad that Mr Plowden had been removed from Bristol. In a farewell
declaration to his congregation Plowden explained that the reason for his dismissal was not that he would not submit to lawful authority but because he assigned to his congregation ‘without necessity a double meaning to a sentence in the Bishop’s Lenten instruction, the one Heterodox and the other Orthodox’. Plowden did not, in fact, finally leave until Tuesday, 4 April 1815. Unrepentant, he went to Swynnerton, south of Newcastle-under-Lyme, to take charge of the chapel there, under the aegis of his friend, Bishop Milner of the Midland District.

Plowden was determined never to submit to the bishop in order to regain his place although, he said, he would obey any instruction to return by his provincial, ‘to whom alone I hold myself accountable’. But he clearly thought this unlikely and accepted that the body of the clergy in the District ‘patronized the bishop in his error’ whilst the Jesuits at Stonyhurst ‘wished to extricate his Lordship from blame and censure’. He submitted to an order by Stone not to publish anything in connection with his dispute, but he was determined to make head against the ‘heretical meaning’ of the pastoral and in lengthy letters explained his position to those who wrote to him. He gave his most detailed explanation on 27 December 1815 in a ten-page letter from Swynnerton addressed to John Smith in Bristol. As Plowden saw it the question was not how soon a man is obliged to go to confession after committing a mortal sin - immediately, in an hour, a day, ten days or ten months - but

if in the interim God deigns to grant him an act of contrition (which it is blasphemy to deny God the power of doing) whether he is justify’d and becomes a true penitent by that act alone before he goes to confession and is absolved, or whether he must wait for confession and absolution before his sins are forgiven him.

If, however, two things must exist (as the bishop expressly said), namely sorrow and
then confession, then if the sinner should unexpectedly die, even though he had made an act of contrition, he can have no forgiveness and 'must go headlong to the devil'. To assert this, Plowden continued, is rank heresy and coincides with Baius's condemned propositions, particularly no.32 (which states that charity which is the fulfilling of the law is not always accompanied with a remission of sins), and also proposition no.71 (where Baius states that by contrition, even with perfect charity and a desire of achieving the sacrament of penance, sin is not forgiven - barring a case of martyrdom - without the actual receipt of the sacrament). It is evidently impossible for a sinner at all times to go to confession, but through the grace of God he can at all times make an act of contrition, and that at all times justifies him. The Council of Trent may wish for confession as soon as possible but never imposes it as a bounden duty nor as a condition under the Gospel dispensation for recovering the grace of God. How soon does the precept of confession become binding after the commission of mortal sin? Not absolutely on the first opportunity (as stated in Baius's condemned seventy-first proposition), Plowden replied, but only at the first convenient opportunity. Collingridge's statement, that if the first opportunity was not taken the penance was fruitless and illusory, was his chief error. Plowden acknowledged that many priests in England sided with the bishop, but, he said, they too were in error.

It could not be said, Plowden argued, that he had forged the condemnation of Baius's propositions, because they stood printed in 'every Book of Divinity'; and people could not then go on to say that he had wrongly applied them to the bishop's propositions, because they had no proof to offer. Before his explanation, would not ninety out of a hundred priests and laymen have said that they could not be justified.
without confession? And what were the consequences of this? The Catholic who frequently lapses in to sin ‘tired with the heavy task of confessing so often gives up all hopes of salvation and abandons the practice of his religion’, or never thinks of attempting a serious act of contrition until he has an opportunity of meeting his confessor ‘perhaps fifty or a hundred miles distant from him’. As things were, concluded Plowden, ‘a practical Bayism ... was a system that pervaded the land’.

After five years at Swynnerton, Plowden moved to Wappenbury, south east of Coventry. Jeremiah Maher of Bristol, a staunch supporter of the Jesuits and one of the congregation present when Plowden challenged Collingridge’s pastoral in 1815, wrote to him on 26 October 1821 and in reply Plowden restated his case saying that those who made an act of contrition were justified and need not confess before a priest, but this time adding: ‘providing they do not delay the confession of their sins beyond the term of a year which is the term prescribed by the Church for complying with that divine precept’. In the meantime their penance was not fruitless and illusory as Bishop Collingridge and ‘so many deluded clergymen in this kingdom continually pretend’, and if, said Plowden, he should assent to them, for that alone and irrespective of other misdemeanors he would at his death go ‘precipitately to the devil’.

An anecdote Foley relates about Plowden is the reminiscence of a man who as a schoolboy in Bristol had been told the following story by Plowden himself. A young Catholic midshipman from Bristol fell ill whilst on his travels and being on the point of death wished to make his confession. There being no priest available he made it to a Protestant friend whom he begged to relay it to Fr Plowden at the first opportunity. The point that need concern us - for it is of a piece with Plowden’s
NICOLAS DE BOBADILLA, ONE OF THE FIRST COMPANIONS OF ST. IGNATIUS.
thoughts on confession and shows his consistency - is that when the Protestant friend
finally arrived in Bristol to carry out his promise Plowden assured him there was no
necessity for him to repeat the confession, and that indeed it would be useless, 'but
that he doubted not that this fervent act of humble contrition had been accepted by
God, and the dying soul forgiven whatever fault it had committed'.

Plowden died at Wappenbury on 17 June 1823 at the age of eighty-three,
having passed his final years in what Foley describes as 'extreme poverty'. Some
years later his great nephew, William Plowden, erected a monument to his memory
in St Anne's churchyard. His distinguished career as missioner and theologian had
been marred by a tendency to controversy, and his tenacity in debate and a disposition
to be over-exact (when a shrug of the shoulders would have served him better) could
result in a point of disagreement developing into a sustained polemic. His cast of
mind was such that he found it difficult to retreat from a position once established,
even though he could have done so decently in the name of obedience to a superior.
(Indeed, the Constitutions of the Jesuits declare 'a remarkable pertinacity of opinion;
which is often the occasion of much trouble to societies of men' to be an impediment
to admission into the Society of Jesus. 259) Lord Clifford, hearing of Collingridge's
problems with Plowden once remarked: 'I before informed your Lordship that there
was always something singular in his way of thinking,'260 and Joseph Reeve,
Clifford's chaplain, who had a prudential regard for orderliness in the affairs of the
Society and was severe on what he considered wayward conduct, had, some years
earlier, instanced a parallel in Jesuit history. Plowden, he had told Marmaduke
Stone, could be considered the Bobadilla of the present age. 261 Bobadilla, continued
Reeve, was one of the first men of the Society of Jesus but had a temper of his own
which rendered him tenacious of his own will and most troublesome to his superiors, though he submitted to the dictates of obedience in the end.\textsuperscript{262} Plowden’s apologies to Collingridge (like those of the Rev. Joseph Wilks to Bishop Walmesley, and of the Rev. Peter Gandolphy to Bishop Poynter of London) rarely gave satisfaction, for they were never categorical but hedged about with qualifications such as ‘If I have ...’, ‘as far as Religion allows’.\textsuperscript{263} In his disputes he saw himself as the aggrieved party and lamented: ‘I have learnt from dear bought experience my utter incapacity of expressing myself upon theological subjects in words that will give your Lordship satisfaction.’\textsuperscript{264} Foley, in his \textit{Records}, describes Plowden as ‘a keen theologian, and an unflinching defender of the purity of faith and doctrine’.\textsuperscript{265} James Parker, a fellow Jesuit, who lived in Bristol for many years during Plowden’s ministry remarked: ‘His indefatigable and daily labours in his attendance on his flock and on the poor and distressed of this place are equal to what you read of the great zeal of our missionary Saints.’\textsuperscript{266}

When he reflected on Plowden’s life Dr George Oliver of Exeter, a contemporary and, though not a Jesuit, a great admirer of the Society wrote a touching tribute. A respected cleric and chronicler of Catholic affairs in the South West, Oliver regarded Plowden as a man of indefatigable zeal and industry whose disinterestedness and self-denying way of life deserved the character of ‘father of the poor’,\textsuperscript{267} but he condemned his attitude to Collingridge as outrageous resistance to episcopal authority:

In looking back to his history, it brings tears to the eyes, and agony to the heart, to witness this champion of religion, venerable by his hoary head, ... after nearly forty years’ ministerial service forgetting his duty so far ...\textsuperscript{268}

A poignant phrase of Oliver’s doubtless summed up the affectionate and honest regard
of many of Plowden's contemporaries as they saw him stubbornly defending his battle-line to the end: 'This lion-hearted but wrong-headed old man'.269
NOTES TO CHAPTER V

1. ABPSJ, Foley MS 5, 22/1/3/3.


4. CDA, *Correspondence 1792-93*, Walmesley to Gibson, February 1793.

5. Ibid., Walmesley to Douglass, 9 May 1793.

6. Ibid., Douglass to Walmesley, 22 July 1793.


8. Ibid., p.29.

9. Ibid., p.60.

10. Ibid., p.64.

11. Ibid., p.163.

12. Ibid., p.175.


17. Ibid., p.15.

18. CDA, *Correspondence 1794-95*, 29 September 1795; *Correspondence 1796-97*, 15 August 1796.


20. CDA, *Correspondence 1792-93*, Petre to Walmesley, 26 March 1792.
21. Ibid., 10, 14 April 1792.


23. Ibid., p.167.

24. CDA, *Correspondence 1798*, Carroll to Plowden, 2 March. cf. William Coombes's remark to Bishop Walmsley that Bishop Douglass 'forms his judgment from the last opinion he hears' (*CDA, Correspondence 1791*, 23 May).


28. Ibid., sec.2.


32. cf. O'Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1993), p.54: 'After the Jesuits opened their first school in 1548, they began to recruit over 50 percent of their novices from their students.'


34. In her thesis, *Studies from Roman Catholic Government Inspected Elementary Schools in Bristol 1847-1902* (unpublished master's thesis, University of Bristol, 1971), Mary O'Brien speaks from time to time of St Joseph's School, but refers (p.27) to Robert Plowden's school only to say that when the chapel was opened in 1790 there was a school for poor children attached.

35. Smith, *op. cit.*, p.19. At that time the Jesuits had been excluded from Bristol and the mission was being served by the Franciscans.

36. Ibid., pp.19, 20.


38. CDA, *Correspondence 1812*, Ann Hippisly to Miss Martin at Hammersmith, 5 June.
40. CDA, *Correspondence 1812*, Ann Hippisly to Miss Martin, 6 June.
41. On the death of his wife, Thomas Weld became a priest and later a cardinal.
42. Gifts of this kind were of practical assistance to decent families struggling in hardship and were customary in the Catholic Church in Bristol throughout the eighteenth century and beyond. See Hankins, *op. cit.*, p.58.
44. The other works of Gobinet available in English translation were *A treatise of the imitation of the holy youth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ* and *A treatise on the two sacraments of penance and the holy eucharist*. See Blom, *op. cit.*, p.128.
45. BRL, Signed 'G', *Bristol Mercury*, 21 November 1814.
46. As a young man Jeremiah Maher had attended St Joseph's Chapel, and when Plowden was forced to leave corresponded with him until his death. His son became a Jesuit priest. Maher's wife's family claimed Sir Isaac Newton as one of their ancestors. See Hankins, *op. cit.*, pp.39, 72, 76.
48. CDA, *Correspondence 1792-93*, Weld to Walmesley, 19 June 1792.
50. 'It is chiefly Bp. B[eringto]n who has filled every place with his pestiferous blue books' (CDA, *Correspondence 1794-95*, Milner to Walmesley, 23 February 1795).
52. CDA, *Correspondence 1792-93*, Coombes to Plowden, 9 June 1793.
53. CDA, *Correspondence 1794-95*, Douglass to Walmesley, 18 July 1795; *Correspondence 1796-97*, Douglass to Walmesley, 14 April 1796.
54. CDA, *Correspondence 1796-97*, Bishop Walmesley's 'To the Clergy of the Western District', 1797.
55. CDA, *Correspondence 1792-93*, Douglass to Walmesley, 21 November 1793.
56. CDA, *Correspondence 1796-97*, Bruning to Walmesley, 9 November 1796. Bishop Walmesley replied to Bruning on 14 November 1796 and spoke of 'the foolish conceits of his own [Joseph Berington's] insane imagination'.


58. For example: 'Your [Walmesley's] proceedings against Mr Bernard appears to me [Robert Plowden] to be perfectly canonical for two reasons.' Plowden refers to the Council of Trent and the Constitution of Clement X (CDA, *Correspondence 1794-95*, 4, 5, 16, November 1795).

59. 'Among the objects of our consultation was that of Baptism conferred by parsons of every description. Such glaring proofs of neglect were adduced ...' (CDA, *Correspondence 1796-97*, Pilling to Sharrock, 12 August 1796).

60. CDA, *Correspondence 1794-95*, Douglass to Walmesley, 17 August 1795. I am assuming the reference is to Robert Plowden because of the respect Bishop Douglass had for him and since his name was frequently paired with that of William Coombes.


63. CDA, *Correspondence 1791*, Plowden to Walmesley, 6 June 1791.


65. CDA, *Correspondence 1796-97*, Warmoll to Sharrock, 12 April 1797.


67. CDA, *Correspondence 1772-1788*, Strickland to vicars apostolic, 19 January 1787. The wording (though not the sense) of Strickland's letter to Walmesley, in the Clifton Archives, is slightly different from that of his original letter to the vicars apostolic, now in the Jesuit Archives and quoted by Geoffrey Holt, *op. cit.*, p.118.

68. ABPSJ, *Old College of St Francis Xavier, Part I*, Plowden to Strickland, 27 May 1801.


70. cf. In his will dated 20 April 1774, the ex-Jesuit at Holywell, Michael Moseley, conveyed ex-Jesuit property to Bishop Walmesley as though it were his own, but Walmesley signed a deed of trust declaring that he held the property for the mission to be used as the ex-Jesuits should appoint (Edwards, *op. cit.*, p.157).


73. CDA, *Correspondence 1796-97*, Walmesley to Plowden, 20 November 1797.

74. CDA, *Correspondence 1796-97*, Preston to Plowden, 4 July 1797.

75. *Ibid.* The priest at Abergavenny would have done better, said Plowden’s correspondent, if he had followed the example of the procurator of the Jesuit house at Watten who asked a higher price for a flock of sheep belonging to it than the procurator at St Omer’s chose to give. When the latter reminded him that they were brothers, the other replied: ‘Tis true, Father, we are brothers, but our purses are not sisters.’

76. Bishop Gibson hoped at first that the college and seminary would be at Tudhoe, near Durham.

77. CDA, *Correspondence 1792-93*, Weld to Walmesley, 7 June 1793. His second and fourth sons, Thomas Weld said later, intended becoming Jesuits (CDA, *Correspondence 1796-97*, 3 January 1796).

78. CDA, *Correspondence 1794-95*, Weld to Walmesley, 30 July 1794.


80. CDA, *Correspondence 1798*, Stone to Sharrock, 3 February 1798.

81. The ex-Jesuits wished to deploy their priests to those missions and chaplaincies which the former Society traditionally served. They also claimed that Stonyhurst was a pontifical seminary and that a Rescript of 14 February 1796 confirmed for the College the privileges enjoyed by the academy at Liège under the Brief *Catholici Praesules*. Later, in 1802, in answer to a complaint to Propaganda from the vicar apostolic of the Midland District a Rescript made it clear that Stonyhurst was not to be considered a diocesan seminary and on ordination the students could serve outside the district. See Geoffrey Holt, *op. cit.* pp.53-61.

82. CDA, *Correspondence 1796-97*, 12 January 1796. In April 1796 Marmaduke Stone, the President of the College, wrote to Walmesley saying he was pleased that the undertaking at Stonyhurst had met with the joint approval of his Holiness (by a special Brief from Rome, 14 February 1796) and of Walmesley himself (*Ibid.*, 28 April 1796). Within a few years there was not one seminary in England as Bishops Douglass and Gibson had wished (though each for his own district), but several foundations in different parts of the
country: Old Hall Green in the London District; Crook Hall near Durham in the Northern District; and Oscott near Birmingham in the Midland District. There were in addition the seminaries of the Jesuits at Stonyhurst, Lancashire, and of the Benedictines at Acton Burnell, Shropshire.

83. ABPSJ, Strickland’s *Circular*, 5 July 1795.
84. CDA, *Correspondence 1796-97*, 12 December 1796. Plowden’s circular was published in London by Keating in 1796.
86. *Ibid*.
89. cf. ‘[Bishop Sharrock] was much occupied in giving faculties to exiled French priests ... found in locations as varied as Marlborough, Shaftesbury, Ugbrooke, Chudleigh (where there were five French priests) and Abergavenny’ (Aidan Bellenger, ‘The Vicars Apostolic of the Western District, 1688-1850’, *Fathers in Faith*, (Downside Abbey, 1991) p.15).
90. Bellenger, *op. cit.*, pp.52-53. See also Bishop Sharrock’s appeal for missioners for the Western District in 1807 (CDA, *Correspondence 1807*, 17 November).
94. CDA, *Correspondence 1814*, Collingridge to Stone, 19 November 1814.
96. Plowden reported he had lost £30 ‘through Lord Arundell and others’ (ABPSJ, *Old College of St Francis Xavier, Part 1*, Plowden to Stone, 19 December 1805).
97. CDA, *Correspondence 1803*, Plowden to Sharrock, 25 November 1803; *Trenchard Street Chapel 1787-1845*, Plowden to Sharrock, 28 January 1804. There were two émigré clergy named Denmat - Jean le Denmat and Mathurin le Denmat, both born in 1753 and of the Quimper diocese in Brittany. The one assisting at Swansea was probably Mathurin. See Aidan Bellenger, *The French Exiled Clergy in the British Isles after 1789* (Bath: Downside Abbey, 1986), p.172. By the Aliens Act of 1803 the Secretary of State had the power

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to expel foreigners on mere suspicion of infringement of the regulations.

98. CDA, Correspondence 1808-09, Williams to Plowden, 27 January 1809. cf. Bellenger, op. cit., p.51.

99. CDA, Correspondence 1807, Plowden to Sharrock, 8 May.

100. CDA, Correspondence 1808-09, Hughes to Collingridge, 21 January 1809.


102. ABPSJ, Old College of St Francis Xavier, Part III, p.20 (undated).

103. The prisoners, at times numbering several thousands, led lives of enforced idleness which many spent in gaming, and when quarrels broke out they sometimes led to duelling (the weapons were makeshift) with occasionally fatal consequences. Latimer speaks of over 150 duels being fought by French prisoners at Stapleton in the first decade of the nineteenth century (Latimer, op. cit., II, 31-32).

104. CDA, Trenchard Street Chapel 1787-1845, 15 October 1803.

105. Oliver, op. cit., p.288. 'Duval' was, it seems, a common name amongst émigré priests: Bellenger lists thirty (Bellenger, op. cit., p.179).

106. CDA, Correspondence 1814, Hippisly to Collingridge, 10 March.

107. Ibid., Plowden to Collingridge, 3 April 1814. Ann Hippisly expressed surprise at how little linen Père Duval possessed, though he had a great many books! Two years earlier William Wakeman of Beckford had written to Bishop Collingridge about Duval: 'His language is imperfect and he is not sufficiently understood, besides he will not suffer a servant to live with him to keep him decent.' (CDA, Correspondence 1812, Wakeman to Collingridge, 17 April).

108. CDA, Correspondence 1796-97, Plowden to Sharrock, 29 December 1797.

109. Oliver, op. cit., p.428; Bellenger, op. cit., p.280; John Smith, Jesuitism and Friarism in Bristol (Bristol: Powell, 1845), p.19. Smith apparently recalled the name 'Le Villain' phonetically, misspelling it 'Levelain'.

110. CDA, Correspondence 1803, Plowden to Sharrock, 5 November 1803. Père Moutier came from the diocese of Rouen. See Bellenger, op. cit., p.225.
111. Oliver op. cit., p.359. Not all émigré clergy had a talent for making money - perhaps it did not much concern them. Raymond de La Borde, who died in Liverpool in 1795, 'much regretted by all who knew him', left just four guineas, enough to cover the expenses of his funeral. His clothing was so wretched that most of it was given to the poor.

112. CDA, Correspondence 1792-93, Douglass to Walmesley, 24 January 1793.

113. Ibid., Plowden to Walmesley, 23, 27 October 1792.

114. CDA, Correspondence 1803, Douglass to Sharrock, 24 January. The matter was brought up again in 1807 when Bishop Milner wrote to Bishop Sharrock protesting at Bishop Douglass's plan, supported by his London clergy, to abolish Saturday abstinence. See CDA, Correspondence 1807, summer 1807 [undated].

115. CDA, Correspondence 1794-95, Bishop Walmesley's Mandate, 4 December 1795.


117. CDA, Correspondence 1798, Bishop Douglass to Bishop Sharrock, 24 March 1798. See also Basset, op.cit., pp.365, 366. The Jesuits regarded the Pope's verbal permission as allowing them to be Jesuits in private ('for the internal forum') whilst remaining secular priests in public. The Society of Jesus was not canonically restored throughout the world until the Bull of Pope Pius VII, Sollicitudo Omnium Ecclesiarum, 7 August 1814.

118. ABPSJ, Old College of St Francis Xavier, Part III, f.108, 28 March 1809. See also Letters etc. 1805-1818, Plowden to Stone, 26 January 1807; Stone to Plowden, 29 January 1807.

119. This is the expression commonly used in this context. cf. the French and Latin equivalents: 'J'ai été agréé [à la Province de Russie]', and 'facultas aggregandi et uniendi'.

120. See AHSI, 60 vols (Rome: Institutum Historicum, 1973), XLI, 288-311. In this paper, 'The English Province: the Ex-Jesuits and the Restoration (1773-1814)', Geoffrey Holt has meticulously compiled the membership of the English Province from the suppression of the Society to its restoration. 'Of the 270 or so Jesuits of the English province in 1773 [at the suppression] ... very nearly 200 did not have the chance [to rejoin] as they died before the restoration ... in May, 1803' (p.311).

121. ABPSJ, English Province Correspondence ff.70,73 (Stone to R. Plowden, 29 January 1807; C. Plowden to Glover, 10 March 1807). ABPSJ, Letters etc. 1805-1818 (Reeve to Stone, 9 May 1805, 3 August 1805; Plowden to Stone, 26 January 1807; Stone to Plowden, 29 January 1807).

122. CDA, Correspondence 1803; Reeve to Sharrock, 29 November 1803.
123. The *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* (usually referred to simply as 'Propaganda') was established in 1622 to deal with the problems of growing missions such as England and charged with the spreading of Catholicism. Cardinal Borgia's letter, now in the Westminster Archives, is published as Appendix K in Ward's *The Eve of Catholic Emancipation*, III, 286-287.

124. CDA, *Correspondence 1804*, 20 March 1804. The trustees, in addition to William Strickland, were the ex-Jesuits Thomas Meynell and Marmaduke Stone. See CDA, *Correspondence 1799*, 4 January 1799 (Plowden to Sharrock) and 20 December 1799 (Strickland to Sharrock).

125. ABPSJ, *Old College of St Francis Xavier 1743-1847, Part 1*, F.21, Plowden to Strickland, 27 May 1801.

126. CDA, *Trenchard Street Chapel 1787-1845*, Berington to Sharrock, 10 October 1803.

127. See Foley, *Records*, VII, p.clixix. Strickland was later to distance himself from the Paccanarists, suspecting their Order was being manipulated by Spanish interests. It was hoped by anti-Jesuit factions, particularly the powerful Spanish court in Rome, that the Paccanarists' movement would be considered an alternative to the Society of Jesus which would therefore not be restored. Jean Rozaven, whom Paccanari declared Provincial in England, eventually, like most in the new movement, entered the Society of Jesus as it moved towards full restoration. De Broglie became a secular priest.

128. Monsignor Bernard Ward tells of the occasion following the issuing of the *Observanda* in 1803 when the Rev. James Archer of London, the most popular preacher of his day, who was in the habit of going to the theatre in order 'to take lessons in eloquence' and who resented the prohibition, found himself sitting near Bishop Milner at a dinner in London and loudly declared that the *Observanda* was 'the most ridiculous composition that ever was published'. Milner naturally defended it. Archer later wrote to Milner apologising for the unseemly manner in which he had spoken to him (Ward, *The Eve of Catholic Emancipation*, I, 122-123).

129. CDA, *Correspondence 1804*, Plowden to Sharrock, 6 April 1804.

130. *Ibid.*, 11 April 1804. Plowden is presumably alluding to the Catholic doctrine of Limbo, devised by medieval theologians to explain the destiny of those - more precisely of children (*limbus puerorum*) - who dying unbaptised and therefore still stained with original sin can never meet God face to face. In an article in the Jesuit periodical, *The Month*, John Kenny looks at the doctrine and the issue it focuses and argues that today twentieth century theologians judge the limbo-theory untenable (‘On the fringe of eternal life’, *The Month*, 28 (1995), pp.27-31). See also: 'As regards children who have died without God... Indeed, the great mercy of God ... and Jesus' tenderness toward children ... allow us to hope that there is a way of salvation for children who have died without Baptism' (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*).
131. CDA, Correspondence 1804, Plowden to Sharrock, 4 May.

132. Ibid., Plowden to Sharrock, 6 May.

133. Ibid., Plowden to Sharrock, 10 May.

134. J.B. Dockery, Collingridge (Newport: Johns, 1954), p.153n. Collingridge and Dockery were both Franciscans. Dockery identifies 'Dr Rigby' as being Dr John Rigby, but it is more likely that Collingridge is referring to Dr Thomas Rigby, a prominent clergyman who was formerly an adviser on theology to Bishop Gibson and later became one of Bishop Poynter's vicars general. See C.D.A., Correspondence 1813, 29 November. In The Eve of Catholic Emancipation Monsignor Bernard Ward refers to Thomas Rigby as 'the well-known Dr Rigby' or 'the well-known Dr Thomas Rigby', and Collingridge (Plowden too) would be keen to have the backing of such a respected theologian. See vol.1, p.180 and vol.2, p.8.

135. ABPSJ, Bristol Papers, Plowden to Smith, 27 December 1815.


137. CDA, Correspondence 1813, Rigby to Collingridge, 29 November.

138. Ibid.

139. Ibid.

140. ABPSJ, Letters etc. 1805-1818, F.260, Parker to Wright, 16 February 1815.

141. AAW, AAW/A 58 2c 1 & ii, Hodgson to Poynter, c.14 September 1812. Dockery is mistaken in referring to John Carpue as 'a French refugee Priest'. Carpue was born in London, trained at the English College, Douai, and was ordained by Bishop Douglass of London. Dockery also incorrectly identifies 'Mr Parker' as the 'Prior of the Paris House of Benedictines' (Dockery, op. cit., p.155). Dom Parker's main concerns were with English Catholic affairs on the Continent and were conducted not through Bishop Collingridge but principally Bishop Poynter, and there is therefore no apparent reason why he should have any involvement with the matter under discussion. The 'Mr Parker' of whom Collingridge speaks was almost certainly the Rev. James Parker, a Jesuit priest who lived at Bristol on and off between 1803 and 1820. A close ally of Plowden, he cast himself in the role of apologist for the Jesuit mission in Bristol and frequently clashed with Bishop Collingridge. See CDA, Correspondence 1814, 26 March, and Correspondence 1813, 4 December, 24 December.

142. CDA, Correspondence 1804, Plowden to Sharrock, 6 April.
143. CDA, *Correspondence 1811*, Plowden to Collingridge, 12 July.

144. Benedict XIV, born at Bologna, was elected pope on 22 August 1740. He died 3 May 1758. He was recognised as one of the most cultured popes of the eighteenth century; according to the French philosopher, Montesquieu, he was the scholars' pope.

145. CDA, *Correspondence 1811*, Plowden to Collingridge, 14 July.

146. SCA, *MS. C.iii, 14*, Collingridge to Plowden, 12 July 1811.

147. Milner's friend, F.C. Husenbeth, in his *Life of Bishop Milner*, puts the number at one hundred.

148. Bishop Poynter's *The Apologetical Epistle*, addressed to Cardinal Litta in Rome on 15 March 1815, was published that year (in Latin and English) as a seven and a half page document by John Murray of Albermarle Street, London. See CDA, *Correspondence 1815*.


151. Plowden was on visiting terms with Bishop Milner. It was on one of Milner's visits to Plowden at Bristol in 1808 that the artist, George Keman, took the opportunity to paint a miniature of the bishop in the Trenchard Street presbytery, 'decidedly the best ever taken of the Bishop' according to his contemporary and biographer, F.C. Husenbeth. See Husenbeth, *op. cit.*, pp.150-151.

152. AAW, *AAW/A 58 2c i&ii*, Collingridge to Poynter, 30 September 1812.

153. See Robert Plowden, *A Letter to Francis Plowden* etc., pp.29, 60, 64.

154. CDA, *Correspondence 1813*, Collingridge's Pastoral Letter, 27 November.

155. CDA, *Trenchard Street Chapel 1787-1845*, Plowden to Collingridge, 4 December 1813.

156. CDA, *Correspondence 1813*, Parker to Collingridge, 4 December.

157. CDA, *Trenchard Street Chapel 1787-1845*, Vauquelin to Collingridge, 8 December 1813. Fr Vauquelin was in charge of the congregation at Ugbrooke from 1794-1816, when he returned to France and became vicar general of Rouen. See also CDA, *Correspondence 1814*, 9 November.

158. CDA, *Trenchard Street Chapel 1787-1845*, Collingridge to Plowden, 10 December 1813. Collingridge sometimes put the time of day on his letters.
159. Ibid., F.221: ‘Withdrawing Missionary Faculties from Mr Plowden’, 16 December 1813. Dockery is mistaken when he speaks (op. cit., p.156) of Collingridge calling on Plowden at Bristol; the interview took place at Taunton. See CDA, Trenchard Street Chapel 1787-1845, 1 December 1813, and Ibid., F.221, 16 December 1813.

160. CDA, Correspondence 1813, Collingridge to Plowden, 16 December.

161. ABPSJ, Smith, op. cit., p.16.

162. CDA, Trenchard Street Chapel 1787-1845, Collingridge to Coombes, 19 December 1813.

163. Tate had served in Lancashire where there was a strong Catholic population. He had been at Preston 1803-1808, and at Wigan 1808-1810. The Jesuits had built a chapel at Preston in 1793 capable of seating 2,000 people, but by 1813, although it was the largest Catholic church in England, it could no longer contain the congregation and an appeal was issued for funds to build another. See CDA, Correspondence 1814, leaflet entitled ‘Address to Catholics’, dated 1 May 1813 [sic].

164. CDA, Correspondence 1819, Tate to Collingridge, 24 December.

165. CDA, Correspondence 1813, Tate to Collingridge, 20 December.

166. Ibid., Green to Collingridge, 21 December.

167. SCA, MS C.iii, 14, Weld to Stone, 21 December 1813. Thomas Weld, a Jesuit sympathiser, was always willing to write on Plowden’s behalf. See CDA, Correspondence 1814, Weld to Collingridge, 4 January.

168. SCA, MS C.iii, 14, Plowden to Stone, 23 December 1813.

169. Ibid., Stone to Plowden, 28 December 1813.

170. Ibid., Plowden to Stone, 30 December 1813.

171. CDA, Correspondence 1813, Collingridge to Coombes, 19 December.

172. Ibid., Plowden to Collingridge, 21 December.

173. Ibid., Tate to Collingridge, 23 December.

174. See CDA, Correspondence 1814, Poynter to Collingridge, 13 April. For the dispute between Bishop Poynter and the Rev. Peter Gandolphy see Ward, The Eve of Catholic Emancipation, pp.205-220. The vicars apostolic found errors in his Liturgy, but he determined to publish it and went so far as to plead his case in Rome. See CDA, Correspondence 1815, Poynter to Collingridge, 16 November, 21 November; McDonnell to Collingridge, 28 November. Like Plowden, Gandolphy was stubborn and convinced of the rightness of his
opinions. Bishop Poynter suspended him for disobedience but he found, like Plowden, an ally in Bishop Milner.

175. CDA, Correspondence 1814, Poynter to Collingridge, 4 January.
176. Ibid., 21 January.
177. Ibid., 3 February.
178. Ibid., 7 February.
179. SCA, MS C. iii, 14, Weld to Stone, 18 February 1814.
180. CDA, Correspondence 1814, Plowden to Collingridge, 21 February.
181. SCA, MS C. iii, 14, Plowden to Stone, 22 February 1814.
182. CDA, Correspondence 1814, Collingridge to Tate, 23 February.
183. CDA, Correspondence 1815, Collingridge to Parker, 26 March. James Parker had been the Jesuit chaplain to the Countess of Shaftesbury at St Giles Camborne, Dorset, since 1787, but on coming to Bristol in 1803 had held no official position though occasionally preaching at the Catholic chapel.
184. CDA, Correspondence 1814, Tate to Collingridge, 6 October.
185. Ibid., Plowden to Collingridge, 14 December.
186. Ibid.
187. Ibid., Collingridge to Stone, 19 November.
188. Ibid., Plowden to Collingridge, 4 December.
189. Ibid., Collingridge to Stone, 19 November.
190. 'To the greater glory of God' - the unofficial motto of the Jesuits. In their Constitutions the phrase is used frequently, sometimes in slightly different forms: Ad maiorem Dei gloriam (approx. twenty-six times), ad Dei gloriam (approx. thirty-two times), ad maius Dei obsequium et gloriam (approx. thirteen times).
191. CDA, Correspondence 1814, Stone to Collingridge, 20 December; Correspondence 1817, Stone to Collingridge, 17 February 1817.
192. Ibid., Tate to Collingridge, 31 December.
193. CDA, Correspondence 1815, Plowden to Collingridge, 11 January.
194. Ibid., Collingridge to Plowden, 13 January.
195. Ibid., Plowden to Collingridge, 17 January.

196. Ibid., Tate to Collingridge, 30 January.

197. CDA, Correspondence 1820, Tate to A.R. Sumner, 27 September.

198. CDA, Correspondence 1817, Stone to Collingridge, 17 February.

199. CDA, Correspondence 1819, Tate to Collingridge, 24 December.

200. 'Jansenism is a concept the elements of which are so complex that it is impossible to enclose them by a definition' (New Catholic Encyclopedia). Cornelius Otto Jansen (1585-1638) was Professor of Sacred Scripture at the University of Louvain in 1630 and Rector in 1635. In his major work, Augustinus, he was accused of renewing the errors of Baius (see note 79) and Calvin, of removing all reality from the free will, and of affirming that Jesus Christ had prayed and died only for the elect. The work was condemned by a bull of Pope Urban VIII in 1643. Robert Plowden evidently saw in Bishop Collingridge the rigorism and unorthodoxy of Baius and Jansen.

201. SCA, MS C.iii, 14, No.37, Charles Plowden to Stone, 24 November 1814.

202. CDA, Correspondence 1815, Tate to Collingridge, 1 February.

203. Ibid., Tate to Collingridge, 6 February.

204. Collingridge's Pastoral Letter, dated 'Taunton, 1 February 1815', was sub-headed: 'Bring ye forth fruits worthy of penance, Matt. III. v.8.'

205. Baius, born in Belgium in 1513, became Professor of Theology at the University of Louvain in 1551. Pius V, on 1 October 1576, condemned seventy-nine of his propositions. In the last years of his life there was controversy between him and the Jesuits. 'He was not afraid, but rather glad, to arrive at conclusions, in matters of faith and morals, that were in open contradiction with all contemporary Catholic views' (New Catholic Encyclopedia).

206. ABPSJ, Bristol Papers 22/1/3/2, anonymous note.

207. CDA, Correspondence 1815, Tate to Collingridge, 6 February.

208. 'The contrition called imperfect' (or 'attrition') is also a gift of God, a prompting of the Holy Spirit... By itself however, imperfect contrition cannot obtain the forgiveness of grave sins, but it disposes one to obtain forgiveness in the sacrament of Penance' (Catechism of the Catholic Church (London: Chapman, 1994), pp.326, 327).

209. AAW, AAW/A 58 2c i & ii, Collingridge to Poynter, 20 November 1812.

210. Ibid.


213. CDA, *Correspondence 1815*, Collingridge to Plowden, 11 January.


217. ‘The Catholic World demands with unanimous voice the re-establishment of the Company of Jesus’ (from the papal Brief re-establishing the Society of Jesus, 7 August 1814).

218. CDA, *Correspondence 1814*, Stone to Collingridge, 20 December.

219. CDA, *Correspondence 1815*, Tate to Collingridge, 30 January 1815.

220. SCA, *MS C.iii, 14, No.43* Stone to Plowden, 10 February 1815.


224. cf. ‘We [the vicars apostolic] consider every act of interference in the government of any one of our Districts, and every attempt to call us to account for the same by any other person or persons whomsoever ... as injurious to the Sovereign Pontiff, derogatory to his sacred authority, and an invasion of our own rights’ (*Resolutions of the vicars apostolic assembled at Durham in August, 1811*). See Ward, *The Eve of Catholic Emancipation*, 1, Appendix D, par.3).

225. CDA, *Correspondence 1815*, Stone to Collingridge, 13 February.

226. SCA, *MS C.iii, 14, No.47* Stone to Plowden, 13 February 1815.

227. CDA, *Correspondence 1815*, McDonnell to Collingridge, 9 February.


231. CDA, *Correspondence 1815*, Vauquelin to Collingridge, undated but received on 10 February.

232. Ibid.

233. Ibid., Elloi to Collingridge, 17 February.

234. Ibid., Gibson to Collingridge, 8 February.

235. Ibid., Gandolphy to Plowden, 25 February.

236. Ibid., Poynter to Collingridge, 20 March.

237. Ibid., Green to Collingridge, 9 February.

238. ABPSJ, Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

239. ABPSJ, Ref. 530, Plowden to Smith, 1 August 1816.

240. SCA, *MS C. iii, 14, No. 49*, Charles Plowden to Stone, 28 February 1815.


243. CDA, *Correspondence 1815*, Plowden to Stone, 4 March.

244. Ibid., Husenbeth to Collingridge, 9 March. Frederick Charles Husenbeth was the father of F.C. Husenbeth, DD, who in 1852 became vicar general of the diocese of Northampton, and whose *Missal and Vesper Book* were frequently reprinted. Husenbeth senior, a native of Germany, was a linguist and an excellent musician. He became an acquaintance of the poet Coleridge, a frequent visitor to Bristol.

245. Ibid., 25 March.

246. BRL, *Bristol Mercury*, 20 March 1815.

247. BRO, 35721, Box 7. Plowden also claimed that a great deal of the chapel furniture at Swansea, where he had established a mission, belonged to him. See CDA, *Correspondence 1815*, Williams to Collingridge, 27 December.


249. Ibid., McDonnell to Collingridge, 14 April; 18 March.
250. SCA, MS Ciii, 14, No.54, Plowden's 'Declaration to the Gentlemen of the Roman Catholic Congregation, on his quitting Bristol', March/April 1815.

251. ABPSJ, Ref. 530, Plowden to Smith, 22 September 1815.

252. Ibid.

253. Ibid., 27 December 1815.

254. Ibid. A favourite expression of Plowden's.

255. ABPSJ, Ref. 530: 'Remarks on the effects of Charity or Contrission' [sic].

256. Ibid., Plowden to Maher, 6 November 1821. According to the Church's command, 'after having attained the age of discretion, each of the faithful is bound by an obligation faithfully to confess serious sins at least once a year.' *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, p.327.

257. ABPSJ, Ref. 530, Plowden to Maher, 6 November 1821.

258. Foley, op. cit., IV, 671.


260. CDA, Correspondence 1815, Clifford to Collingridge, 18 February.

261. Nicolas de Bobadilla, a Spaniard, was one of the small band of students in Paris who joined Ignatius Loyola, and who in 1540, under his leadership, founded the Society of Jesus. 'An irrepressible character incapable of concealing what he was thinking, at times argumentative and pig-headed, he was nevertheless deeply religious and capable of great generosity... His gifts and enthusiasm were unquestionable' (Caraman, op. cit., p.87). See also John W. O'Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1993), p.31 et al.

262. ABPSJ, Letters etc. 1805-1818, Reeve to Stone, 28 August 1805.

263. See CDA, Correspondence 1813, Plowden to Collingridge, F.236.

264. CDA, Correspondence 1814, Plowden to Collingridge, 4 January.

265. Foley, op. cit., IV, 671.

266. ABPSJ, Letters etc., 1805-1818, f.260, 16 February 1815.

267. Oliver, op. cit., p.110.

268. Ibid., p.383.

269. Ibid.
CHAPTER VI

Joseph Tate and the Resumption of the Battle for Control

6.1 Joseph Tate's Attempts to Establish his Authority in the Catholic Community

The status of Joseph Tate, now in sole charge of the Bristol congregation, was to a degree anomalous, but not wholly unusual in Jesuit missions.¹ He is often described as being a Jesuit at this time, but wrongly so, for he was not to join the Society until a year or so after leaving Bristol. Tate had been educated at the Jesuit academies of Liège and Stonyhurst, and joined the Society of Jesus in 1810 but left shortly afterwards without taking vows. His service as a priest, however, had been entirely in Jesuit missions, where he acknowledged the English provincial as his superior. Such was the case at Bristol: he had been appointed by Marmaduke Stone and was thus a nominee of the Jesuits, but a secular priest none the less which allowed him a certain latitude in his personal relationship with his colleague, Robert Plowden. It suited him to see the latter’s actions as part of an attempt by the English Jesuits to distance themselves from the control of the vicars apostolic, whilst he himself, siding with episcopal authority, could secure the bishop’s support. He was disposed to speak to Collingridge of the opposition to him in Bristol, both before and after Plowden’s departure, as ‘the persecution raised by two or three individuals against your Lordship and myself’;² and again would express the hope that ‘we shall soon weather the storm and that justice will be done to both your character and mine’.³

Resented as a usurper by Plowden’s supporters he was to meet with determined opposition from Jesuit sympathisers and from the provincial, Marmaduke
Royal York Crescent, Clifton. Well-to-do Catholics like the Blounts and the Welds had homes here and the vicar apostolic and the Jesuit provincial would often stay with them on their visits to Bristol.
Stone, who thought his behaviour unseemly and his presence an impediment to harmonious relationships amongst the congregation. Disturbed as he was by the allegations against Tate, Bishop Collingridge nevertheless supported him; he suspected Jesuit intrigue to have Plowden restored, and feared that episcopal authority would be undermined if he gave way to calls for his dismissal. Within a larger context he saw the situation at Bristol as reflecting a national malaise - as illustrating the general spirit of insubordination at that time pervading all ranks of society, with disastrous effects on the Church.

The struggle for control of the Bristol mission, in which Plowden in his early days had found himself embroiled with some of the town's Catholic business men, was now to an extent renewed over the issue of the management of the Trenchard Street Poor School, but with a reversal of roles, for it was to the trades-folk that the priest now turned for support. The ladies who, at Plowden's request, had an oversight of the school - Mrs Thomas Weld, Mrs George Blount and Mrs Charles Bodenham (the wives of the city's Catholic gentry) - represented traditional patronage, and as appointees of the departed priest were about to have their authority curtailed. Indignant that they had been given no prior notice of Tate's intention of forming a school committee, and seeing it as a deliberate attempt to force them from office, they resigned in protest. As Mrs Blount succinctly expressed it to the bishop: "The management is taken from us." After a hurried investigation of her complaints Collingridge, 'alarmed for the fate of the Catholic school', replied on 30 March 1816. It was hoped that Mrs Blount and her colleagues would continue to serve since the new arrangement was simply a plan to supply them with 'useful auxiliaries'. But the ladies were not to be assuaged
by euphemisms. Although, Mrs Blount said, the provincial had protested to Tate, the latter had continued with a few intimate friends to implement his plans. This, she said, did not indicate a wish to assist her and her colleagues, especially since the new chairman had 'expressed his gratification that the school was no longer in the ladies' hands'.

She wrote to Tate asking that a paper from her and Mrs Bodenham (their colleague, Mrs Weld, had died) should be read out at a public meeting held to discuss the new arrangements. It commended 'the late venerable Pastor ... whose popularity, almost unprecedented among all classes of his fellow-citizens, was the effect of many virtues by which he was distinguished', and referred to the new committee as 'a party which [could] not be considered either as numerous or respectable'. John Smith, whom Plowden had placed in charge of the school, was acknowledged to be one 'than whom a more respectable and conscientious character could not be found to superintend [the] establishment'. As for the provincial, Marmaduke Stone, who had tried to mediate - the ladies felt he had been treated in a 'contemptuous manner'. Their letter, not surprisingly, was not put to the meeting.

Out of a Catholic population of two hundred who might have attended, Mrs Blount later said, the meeting comprised no more than eighteen people. She feared that John Smith was to be dismissed as schoolmaster and that Marmaduke Stone, through charity, was inhibited from speaking frankly to the bishop though it was evident that he condemned all that was going on and had frequently expressed his great regret that he was ever induced to place Joseph Tate at Bristol. She urged Collingridge to make an impartial enquiry into the real state of things in the city's Catholic community and left him to ponder on 'the magnitude of the evil'.

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Tate's new committee of eight were men with whom he was on visiting terms or were veterans of struggles with Robert Plowden in the past. They sought respectability by requesting the approval of Thomas Weld (later to become Cardinal) but his reply was curt: the manner in which the committee had constituted itself, and 'the spirit of party' with which it seemed actuated were sufficient reasons to prevent him giving it his sanction. Unfazed, the committee turned to Bishop Collingridge to inform him of their esteem and approbation of him in advising and enabling Tate to 'overturn and crush the wretched remnant of an unchristian faction which [had] long disturbed the peace, harmony and good of the congregation'.

The new committee had no intention of retaining someone so critical of them as the schoolmaster, John Smith, and on 25 September 1816 he was dismissed. He now found himself (in his own words) 'a discarded schoolmaster by an intrusive party', but he refused Tate's demands that he should leave the presbytery (where Plowden had built an additional room to accommodate him) and for a while he remained with Plowden's approval in charge, as he put it, of the presbytery and furniture at one end of the chapel, and receiving the rent of the house (belonging to the chapel) at the other.

You have done well in refusing to regard Mr Tate's summons to quit, - I [Plowden] would not on any account have you think of moving; you have business ... if it were nothing else than to take care of my two houses which I myself built.

On Plowden's instructions the box of deeds was removed from the presbytery and placed in the care of the Rev. James Parker whom he named as his executor. 'I do not intend to let him [Tate] have it,' wrote Plowden to Smith from Swynnerton on 26 September 1816. But Plowden, no longer in situ, could not influence events and in January 1816 Bishop Collingridge wrote to the Jesuit provincial insisting that the
box of deeds concerning the Trenchard Street chapel be deposited in his custody as 'the official guardian of pious foundations'. He had been urged as a last resort, he said, to bring the business before a court of law.15

Marmaduke Stone, as befitted his disposition, adopted Fabian tactics, ignoring the bishop's requests until forced to reply and thereafter procrastinating further still. He told Collingridge that the Bristol chapel and premises belonged to the Society of Jesus, and that the deeds should be deposited in the Jesuit archives with all the others relating to their property throughout the kingdom. If, however, Collingridge could give reasons why an exception should be made in the case of Bristol he would lay the matter before the Elders of Stonyhurst College, and if they agreed he would see if he could persuade Mr Parker to surrender the deeds. At the end of the year Parker, anxious to take up an appointment in the Northern District, where he was born, was, as a precondition laid down by Bishop Gibson, forced to make his peace with Collingridge who thus finally obtained possession of the deeds and of the presbytery itself.16

Even after Plowden's departure powerful forces were working to restore him to his old mission. In June 1815 Collingridge was surprised to receive from London a letter from the distinguished Catholic lawyer and secretary to the Catholic Committee, Charles Butler, urging him to reconsider his decision. Butler had been approached in London by Marmaduke Stone and Joseph Tristram (the Jesuits' administrative agent), and told that Plowden had been made sensible of the impropriety of his conduct and was ready to make any apology for it. His return to Bristol would, said Butler, give great satisfaction to both Catholics and Protestants - it would be an act 'very favourably received by a large portion (at least) of the
Catholic public'. He wished 'only to be allowed to retain, in his own breast, an opinion, that the senses of the sentence [in Collingridge's Pastoral of 1815] were open to a wrong construction, and therefore [were] objectionable'. It was characteristic of Plowden, a man of great candour that, though an unqualified apology might gain him much, he could not make it without revealing the reservation of his heart.

But Marmaduke Stone was concerned to remove the cloud overhanging Plowden's departure from the city. In 1812 Bishops Collingridge, Gibson and Poynter had made an agreement that if a subject of one District sought employment in another he would not be accepted without the approbation of his previous bishop, and years later it rankled with Collingridge that, without Plowden attempting to make amends, and without reference to him as his previous bishop, Bishop Milner accepted Plowden into the Midland District. Milner offered no explanation at the time, but in later years said it was enough for him to know that Plowden had not been suspended, since this implied that Collingridge did not think him unworthy of faculties, and he quoted the precedent of Bishop Walmesley depriving Joseph Wilks of his missionary faculties in his District but making no objection to his being employed in Shropshire.

On 8 December the provincial finally persuaded Plowden to submit an apology to Collingridge which Stone enclosed with a placatory letter of his own. But with Plowden's qualifying expressions - 'though it did not strike me in that light' and 'as far as I have been guilty of such indiscretions' - the apology could amount to no more than contrition of a sort. Ultimately, it would seem, Plowden could admit to being chastened but not to being wrong. Apologies notwithstanding, the likelihood that Collingridge would allow him to return to Bristol was slight; having finally worked
through his difficulties with the redoubtable priest he was not about to renew them.

Of more pressing moment to him was the future of Plowden’s successor, Joseph Tate. Collingridge admired him as a preacher and catechist but was worried by persistent complaints about his conduct. The originator of these charges is not known, but Tate’s implacable adversary, John Smith, was about to repeat them at some length and to name witnesses. He expanded on them in a detailed letter to the bishop on 6 September 1815, remarking how Tate, called to attend a dying man, had stayed no more than five minutes and had not given him the sacraments, and when sent for again the following day had said to him: ‘What do you want now?’ Tate had been occasionally (‘the servants say frequently’) intoxicated, and once after coming home at midnight in that state he had upset a table and then ‘asked where the old boy [Robert Plowden] was’. Another time, when Plowden and Tate had dined at Mr Green’s, Plowden came home about nine o’clock for night prayers while ‘Mr Tate came reeling about eleven’. Three weeks previously, Smith added, Tate had been seen (so Smith had been informed by respectable Catholics and two clergymen) conducting ‘first two and then one lady through the park at about ten o’clock at night’. Tate had been to public parties during Lent and recently to the circus; he was letting the house and using the missionary-fund boxes in the chapel for his own profit. Some members of the congregation went miles to make their confession rather than go to Tate, Smith said; and where Mass had once been said in the church every day of the week, now it was celebrated on only three days.

6.2 Bishop Collingridge Supports Tate

The bishop reported the matter to Marmaduke Stone who said he would look for a
proper successor to Tate, but behind it all Collingridge suspected more Jesuit scheming. 23 He was able to satisfy himself on most of the charges, and felt that John Smith was under ‘the strong impulse of party spirit being a Jesuit’ and as such anxious to inculpate Tate and ensure his removal to make place for another member of the Society of Jesus. ‘It appears pretty clear their aim is to get a victory over me - it has been said I wish the bishop was dead or would die then we should have Mr P. again.’ 24 In face of this, Collingridge, concerned though he must have been about the reports of Tate’s unseemly behaviour, declared he did not intend to give way to Plowden’s supporters since in doing so his authority would be undermined. 25

Marmaduke Stone, who had spent the New Year with the Blounts in Bristol, told the bishop that it was expedient that Tate should be removed and another sent in his place - ‘Neither your Lordship nor I shall have any peace till that is done.’ 26 Buoyed up by her conversations with the provincial, and no doubt persuaded in her own mind that they could win the day, Mrs Blount wrote to the bishop saying she had learned that it had never been Stone’s intention to send Tate to Bristol as head of the congregation, and that Tate had not kept his promises to the provincial about his behaviour. In those circumstances ‘the most respectable and religious part’ of the congregation entreated the bishop to grant them another pastor.

An exasperated Collingridge finally replied twelve days later on 15 January 1816. That same day he had received yet another letter from the Jesuit provincial (still in Clifton with the Blounts) saying that the ‘miseries of the congregation’ at Bristol had grown worse and that for the greater glory of God and for the good of souls Tate should go. 27 The request was inopportune, for the circumstances of Plowden’s departure and the ready welcome accorded him by Bishop Milner were still
fresh in Collingridge’s mind. He began with a general stricture on the state of society and the Catholic Church in England, thus placing the dispute in a national context:

The characteristic vice of the present age is a peculiar species of pride... It shows itself in the general spirit of insubordination that pervades all ranks of society. How visible and how disastrous have been its effects on the church; laity assuming to interfere with and presuming to judge the clergy - the inferior clergy interfering with and presuming to judge, resist and control their superiors.

He then made his specific charge:

That this spirit has been long working at Bristol and has never yet been subdued is quite evident. Hence a part of the congregation is kept in a constant state of ferment by a few instigators, pretty well-known, against their pastor and against me, in letters some signed, others anonymous... The newspapers have been more the vehicle of their vengeance against me, the pulpit has been degraded to the same daring spirit.

Collingridge spoke of members of the Bristol congregation who had slandered him, branded him with 'the vilifying epithet of a Jansenist' and fervently wished for his death in order that Robert Plowden might be brought back. It was a spirit of faction and opposition to authority to which neither he nor Marmaduke Stone, as provincial of his order, could allow themselves to succumb - the consequences could be more general and disastrous. ‘Were you or I to sacrifice to it today, it will devour us to morrow.’ It was a rebellious spirit which had its origins in the past, and just as Bishop Walmesley had aided Plowden in his difficulties so he, Collingridge, would support Tate. What he had heard against Tate were vague assertions; if charges could be substantiated then he would replace him, but in the meantime he would not give way to a few agitators who were bent on degrading and trampling on authority. It was a clear signal to the Jesuit provincial that this was a struggle which episcopacy was bent on winning, and to that end Plowden was not to be suffered but Tate
endured.

By February 1816 Tate felt things were moving in his favour. Giving Collingridge a résumé of the situation at Bristol he declared that the ‘respectable’ part of the congregation were anxious to have the school put on a solid and prosperous footing and were keen that he should have an assistant priest. The evening lectures (he gives no details) were received with great satisfaction and together with ‘continual public exhortation’ on Sundays gave respectability to ‘Catholicity in this large town, where it is at a very low ebb and where prejudices against it run high’. But he regretted that the Jesuit provincial was still in Bristol for he was proving a rallying point for ‘the party spirit’; Stone seldom stirred abroad and only the ‘prejudiced’ had access to him. Tate concluded that while he had a great respect for the provincial he thought him quite unfit for either temporal or spiritual action and felt Catholic affairs would wear a very pleasant aspect if only he were gone. The provincial himself, who said the affairs at Bristol had detained him longer than he ever intended, finally left the city in the middle of March.

To what extent were the quarrels at Bristol known outside the city’s Catholic community? Mrs Blount hinted at common knowledge, telling the bishop that to avoid embarrassment with Protestant acquaintances ‘of great respectability’ she had to pretend that since her family had their own chaplain she knew little or nothing of Tate. A prominent member of the congregation and a Jesuit sympathiser, Frederick Husenbeth, whose son was training for the priesthood in Bishop Milner’s District, informed Bishop Collingridge of a family dispute in which both Tate and the Reverend James Parker had been involved as mediators. Some of Tate’s remarks prompted one member of the family to say to Husenbeth: ‘How your priests vilify
Husenbeth hoped that differences between Tate and the congregation ('of whom 9 out of 10 are still dissatisfied with him') would speedily be settled or Catholicity in Bristol would suffer a dreadful blow.

Another parishioner by the name of Dunn, a tailor, who had taken an intense dislike to Tate had complained to the bishop about him. Tate took satisfaction in reading the bishop's reply to the congregation, whereupon Dunn retaliated by printing a letter attacking Tate's character and conduct and circulating it extensively. A more disinterested commentator, the Reverend William Gerard, a Welsh priest whom Collingridge had consulted about events at Bristol remarked that prejudices were such that only Tate's departure would settle affairs, and he spoke to the bishop of 'this unpleasant business which unhappily is a frequent topic of conversation in most companies'.

From Swynnerton Plowden regretted the censures and obloquy of the world to which he and the Bristol congregation had been exposed since his departure. Finally, Bishop Collingridge, as we have seen, was prepared if necessary to take legal action to gain the Trenchard Street premises from the Jesuits. The evidential value of some remarks might be questioned, but there was clearly an outspoken readiness on all sides to move unhesitatingly from private to public dissent.

The tensions between provincial and bishop over issues at Bristol were reflected in the Jesuits' relationships with the vicars apostolic of the Northern and Southern Districts. During the spring and summer months of 1816 Bishop Poynter of London shared with Collingridge some of his concerns about Catholics who, he felt, were at work in England and Rome to undermine their authority and that of Bishop Gibson. He identified the culprits as the Jesuit provincial, Marmaduke Stone,
and Bishop Milner of the Midland District; and he also cited Plowden’s old ally, Peter Gandolphy of London, and the Reverend Dr Murray, coadjutor of the Archbishop of Dublin, who was representing (along with Milner) the Irish prelates at recent meetings in Rome. So alarmed was Poynter at the independence with which Milner conducted his affairs that he exclaimed: ‘I am not indeed without my fears that a [‘schismatical’ is deleted] spirit is forming in the Middle District which will end in a breach of union amongst us... God keep us together.’ Robert Plowden, as we have seen, had previously attributed the possibility of schism not to Milner’s policies but to the failure of his fellow bishops to adopt them.

To the dismay of Bishop Poynter, the Reverend Peter Gandolphy of London, who, although not a member of the Society of Jesus, in his disputes with episcopal authority saw his interests linked to those of the Jesuits, returned from Rome with an Imprimatur from the Master of the Sacred Apostolical Palace for his Liturgy and Sermons. Poynter, however, advised Dr Collingridge and Dr Gibson that he was determined to await written approval from Propaganda before allowing Gandolphy to publish in his District. Undeterred, Gandolphy issued a printed notice in October 1816 entitled ‘Address to the Public by the Rev. Peter Gandolphy author of ‘Defence of the Ancient Faith’ and ‘Exposition of Liturgy’, in which he spoke of enduring opposition, misrepresentation and ill-treatment in attempting to bring his writings before the public, and declared how if his works were withdrawn from publication it would be possible to slander them and ‘the reputation of the theological schools of the Jesuits, urged by Jesuitphobia’. In a footnote he linked this persecution with the misfortunes endured by ‘that venerable old Jesuit, Mr Robert Plowden, and that worthy Jesuit, Mr James Parker ... suspended at Bristol’, and said how the London
clergy (i.e. the seculars) had played 'a most active part' in the affair by persuading Bishop Poynter to recommend to Bishop Collingridge that he should stand firm. He concluded with a defiant postscript stating that his works were to be had at booksellers in London and Birmingham (Bishop Milner's District), and he also took the step of advertising them with their Imprimatur in the Orthodox Journal.

Before the month was out Bishop Poynter withdrew Gandolphy's faculties in the London District. Collingridge approved, hoping that the measures Poynter had adopted might tend to crush the spirit of insubordination that had been 'so daringly insulting to authority of late years'. Nothing, he assured Poynter, but vigour and union among the bishops could do it. He spoke of Gandolphy's impudent interference with his administration of the Western District in the cases of Robert Plowden and James Parker, and to his attempt to exhibit him as a persecutor of the Jesuits.

Poynter already felt matters generally had gone too far: 'Mr Gandolphy, Mr Stone and others in the interests of the Jesuits, to say nothing of Dr Milner's labours that way, have done everything in their power to weaken our credit and authority at Rome and that with too much success.' Gandolphy had represented them as Jansenists (as Plowden had previously described Bishop Collingridge) and Marmaduke Stone had declared them to be persecutors of the Society. Poynter, uncertain of the attitude of Cardinal Litta, Prefect of Propaganda, felt it was time for the vicars apostolic to write a strong remonstrance to the Pope himself.

Within the Bristol congregation opposition to Tate continued. Collingridge received various letters from parishioners, signed or anonymous, alleging unsatisfactory behaviour or neglect of duty, but the bishop remained suspicious as to
their real provenance - 'A letter from a respectable quarter, which I received yesterday, states that Mr John Smith is known to be at the bottom of it,' he wrote to the Jesuit provincial.49 Some of the letters, said the bishop, were in counterfeited handwriting.50 One letter from a Mrs Winifred Mahon, in which she complained that Tate failed to attend a dying woman, throws an interesting sidelight on Protestant endeavours in Bristol: if the husband had sent for any Dissenting minister in the town, she said, he would willingly have attended 'for they are continually pushing themselves into the houses of all where they can'.51 But if the writer had at any point engaged the bishop's sympathy she undoubtedly forfeited it by concluding: ‘O! Dear Mr Plowden!!! What will become of Catholic Religion here if your Lordship leaves things as they are, it is evidently decaying;'52 and - alluding specifically to Joseph Tate - she exclaimed, 'How fallen is the honour of the Catholic clergy here.'53

George Blount of Clifton thought the scandal to both Protestants and Catholics had considerably increased of late. Some Protestant families had been in the Trenchard Street chapel on the Sunday when Joseph Tate read out the bishop's reply rebuking one of Tate's critics, the result being that instead of hearing the priest discourse on some religious topic the Protestants had heard him launch a 'violent Philippic' against the person he imagined had wronged him. This, said Blount, had strengthened them in their opinion that the Catholic chapel had lost all respectability.54

Tate's perception of things was of course different. As a result of the public exposé made in the chapel, he assured the bishop, the faction had become known and that was sufficient 'to break and crush it'. He had received a letter from a worthy
Protestant gentleman in which he spoke highly of Collingridge's candid and spirited conduct in the matter. By contrast Tate saw the Jesuit provincial, Marmaduke Stone, as exhibiting 'shuffling weakness and want of candour'. Tate's friend, William Green (the bishop's wine merchant), also wrote to Collingridge on Catholic affairs at Bristol. Where George Blount had spoken of Tate's 'violent Philippic', Green saw 'mildness and composure ... charity and forgiveness'. He hoped that very soon the whole of the congregation would be on a friendly footing. Business was not forgotten: 'My best thanks for having recommended the good Nuns at Cannington to me for their wine.'

Towards the end of 1816 Green had more good news for the bishop: Tate had recommenced his evening lecture and prayers at six o'clock on Sundays, which he had started the previous year, and the Committee had established a charity for supplying the poor of the congregation with soup, meat and bread throughout the cold winter months. Every week they were able to relieve the whole of the Catholic poor of Bristol which Green estimated at nearly three hundred men, women and children. A memorandum written by Tate gave the number of Catholics in Bristol 'at Easter duties' in 1818 as 540, and Confirmations by Bishop Collingridge as 163. To underline the increase in Confirmations since Plowden's time he also gave the figures for the years 1808 and 1812 as 48 and 61 respectively. He also received commendation from an old Plowden admirer, Ann Hippisly, the former schoolmistress, who was then living at Bath. She told the bishop that on a recent visit to Bristol she 'was amazed to see how much Mr Tate had alter'd for the best the appearance of all around him'; and she had a piece of gossip for him: 'The Archduke ... of Austria, with 3 other persons of distinction heard Mass Sunday week
at Bristol - all 4 very dirty and very ugly." 

Two successes were to come Tate's way: the departure of the Jesuit priest, James Parker, and that of the Jesuit brother, John Smith. Collingridge's problems with James Parker approached a resolution when Marmaduke Stone sought to appoint him to the mission at Pontefract in the Northern District. It was not the wish of the Society that individual members should remain at odds with their bishop, and the superior at Stonyhurst, Nicholas Sewall, acting for Marmaduke Stone in his absence, conveyed Parker's regret at what he had done and took the opportunity to state that all at the college also highly condemned Robert Plowden's conduct: 'Such opposition to Episcopal Authority is very scandalous and directly contrary to the rules of St Ignatius. We all wish to be on the most friendly terms with your Lordship and the other Bishops.' But Collingridge was greatly disappointed with Parker's letter of apology which, with its qualified expressions of regret, he characterised as no more than apologising 'hypothetically'. There was another matter: the return of the box of deeds of the Bristol mission was a sine qua non for his approval of the granting of faculties for Parker to serve in the Northern District. Within a week Marmaduke Stone was able to assure Collingridge that he would let him have the deeds (they were in fact with the Jesuits' agent in London), and before the month was out, on 29 November 1816, Collingridge received a complete apology from Parker, thus leaving the way clear for Bishop Gibson to grant him faculties in the Northern District.

So Parker quitted the Bristol mission having made his peace with Collingridge and fortunately without knowledge of the bishop's observation to the provincial that he had always felt that whatever in Mr Parker's conduct affected him personally he
could always excuse 'on the score of his being in a state of mind bordering on madness'. Parker served the Society in Liverpool, and from time to time continued to engage in sharp exchanges with his former bishop until his death in 1822 at the age of seventy-five.

John Smith was also soon to quit Bristol, in his case for Stonyhurst. He had once again transmitted an apology from Plowden to Collingridge, but unlike Parker’s it showed Plowden holding tenaciously to his views for he was ready to ask forgiveness only if the bishop would acknowledge that pardon of mortal sins and fruitful repentance could be achieved by contrition alone whenever it existed - the original point of contention between them. Smith also gave the bishop his own appraisal of the state of the Catholic Church at Bristol: he spoke of the ‘violence’ taking place there and said he had never seen such diabolical work on a mission.

Tate retaliated by charging Smith with having been in league with Parker in clandestinely removing the deeds and account books from Bristol, and banned him from his old room at the presbytery. Eventually William Coombes, the bishop’s vicar general, felt it necessary to intervene on Smith’s behalf, and to impress on Tate the urgency of allowing Smith access to the premises so that he could remove his belongings and any of Plowden’s effects which were still there. Coombes told him that Smith had been exposed to the danger of remaining in wet clothes and consequently had suffered a violent cold (for which he had been ‘bled, blistered and dosed with medicine’), and Tate should therefore let him depart as expeditiously as possible for if the infection in his lungs should take a fatal turn while he was still in Bristol ‘the affair [would] make a most tremendous noise’. Tate gave Smith one hour in which to clear his room.
The Jesuit provincial assured Bishop Collingridge that he was anxious to meet his request for an assistant at Bristol, but had no missioner to send. There was a shortage of ordained men in every District, Stone said, but Collingridge was rightly concerned about the shortfall in his own. The missions at Tor Abbey, Falmouth, Beckford and Cannington were without priests and he knew that with the return home of the French clergy there would soon be three or four more vacancies. Stone did not think there were the means to maintain two priests at Bristol, but even if the circumstances were favourable, he added, 'I must own I should feel very unwilling to place any of our young religious under Mr Tate.'\(^{69}\) Collingridge, however, repeatedly pressed for an assistant at Bristol because there was enough work there for two missionaries and without help Tate would, in the course of a few years, 'sink under the labour'.\(^{71}\)

The appointment in September 1817 of Charles Plowden as provincial of the English Jesuits in succession to Marmaduke Stone saw no improvement in relations between the Society and the vicars apostolic. Plowden bluntly remarked to Bishop Collingridge that until that moment he had refrained from defending his brother, Robert, out of respect for his Lordship, but was no longer prepared to be silent. Tate did not act like a missionary from Stonyhurst and had been 'the domestic torturer' of a venerable man who was 'hardly surpassed in England in his missionary zeal and sacred knowledge'. Robert Plowden had, he said, nobly expended all his means and the donations of friends to build the Bristol chapel and rescue it from 'lay-intrusion', only to find himself finally expelled from his mission 'in the most abject poverty'. Charles Plowden asserted once again that the Society of Jesus was 'the real owner of the Bristol premises'.\(^{72}\)
The person Tate was particularly anxious to have as his assistant was his younger brother, Thomas, a Jesuit serving at Wigan in Lancashire, but though Collingridge pressed for his appointment the Jesuit provincial was unable to spare him because of difficulties at Wigan at that time. He offered to send John, Tate’s other brother at Wigan, but Tate declined the proposal observing to the bishop that being a priest at Wigan could not qualify him ‘for the more arduous, difficult and troublesome congregation of Bristol’, a far cry from the time when, fresh from Wigan himself and about to take over from Robert Plowden, Tate had told Collingridge that Bristol would be no problem for him as he had served bigger congregations.

The allegations against Joseph Tate continued. John Winter, the son of the John Winter who had clashed with Robert Plowden in earlier years, wrote to Bishop Collingridge accusing Tate of drunkenness. He found his manners coarse and disgusting:

My Father repeatedly said he was better calculated for a coal-heaver than a priest. Among many other acts of indecency he is charged with being drunk at the Altar and that frequently... What an example to a Congregation; who would follow the precepts of a sot? Who attend to the advice of a drunkard?

How could a man drunk at the altar have the power of turning the elements of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ? Outside the congregation, what would be the effect of all this on the Protestants of the city? He urged the bishop to give the Catholics of Bristol a ‘proper pastor’ and to restore union between them.

Faced with Charles Plowden’s refusal or inability to send an assistant to Joseph Tate, Collingridge carried out a threat he had previously made of providing a clergyman of his own choosing. He turned to the Rev. A.R. Sumner of Cannington in Somerset, who over the following year assisted Tate before leaving in August 1821
to become chaplain to the Franciscan nuns in Plymouth. During the short time he was in Bristol the treasurer and secretary of the school committee fell out with Tate and urged his removal from the mission, but were themselves voted out of office when they failed to secure the support of Sumner and the bishop who saw their actions as daily becoming more extravagant and daring. Yet one more attempt by some of the laity to unseat their pastor had come to nothing.

It was the bishop himself who was to prove Tate’s undoing. Having provided him with a new assistant in the person of Henry Riley, a secular priest from London, Collingridge felt he could entrust Tate with a task which would entail his absence from Bristol for a while. Late in 1821 he sent him to Falmouth on some business ‘of a most delicate and complicated nature’, to use Dr Oliver’s words. Oliver leaves the matter there, but correspondence shows it concerned Gabriel Grézille, the Abbé in charge of the Falmouth mission, about whom there had been talk of sexual impropriety. Tate’s commission was to persuade him to leave the town as soon as possible and to manage the mission himself until a replacement arrived.

In January 1822 Tate informed the bishop that Grézille acknowledged the propriety of his removal but thought things were being conducted in too peremptory a fashion and wanted to delay his departure. While he wrestled with the Grézille affair and the outstanding debts the Abbé had incurred in opening a new chapel at Falmouth, Tate soon found himself with a problem affecting his own career. In his recent correspondence with the bishop he had been at pains to tell Collingridge that Miss Lane (a mutual acquaintance and a personal friend of Tate’s) could soon expect a letter from him, but he was surprised to be anticipated by a prior letter from her with news which brought him posthaste to Bristol in alarm.
The missioner whom Bishop Collingridge had earmarked to succeed Grézille in Falmouth was the Rev. John Williams from the seminary at Ushaw. He had been ordained barely five weeks when he arrived in Bristol on 1 January 1822 *en route* for Falmouth. The bishop, who had taken up temporary residence in the city, heard him preach at the Trenchard Street chapel and was so impressed that he modified his plans and determined to leave Tate at Falmouth whilst keeping Williams at Bristol. Apart from other merits the arrangement might have, it doubtless offered a neat solution to the problems at Bristol, for it would enable the bishop to remove Tate, about whom he had received many and repeated complaints, without appearing to be acting under Jesuit pressure. Tate, however, apprised by Miss Lane of the bishop’s intention, quickly returned to Bristol in March 1822 before Collingridge’s directive could reach him. Despite Tate’s protests, Collingridge held to his decision though offering him another place elsewhere. In disgust Tate left the Western District.

Whilst at Falmouth he seems to have made a favourable impression, for one of the Catholic community told Collingridge they parted from him with much regret and he trusted that the good work Tate had initiated would be continued by his successor who, it was hoped (despite the needs of the many Frenchmen who frequented the port), would be English. A few months after Tate’s departure the same correspondent wrote to Bishop Collingridge saying they were in a ‘pitiable state’ for want of a priest. In August 1822 the Rev. Thaddeus O’Meally, a secular priest from Limerick, arrived as the new missioner. He was soon asking the bishop to increase his salary to £64, saying he could expect little financial help from his congregation. The evidence seemed compelling - the previous Sunday’s collection
had been one penny.\textsuperscript{84}

6.3 The Bristol Mission and the Dispute amongst the Catholics at Wigan in 1818

Bristol’s connection with Wigan at this time was not only that the priests there were Tate’s brothers; it was also highlighted by a dispute in 1818 when Catholic affairs in that town were in something of a ferment. A busy mission, where for a while the Jesuits had maintained a school and chapel as early as the seventeenth century, Wigan by 1817 had a steadily growing Catholic population approaching three thousand.\textsuperscript{85} To meet this the Jesuits began building a larger chapel on the site of their old one, but although the new building was on ground they already owned, Bishop Gibson, foremost amongst the vicars apostolic in refusing to recommend the restoration of the Society of Jesus in England, opposed the project (at least in private) though he made no objection to a group of lay people who wished to establish another, smaller chapel nearby. Indeed such a development must not have been unwelcome to him for he could then appoint ministers for the new secular mission without interference from Stonyhurst, whilst its very proximity to the established Jesuit chapel would lessen the Society’s influence in the area.

Some contemporary correspondence on the Wigan dispute highlights the issues involved and recalls moments in the history of the Bristol mission. Bishop Gibson’s spokesman was his vicar general, the Rev. Richard Thompson, the priest at Chorley, whilst Charles Walmesley, a prominent figure in the Wigan congregation and a trustee, championed the Jesuit chapel. In 1818 he made public his correspondence on the subject with Thompson by printing it in the form of a pamphlet entitled: \textit{A}
Short Address to the Catholics of Wigan occasioned by the Rev. Richard Thompson's 'Case Stated of the Wigan Catholic Chapels'. Walmesley saw Thompson (and by implication, the bishop) as moved by prejudice against the Society of Jesus in allowing the second chapel to be erected within two or three hundred yards of the first. The rebuilding of the Jesuit chapel was the wish of the 'very great and known' majority of the Catholics in the town and nearby Ince and the few who opposed them were driven by personal dislike and pique. He was reiterating the official Jesuit position: Charles Plowden, the provincial, spoke of Thompson's 'violent language' and his 'puff'. He wanted the bishop to speak for himself and argued that the 2,000 Catholics at Wigan were free to provide themselves with a place of worship (i.e. a new Jesuit chapel). Walmesley too argued that the erection of the new chapel on the site where the old chapel had stood for eighty or ninety years was entirely the concern of the Catholics of Wigan. The old site could not be bettered by any other situation because it was both 'eligible' and (in keeping with Jesuit practice, if at all possible, of placing their chapels at the centre of populous districts) 'centrical'.

The vicar-general countered with a lengthy letter proclaiming his honorable motives and the need for obedience to authority. Walmesley, he said, was a layperson and thus in relation to the bishop and in the matter of religion an inferior, and resistance to authority 'ever must be criminal insubordination'. Those involved in building the larger chapel on the site of the old one were acting against the bishop's wishes.

The Wigan Catholics, retorted Walmesley, were not defying their bishop for they were only improving a chapel which had been sanctioned for a century. The speech Thompson had given to a Catholic audience at the Eagle and Child tavern had
THE ENGLISH PRESS AND JESUITISM.

In my last number I slightly noticed the base and atrocious calumnies inserted in The Times newspaper against the Jesuits, by a writer who signed himself "Laicus." These effusions have since been in the form of a pamphlet, and circulated, to gratify the credulity of the English people.

The crack-brained author of the letters has contrived to get his notice in the Literary Panorama (New Series) of last month; and reviewer, after detailing the immoral and blasphemous doctrines attributed to the venerable Fathers of the Order, favours his readers with profound and sagacious reflection.--"All this is bad enough, surely too bad! What can be worse? Why, really, after what has happened, it is still worse to see the English Press in the form of one (we are thankful only one as yet) of our public journals, opening a battery of imprecation against the Jesuits, in the simple heart of the man of the greatest difficulty I could bring my mind to wade through the dirt and filth which this poor man has raked up from the works of the most abandoned and depraved authors of the two preceding centuries—works evidently written with the intention of instigating and infuriating the ignorant and unwary multitude against a body of men, whose conduct was without blemish, and whose superior abilities were the cause of the unjust charges poured forth against them.--The writer has divided his charges into four heads, viz. 1st. As to the Constitution and Rules of the Society; 2d. The Miseries arising in all Countries from their Secular Spirit, cruel persecutions, and restless intrigues; 3d. Their infamous practices in attempting.

In this article the editor, W.E. Andrews, defends the Jesuits from the attacks of a writer to The Times. Andrews describes him as 'cracked-brained', 'a brainless scribe' and 'Bible-bewildered'.
given great scandal in Wigan and even further afield since it had been reported in ‘a monthly Catholic publication’. The publication to which Walmesley alluded was the *Orthodox Journal* of May 1818, which reported the event as follows:

> We have seen this ecclesiastic [Thompson] bellowing forth the most unjust imputations against some of the members of an illustrious order of the Church [the Jesuits] at a Tavern dinner, in the midst of the jingling of glasses and belching of toasts.

No clergyman would address ‘true Catholics’ in such a setting as a tavern, Walmesley scoffed. Plowden too spoke slightingly of the occasion, saying that it was impossible that the bishop would sanction the ‘harsh ideas spouted in the clubroom of the Eagle and Child’ to four other priests and a hundred and fifty weavers. Walmesley concluded that Thompson had ‘a most particular partiality to [his] own body’ - the secular clergy. His letter remained unanswered.

We have seen how things had been handled differently in Bristol in 1787. When a group of dissident Catholics opposed to Robert Plowden and the Jesuits had threatened to build their own chapel, Bishop Walmesley, favourably disposed towards the Society, had declared the intentions of the malcontents to be pointless for he would neither approve of a chapel ‘set up by a private party of persons in opposition to the chapel that is fixed for the whole congregation’, nor, in the event of the chapel being built, would he grant faculties to any priest to minister there. But by the time of the Wigan dispute of 1818 the situation in Bristol had changed and it was the lay supporters of the Jesuits who were now at odds with their priest, objecting to Tate as a secular priest (though appointed by Stonyhurst) of unsatisfactory character who had displaced a Jesuit. In both Wigan and Bristol each of the disputing parties claimed to speak for the majority of Catholics in the town and to describe their opponents as a factious few. Bishop Collingridge, like Bishop Gibson in Wigan and
for similar reasons, supported the anti-Jesuit party, and though Joseph Tate sympathised with his brother’s personal situation as the priest at Wigan, he might well have derived satisfaction from seeing the Jesuits discomfited there in view of his own trials at Bristol.\(^9\) Thomas, who had been a Jesuit since the age of twenty-three, naturally lamented the course of events at Wigan, fearing that if the Society were to lose that town ‘all the Missions in England which the Jesuits have always served, will before long share the same fate’.\(^6\) Eventually Bishop Gibson gave satisfaction of a kind to both parties at Wigan by allowing them to keep their separate chapels - the Jesuit St John’s and the secular St Mary’s. As the years passed, another similar situation was to develop at Bristol.
NOTES TO CHAPTER VI

1. For example, the distinguished nineteenth-century Catholic writer and secular priest, Dr George Oliver, served the Jesuit mission at Exeter as *locum tenens* for forty-four years. He retired in 1851.

2. CDA, *Correspondence 1816*, Tate to Collingridge, 5 February.


7. ABPSJ, Ref. 22/1/3/2, Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 21, 22.

8. CDA, *Trenchard Street Chapel 1787-1845*, Blount to Collingridge, 4 April 1816.

9. *Ibid.*, Roche to Collingridge, 25 September 1816. The members of the new school committee referred to the boys' and girls' schools as the 'Catholic Charity Schools of this city'.


15. CDA, *Correspondence 1816*, Collingridge to Stone, 15 January, 9 October.

16. AAW, AAA/A58 2c i & ii, Collingridge to Poynter, 2 December 1816.

17. CDA, *Correspondence 1815*, Butler to Collingridge, 20 June. Charles Butler was the nephew of the Rev. Alban Butler, author of *Lives of the Saints*. In 1791 he became the first Catholic to be called to the bar since the revolution of 1688. He was secretary of the Catholic Committees formed for promoting abolition of the penal laws and so earned the antagonism of Dr Milner who saw in these committees the beginning of 'that system of lay interference in the ecclesiastical affairs of English Catholics which ... has perpetuated disorder, divisions, and irreligion among too many of them' (DNB).
18. AAW, AAW/A 58 2c i & ii, Collingridge to Poynter, 20 November 1812.
19. CDA, Correspondence 1822, 26 July.
20. CDA, Correspondence 1815, Plowden and Stone to Collingridge, 27 October.
21. Ibid., Collingridge’s notes, 16, 17, 18 October.
22. Ibid., Smith to Collingridge, 6 September. Stone had made the same complaint to Bishop Collingridge. Mass was held twice on Sundays.
23. Ibid., Collingridge’s notes, 16, 17, 18 October.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid.
26. CDA, Correspondence 1816, Stone to Collingridge, 3 January.
27. Ibid., 15 January.
28. AAW, AAW/A 58 2c i & ii, Collingridge to Poynter, 9 April 1816.
29. CDA, Correspondence 1816, Collingridge to Stone, 15 January.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid., Tate to Collingridge, 5 February.
33. CDA, Trenchard Street Chapel 1787-1845, Blount to Collingridge, 4 April 1816.
34. In 1862 Husenbeth’s son, F.C. Husenbeth, DD, provost of Northampton, wrote a life of Bishop Milner. Bishop Collingridge disapproved of Husenbeth’s wish to serve in Milner’s Midland District (CDA, Correspondence 1815, Collingridge to Husenbeth, 8 December).
35. CDA, Trenchard Street Chapel 1787-1845, Husenbeth to Collingridge, 31 December 1815.
36. Ibid., School Committee to Collingridge, 25 September 1816.
37. CDA, Correspondence 1816, Gerard to Collingridge, 7 January.
38. Ibid., Plowden to Collingridge, 22 June.
39. CDA, Correspondence 1816, Poynter to Collingridge, 5 September.
40. Ibid., Poynter to Collingridge, 27 April.
41. Bishop Milner complained to Rome about the frequent publication of heterodox and schismatical doctrine in London, the diversity of discipline and practice amongst the clergy, and the failure of the Bishop of London to take the lead in calling a synod to deal with these issues. See Ward, *The Eve of Catholic Emancipation*, 1, 24-25.

42. CDA, *Correspondence 1816*, Poynter to Collingridge, 27 August.


44. The full title was: *The Orthodox Journal and Catholic Monthly Intelligencer*. It was an important Catholic periodical in its day, founded in July 1813 by W.E. Andrews of Thames Street, London, to counter the influence of the Catholic Board. It lasted until December 1820. Attempts to revive it thereafter proved unsuccessful. Extant copies show that it contained Catholic articles, letters and, sometimes, religious verse. Letters from Peter Gandolphy sometimes appeared in its columns, and Bishop Milner, whom Andrews much admired, was a frequent contributor until forbidden to write for it by the Holy See. Ann Hippisly, formerly mistress at Robert Plowden’s school in Bristol, sold copies of the *Orthodox Journal* at her shop in Bath but was asked by Bishop Collingridge to cancel the order. She was reluctant to comply since the six subscribers threatened to take their custom elsewhere. (See CDA, *Correspondence 1820*, 1 August, Hippisly to Collingridge).

45. AAW, AAA/A58, 2c, i & ii, Collingridge to Poynter, 24 September 1816.

46. CDA, *Correspondence 1819*, Collingridge to Tate, April.

47. CDA, *Correspondence 1816*, Poynter to Collingridge, 5 September.


52. *Ibid*.

53. *Ibid*. Winifred Mahon said Tate was keeping company with a Mr Mills from Somerset ‘where he bears the name of a rogue, in Bristol of a notorious liar and a debauched fellow’.


55. *Ibid.*, Tate to Collingridge, 7 November.

56. *Ibid.*, Green to Collingridge, 21 September. Bishop Collingridge later resided at Cannington, in Somerset, not far from Nether Stowey, the birthplace of the
Elizabethan Jesuit, Robert Parsons.


58. CDA, *Correspondence 1818*, Hippisly to Collingridge, 26 December.

59. CDA, Correspondence 1816, Sewall to Collingridge, c. September.

60. *Ibid.*, Collingridge to Stone, 12 November.

61. *Ibid.*, Stone to Collingridge, 18 November. A note dated October 1852 in the Jesuit archives in London states that at the request of the provincial, John Etheridge, an attempt was made to trace the deeds of the Bristol chapel which were 'lost or missing'. Brother Henry Foley, the Society's archivist at the time, came to the conclusion that they had been in the possession of Bishop Baines (Collingridge's successor) at Prior Park, Bath, but were destroyed in the great fire there in 1836 (ABPSJ, 22/13/2).

62. CDA, *Correspondence 1816*, f.224, Parker to Collingridge.


64. See *AHSI*, XLI (1973), 309-310; also CDA, *Correspondence 1819*, 28 November, and ABPSJ, *Letters etc. 1805-1818*, Parker to Wright, 2 November 1815. James Parker, then in Liverpool, was in dispute with Bishop Collingridge over an altar picture missing from the Bristol chapel. Parker claimed that it was he who had provided the picture in the first place and had removed it when it was in need of repair. He then, in October 1815, gave the renovated picture to Stonyhurst and commissioned another for Bristol. Collingridge, demanding the return of the original painting, called the new one a 'mere daub'. Parker indignantly replied that his new picture had been highly esteemed by 'the late eminent artist Bird of Bristol', and refused to send the old one back.

The artist to whom Parker referred was Edward Bird, who died 2 November 1819. He was 'the only artist resident in Bristol ever honoured with the title of Royal Academician' (Latimer, *op. cit.*, III, 86).


67. The room at the presbytery used by John Smith had been built by Robert Plowden at a cost of £60 for the purpose, in Plowden's words, 'of its being used by a lay brother from Stonyhurst and for no other purpose' (CDA, *Trenchard Street Chapel*, Smith to Collingridge, 25 September 1816).

68. CDA, *Correspondence 1816*, Coombe to Tate, 13 November.

69. AAW, AAA/A58 2c i & ii, Collingridge to Poynter, 1 August 1817.

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70. CDA, *Correspondence 1817*, Stone to Collingridge, 17 February, 22 August.

71. CDA, *Correspondence 1819*, Collingridge to Charles Plowden, 5 August.

72. CDA, *Correspondence 1820*, C. Plowden to Collingridge, 14 May. The expression ‘hardly used’ in connection with his brother, Robert, was again used by Charles Plowden to describe the treatment of Peter Gandolphy (a Jesuit sympathiser) at the hands of the vicars apostolic, though he did not approve of Gandolphy’s actions.

73. CDA, *Correspondence 1817*, 3 October. Thomas Tate died seventeen months later at the age of thirty-nine. Wigan was his only mission.

74. CDA, *Correspondence 1819*, Tate to Collingridge, 24 December.

75. Ibid., Winter to Collingridge, 25 September.

76. Ibid.

77. Correspondence in the Clifton Diocesan Archives relating to the Rev. Sumner is always in the name of ‘A. R. Sumner’, i.e. Richard Sumner. It seems that Dr Oliver is also mistaken over when and where the Sumner twins died. He writes that James Sumner died at Taunton on 10 July 1822 (*op. cit.*, p.383), but the Franciscan, Thomas Grafton, corresponding with Bishop Collingridge within a fortnight of James’s death, said he died at Plymouth on Tuesday, 6 July 1822. The Sumner twins died within a week of each other (CDA, *Correspondence 1822*, Grafton to Collingridge, 19 July).

78. CDA, Ibid., Paul and Roche to Collingridge, 11 May 1821; Roche to Lane, 15 May; Hayes to Collingridge, 16 May; Green and others to Collingridge, 16 May; A. R. Sumner to Collingridge, 25 May.


80. CDA, *Correspondence 1822*, Tate to Collingridge, 8 January.

81. Bishop Collingridge stayed in Bristol during the first few months of 1822, at 30 Royal York Crescent.

82. CDA, *Correspondence 1822*, Fox to Collingridge, 25 March and 2 April.

83. Ibid., 18 May.

84. Ibid., O’Mealley to Collingridge, 3 October.


86. Charles Walmsley, *A Short Address to the Catholics of Wigan* etc. (Wigan: J. Brown, 1818).
87. Ibid., p.9.
88. Ibid., p.13.
89. Ibid., p.14.
90. Ibid., p.16.
91. Ibid., p.23.
95. There is a footnote in Charles Walmesley's *A Short Address etc.* (p.6) listing some of the benefactors of the new Jesuit chapel at Wigan and showing that 'The Rev. Messrs Tates' gave £100. The reference would almost certainly be to Thomas and his brother, John, a secular priest, who assisted him at Wigan, not to their other brother, Joseph, the priest at Bristol.
THE REV. SAMUEL SEYER, M.A.

AUTHOR OF THE MEMOIRS OF BRISTOL.

Ætatis 67.
CHAPTER VII
From Catholic Emancipation to the End of Jesuit Hegemony
in Bristol

7.1 The Jesuits and Catholic Emancipation in Bristol

Full emancipation was not gained until 1829, but 1812 was an important stage in the continuing struggle. In that year a meeting was called at the Guildhall in Bristol and petitions drawn up to resist the claims of Roman Catholics for legislation to remove their civil disabilities. The numerous signatures, so the organisers said, gave additional evidence of the national opinion. Robert Plowden, as the leading Catholic figure in the city, published a letter in protest which in turn produced a reply from the cleric and author, Samuel Seyer, in the form of a pamphlet entitled: ‘A Defence of the Protestant Inhabitants of Bristol who have petitioned Parliament against the Roman Catholic Claims.’¹ The Bristol Poll Book 1812 shows the Rev. Seyer as having voted for the two successful candidates in the Bristol Parliamentary election in October that year - Edward Protheroe and Richard Hart Davis.² If, then, we examine the election addresses of Protheroe (a Whig), and Davis (the nominee of the Tories), we can see how they judged the temper of the Bristol electors on the question of Catholic emancipation and why voters such as the Rev. Samuel Seyer supported them.

Protheroe considered the question one of ‘momentous importance’. He declared himself firmly attached to the principles of ‘our glorious Revolution’ and to the Established Church, but said that neither her honour nor her interests would be promoted by intolerance or persecution.³ Then hastening to dampen what might
seem enthusiasm for the Catholic cause, he added that if Catholics failed to obtain the privileges they demanded it would be attributable to their own obstinacy in refusing to make concessions of loyalty and attachment to the Constitution, and also to the indiscretion of their advocates who had used ‘such inflammatory language’.⁴

For his part Richard Hart asserted that the support of the reformed Protestant religion had ever been and would continue to be the foremost object of his life, but that he would use every means in his power to ‘preserve unimpaired’ the religious liberties of those of other persuasions, the use of ‘preserve’ thus leaving his position on the subject of further Catholic advancement ambiguous.⁵

Another contender, Sir Samuel Romilly, a distinguished lawyer, had declared himself an advocate for religious liberty and a ‘zealous supporter of ... catholic emancipation’, but he was later forced to withdraw his candidature, not for his religious views but on finding himself strongly opposed by those who objected to his anti-slavery principles.⁶

In his pamphlet the Rev. Seyer protested that the very principle of their religion prevented Catholics from leaving Protestants in the peaceable possession of their faith, for the doctrine of exclusive salvation was taught in their catechisms and asserted by Mr Plowden in his letter.⁷ He had other matters of concern. The practice of auricular confession was dangerous because it meant that priests had great influence over the people. Catholics were not to be trusted: the ‘Romish Church’ was always unfavourable to the civil government of England and no Roman Catholic Government in history had tolerated Protestant doctrines when it had it in its power to suppress them.

Referring next to Plowden’s claims that Catholic soldiers were entitled to the
same rights of rank and promotion as others, he accused him of stirring up
disaffection among the soldiers in a garrison town.⁸ Let it be said too, he continued,
that the celibacy of people like Plowden made them incapable of the connexions
which form the foundations of civil society; and then, extending his argument to
Catholic monastic institutions, Seyer declared that they had lately multiplied in
England and Ireland ‘to an alarming degree’.⁹

The topic was not yet exhausted: two more ‘Letters’ followed. In one
pamphlet Martin Farrell, a Catholic of Queen Square, modestly declared that he did
not presume to hurl his own telum imbelle against such an antagonist as Samuel
Seyer, ‘the Bristolian Pyrrhus of the Established Church’, but then - perhaps
surprised at his own strength - charged him with substituting sophism for sound
logic.¹⁰ It was, Farrell continued, a disingenuous effort to torture and pervert the
obvious import of Plowden’s words. He scoffed at the suggestion that Plowden was
employed in stirring up disaffection amongst the soldiers of a garrison town.

One of Farrell’s most interesting passages concerned the question of exclusive
salvation which Seyer had raised:

I [Farrell] have plainly and directly required to have from each of
them [the Catholic priests at Bristol] separately, his belief on this
point. All three most decidedly and most unequivocally disavowed the
doctrine.¹¹ Mr Plowden even added a strong expression to this
effect. ‘Shall I presume to take post as a porter at Heaven’s gate, and,
aroagating the attributes of the Divinity, admit or reject whom I
please?’ He also said that ‘millions who lived and died in the
Protestant religion are, doubtless, in Heaven’.¹²

A third pamphlet was written, this time by a Protestant Dissenter. In his A
letter addressed to the inhabitants of Bristol on the subject of the Petition against the
Catholic Claims,¹³ J.E. Stock, a physician, said he was not ashamed to plead the
cause of a body of Christians who in his opinion were treated with ‘unmerited
unkindness and whose sentiments had long been grossly misrepresented', and he set out to vindicate, as he put it, a ‘persecuted and misrepresented body of men’. His arguments were more general and wide-ranging than those of the other writers, but like them he referred specifically to the subject of Catholic soldiers and sailors. He quoted Plowden’s argument that the King’s ministers, by employing such men within the United Kingdom while the Test Act existed, were themselves dispensing with or violating the laws, but since it appeared that the defence of the realm seemed to require the services of a large number of Catholics then the ‘obnoxious statutes’ should be repealed. Were Catholics, he asked, any less virtuous in their conduct than Protestants? He had noticed that people who lived in the neighbourhood of Catholics found they were ‘as exemplary as Protestants in the discharge of the social duties and relations of life’.

Plowden’s concern for Catholic soldiers and sailors, remarked upon by the Rev. Seyer, Martin Farrell and J.E. Stock, was one that had exercised him and the priests in the other two major towns in the South West - Exeter and Plymouth - over the years. In 1793 the Rev. Thomas Flynn of Plymouth reported to the bishop how he had ministered to 110 sick Irish soldiers who were hoping eventually to be incorporated into English regiments. He was able to give ‘spiritual succour’ to sixteen of them before they died, but others succumbed before his arrival without knowing ‘that any Catholic clergyman whatever existed in the country’. Two years later William Poole, the ex-Jesuit at Exeter, expressed his concerns at the number of poor Catholic soldiers in and about the city, and at the beginning of 1795 Robert Plowden at Bristol found himself chiefly occupied ministering to sick soldiers who had landed from Ireland and were suffering from dysentery and fever.
Upwards of a score lost their lives, but, he told the bishop,

Providentially I have only heard of two that died in the hospital and one in town without my assistance. If there had been no chapel here what a dreadful disaster would it have been for so many to perish without help!\(^{21}\)

Moved by their condition Plowden impressed upon Walmsley the need for chaplains to come from Ireland to minister to Irish soldiers and sailors in England, and he himself considered bringing the matter to the attention of Dr Troy, Archbishop of Dublin.

Meanwhile the debate on Catholic emancipation had reached a decisive stage. The Rev. Samuel Seyer had expressed the fear that Catholics in power would suppress Protestant doctrines, but in 1812 there was little chance of the issue being put to the test. Though Catholic supporters in Parliament succeeded in getting the Emancipation Bill through the Commons, it failed to pass the House of Lords. Nevertheless, the standard had once more been raised and ground gained.

In the two years prior to Catholic emancipation in 1829, the 'Catholic Question' was a major topic in the Bristol press. The amount of space devoted to it was impressive, though the newspapers saw their role as campaigners for their cause, not in providing a forum for open debate. *The Bristol Mercury* and *The Bristol Gazette* supported emancipation; *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal* and *The Bristol Mirror* opposed it. A member of the Catholic community in Bristol summed up the situation in a letter to Bishop Collingridge:

We have one press decidedly in our favour which has of late shown itself an able defender, another gives us more than the balance on our side, and two others which are always opposed to us, and very ready to throw dirt and heap calumny upon us.\(^{22}\)

*Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*, for instance, was commended by one correspondent
for being 'true to the cause of Protestants, in giving us notices from time to time on
the approach of the enemy'.' Seeing itself as a newspaper speaking for a loyal and
constitutional city the Journal later gave an account of a huge Protestant
demonstration on Penenden Heath in Kent, and reported with satisfaction how an Irish
lawyer who attempted to address the meeting was shouted down with cries of: 'Send
him to the Tower - home, home, agitator - shut your potato trap - no rebel - no
popery'.'

Arguments for and against were rehearsed endlessly, but ultimately it was
political expediency which proved decisive, though from time to time lofty voices
could be heard rejecting coercive laws and speaking of enlightenment, of tolerance
and of the Age of Reason. Foremost in the minds of the government leaders - the
Duke of Wellington in the Lords and Sir Robert Peel in the Commons - was the
necessity of appeasing, through emancipation, the restless and discontented Catholic
population of Ireland, thereby ensuring the strength and security of the United
Kingdom. This was the imperative foremost in the minds of many in Parliament who
were otherwise disposed to resist Catholic relief measures, but who ultimately cast
their votes in favour.

It is not the intention here to trace the history of events in Bristol leading to
the 1829 Emancipation Act, but to point to one or two of the features of the campaign
and to consider how opponents of the bill played on the concepts of 'Jesuit' and
'Jesuitism' in the public imagination.

Petitions for and against the relief measure were submitted from all parts of
the kingdom. One from the Catholics of Bristol, organised by one of the priests at
St Joseph's, Francis Edgworth, was sent to the House of Commons on 14 May 1828:
We, the undersigned Catholics, inhabitants of the City of Bristol and its vicinity ... [implore] the repeal of all those laws, which debar us, on account of our religious tenets, from a due share in the advantages of the British constitution ... we are confident that your justice will, at length, relieve us from the unmerited degradation of being excluded from almost every office of civil trust ... and we yield to no class of British subjects in our determination to maintain religious freedom of all against any aggression, foreign or domestic.23

Some Dissenters in Bristol, though their own rights had recently been won by the repeal in 1828 of the Test and Corporation Acts, also opposed Catholic emancipation,26 a stance which prompted the owner of The Bristol Mercury to enquire of them: ‘How can you reconcile, with the spirit of the religion of Jesus, your conduct in joining in the war-whoop against your Roman Catholic fellow-countrymen?’ For the most part, in public at least, they kept silent, but not so one of their ministers, the Rev. William Thorp, who attacked the Catholic claims in a sermon preached at the Baptist Chapel in King Street on 22 January 1829, which was published as a thirty-six page pamphlet entitled England’s Liberties Defended, and printed by J.M. Gutch, the Tory editor of Felix Farley’s Bristol Journal.27

The position of Dissenters generally was given by Mr John Smith in the Commons on 4 February 1828 - a day on which many Catholic petitions were presented to the House. Petitioning on behalf of the Unitarians he took the opportunity to say: ‘The immense majority of the dissenting body is favourable to the claims of the Catholics.’28

From time to time some Anglican minister would also raise his voice in support, which moved the Rev. T.F. Jennings, curate of St Thomas’s, to express concern that not only many Dissenters but even certain clergymen of the Established Church, ‘by an act of suicidal infatuation’, were urging emancipation.29 He was undoubtedly especially mindful of the anniversary sermon given on 5 November 1828
by a prebendary of Bristol Cathedral, the Rev. Sydney Smith. On that occasion the distinguished members of the congregation, anticipating the customary denunciation of popery, were astounded to hear Smith plead for religious tolerance and support for the Catholics’ claims. For some time afterwards the sermon aroused widespread controversy in the press, and when published in the form of a pamphlet reached four editions within two weeks. *Felix Farley’s Bristol Journal* attacked it as ‘uncalled for and ill-timed’, but *The Bristol Mercury* judged that Smith had rightly caught the mood of the times: ‘The human intellect has been gradually rising in the scale of human excellence: and in the same ratio has the harshness of men’s manners been softened and refined.’

It was clear that an important strategy of those opposed to the bill, in Bristol as elsewhere, was to stress that Catholicism could not be divorced from the malignant influence of Jesuitism. The Rev. Francis Edgworth, a Franciscan, was already zealously leading the Catholic campaign when the arrival of William Rowe on 7 August 1828, as his fellow priest at St Joseph’s, gave the Jesuits a presence in the city for the first time in thirteen years. *Felix Farley’s Bristol Journal*, pointing to the Catholic Church in Ireland, solemnly warned that ‘the old system of Jesuitism [was] as much in force ... as in its rankest days’, and alerted its readers to ‘the Jesuitical system of succeeding by wheedling, when they [could] not by force’. The paper referred to a letter in the London Standard (a Protestant journal it was fond of quoting and one which *The Bristol Gazette* described as ‘determined never to be behind in the race of sanguine bigotry’), in which the correspondent listed what he called the ‘crimes’ of the Catholic Church and took care to remind readers of ‘the black deeds of the Jesuits in the old and new world’.

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Journal itself had spoken of 'the order of Jesuits in all their horrible tribunals of the holy inquisition'.

In a sermon preached in Bristol on 8 March 1829, later printed under the title England's Last Effort, the Rev. Jennings named the Jesuits as the great proselytising force of the Roman Church. Identifying Stonyhurst as the hub of the Jesuit organisation in England he set about describing the college and its activities:

'Conversion of Protestants, and Roman Catholic instruction are provided for, on a scale the most extensive and complete... The Jesuits in this College have extensive communications and correspondence with numerous parts of the world.'

He spoke of the distrust and apprehension excited by the mystery attaching to Jesuitism in general, and its 'deep subtlety and restless exertions in the cause of Popery'. He alerted his congregation to their own perilous state describing the Jesuits as rapidly 'pouring into England' at that time, and, anticipating the proposed bill, declared that what was needed was a law not merely to restrict but to suppress them: 'Eradication is the only cure for Jesuitism'.

Felix Farley's Bristol Journal had made a similar point, quoting the Duke of Newcastle's words: 'Let the nation arise from its lethargy ... let it demand that all Popish [institutions] ... whether Jesuits' colleges or monasteries etc. shall be immediately abolished.' Jennings published his sermon both in Bristol and London, pricing the pamphlet at sixpence 'to encourage its circulation'.

One of the numerous anti-Catholic posters then circulating in the city took the form of a letter castigating a Protestant minister, the Rev. Daniel Wilson, for his pro-Catholic views:

Is it to be endured, that with the whole world at peace about us, and only for our foes the traitorous Jesuits and priests of Ireland and
Lancashire ... we should basely desert the God of the bible and fly for safety into the arms of our enemies?40

The author, John Poynter, a lawyer, stressed the importance of prayer, and declared: ‘If we do but continue to pray, we shall defeat the machinations of the Jesuits, and the force and fraud of their master, the devil.’ Posters circulating in the city sometimes originated from outside. One reproduced the words of the Rev. H.F. Lyte who spoke at a protest meeting at Brixham and warned Protestants throughout the country to be on their guard against Jesuit practices: ‘The Roman Catholic Association has at least honestly spoken out its treason, and I prefer its open violence to the Jesuitical machinations I see going on elsewhere.’41

The campaign was enthusiastically carried into verse. One composition, printed at the office of The Bristol Mirror and proclaiming ‘No Popery!’ began:

The Pope and the Devil together conspire,
To lift themselves higher, and higher, and higher;
‘The Jesuit’s abroad,’ and the enemy waits
For traitorous Jussuf to open the gates.
Up! then, for your Country, your Altars, your King,
And this be the cry with which Heav’n’s vault shall ring,
‘No Popery!’42

But another offering, entitled ‘England Trusts in Providence’, despaired of the government’s ability to defend Protestantism and appealed for divine aid against the arch-conspirators:

Avert, Oh! [sic] Heaven, the vile, the deep design!
Let not the Jesuits’ artifice prevail.43

The last stanza defiantly asserted:

Nor Prince, nor Peer, nor Parliament, we trust,
Nor Pope, nor Jesuit, nor Priest, we fear.

On 22 January 1829, William Thorp, a Dissenting minister of Bristol,
preached at the Baptist Chapel in King Street and referred to the 'flimsy and Jesuitical sophistry' of those pleading the Catholic cause.44 The pro-Catholic Bristol Mercury attempted to turn the tables: 'Mr Thorp is by nature a Jesuit; he combines in his own character all the bad qualities we ever heard attributed to that sect, without the qualifications of those supereminent attainments by which that body has always been distinguished.'45

The charge of Jesuitism, so freely brought, created unlikely bedfellows. The Rev. Francis Edgworth, then in his third year as a Catholic priest in Bristol, continued to campaign assiduously, writing to newspapers and, when permitted, speaking at Protestant meetings, activities which led his detractors in the Catholic community (supporters of his colleague, the Rev. Henry Riley) to say that he had little to commend him other than his skill in 'spouting' politics. Edgworth, although a Franciscan and at loggerheads with the Jesuits who had asked for him to be replaced at St Joseph's by a member of their own order, nevertheless found himself charged with 'Jesuitical cunning'. Referring to a letter Edgworth had written to the press in which he had quoted from a book by Bishop Milner (The End of Religious Controversy), a correspondent in Felix Farley's Bristol Journal described Milner, though a secular, as 'this Jesuit' and a 'true Jesuit', and seeking to tar Edgworth with the same brush complained that the latter's method of discourse was 'a mode of argument peculiar to the Jesuits and Romish priests, when they can not repel palpable evidence by any other means'.46 On another occasion the same correspondent (identified later as Abraham Bagnell, MD) referred to Bishop Milner's book as 'the very marrow of Jesuitry', and spoke of Edgworth's own 'priestly, if not Jesuitical, cunning' in denying that Milner had written a particular passage which the
correspondent had found offensive:

Mr Edgeworth may, indeed, have read some edition which Jesuitical design may have published, in which ... this wicked paragraph is advisedly omitted... The Jesuits have been known to republish editions of the most expensive works merely for the purpose of expunging, inserting, or changing a single word, when that word served their deep-laid purposes.47

In the opinion of some writers, it would seem that only the most guarded citizens could escape Jesuit influence, no matter what their religion. The Bristol Mercury referred to a letter a Church of England clergyman had addressed to a Dissenting minister in which he spoke of 'those misguided sects which have chiefly through Popish and Jesuitical influence ... departed from her [the Established Church's] communion,'48 a chance resonance of remarks made by Bishop Newton of Bristol in the previous century when he said that from 'Methodism to popery is a natural and easy transition' and that a Methodist is 'most easily dyed a papist in grain'.49

The Bristol Mercury, acknowledging what it called the 'all-pervading influence of that question', actively supported the call for Catholic emancipation. It argued on two grounds: ethical and economic. Its editor, the liberal-minded T.J. Manchee, in two successive editions50 asserted that religious prejudices, which were once so powerful in the country and nowhere more so than in Bristol, were 'gradually melting away before the light of that ample discussion which we owe to a Free Press', and once again spoke of 'the present comparatively enlightened state of the human mind'.51 Knowing his readership, he instanced the consequences to the British economy of denying rights to the Irish Catholics, for the superabundance of labour in the country had in great measure arisen from the immigration of tens of thousands of half-starved Irish labourers, thus reducing the price of wages below their natural
level and breaking the spirit of the English peasantry. England would only see her poor-rates reduced when the Irish labourer was able to find employment at home where the source of all the trouble had been the distinction the government drew between the religious creed of the different classes of its people. Manchee published a poster restating the benefits he saw flowing from Catholic emancipation: ‘Reduction of Taxes and Poor-Rates, and Cheap bread’, ran the headline. Although not a Catholic, Manchee also spoke at public meetings arranged by Protestants at which he pleaded for Catholics to be given a fair hearing.

The Anglican clergy in Bristol, under their Bishop, Robert Gray, a man strongly conservative in religion and politics, saw the Established Church as the strongest defender of the Protestant faith, and preached earnestly against the intended bill. Foremost among them were the Rev. Martin Whish of St Mary Redcliffe, the Rev. T.F. Jennings, one of his curates, and the Rev. T.T. Biddulph, vicar of St James’s, the parish in which in the previous century John Scudamore established Bristol’s first Catholic chapel. They organised vestry protest meetings, and urged individual parishes to send petitions to the Houses of Parliament, Bishop Gray himself presenting one shortly before Sir Robert Peel brought in his new bill on 5 March 1829. Already, by March 1827, J.M. Gutch, the Tory editor of Felix Farley’s Bristol Journal and a church-warden in the wealthy parish of Clifton, was claiming that all the large parishes in Bristol had petitioned the Houses of Parliament against further concessions to the Roman Catholics. He urged his fellow citizens to ‘flock forward’ and support their revered King, George IV: they would find him the firm and undaunted defender of their faith.

A petition signed by thousands of Bristolians was sent after one of the biggest
Queen Square, 1827. Two years later it was the scene of the big demonstration against the proposed Catholic Emancipation Bill.
demonstrations ever seen in the city. At 4 p.m. on Thursday, 12 February 1829, some 20,000 people\textsuperscript{6} opposed to Catholic emancipation gathered to protest in Queen Square ‘under the statue of King William the Third of Immortal Memory’ (as the advertising poster put it), a memorial the citizens of Bristol had erected in 1736 to commemorate his victory over James II in defence of the Protestant cause. \textit{Felix Farley’s Bristol Journal} of 14 February reported that ‘the shops of the city were closed and after the result of the meeting was known, the bells of several parishes rang merrily throughout the evening’. On 24 February the Earl of Eldon presented a petition to the House of Lords signed by magistrates, clergy, merchants and inhabitants of Bristol and the parishes within ten miles of the city - 38,000 names in all - objecting to the granting of further concessions to the Catholics.\textsuperscript{57} The Duke of Sussex, who on a previous evening had presented a petition from Bristol signed by 1,700 Catholic supporters, including several magistrates and some clergymen, questioned how Eldon’s figure of 38,000 could possibly be accurate when considered as a true proportion of Bristol’s population (at the last census) of 87,779. He felt that a great deal of art had been used in collecting the names: he had heard that ‘whole schools had been carried up to sign the petition’ and there was evidence that some persons had signed ‘over and over again’.\textsuperscript{58}

It would seem that the practice of collecting signatures from children was widespread. On 24 February 1829 \textit{The Bristol Mercury} indignantly reported that some fifty boys from Pyle Street Free School in the city had been persuaded to sign a petition against Catholic emancipation when they were of such an age that they could not possibly have understood the issues involved.\textsuperscript{59} The same paper also carried the story of a petition against emancipation from Manchester and Salford

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The King's Highway
IS FREE TO ALL.

Fellow Protestants!

Let not your zeal in our
Glorious Cause be damped by the
specious suggestions of those
who are opposed to us.

GO OUT TO MEET

Sir Charles
Wetherell,
THE CHAMPION OF
Protestantism

At Three o'Clock.

SATURDAY MORNING,
April 4th, 1829.

WANSBROUGH, Printer. (Albion Office) 12. Redcliffe-Street, BRISTOL.
which was signed by 22,000 people. When it was presented in the Lords, Earl Grey had challenged the figures saying that signatures had been taken from children in Sunday schools.\textsuperscript{60} In London, it was claimed, the organisers of one anti-Catholic petition had even paid a boy by the hour to write names. The practice was derided in both the \textit{Mercury} and \textit{Gazette} in mock nursery rhymes:

I sing a song of sixpence, a parchment full of names,
Eight-and-thirty thousand, against the Popish claims,
When the roll was open'd, Old Bags began to sing,
`Isn't this a famous list to set before the King'?\textsuperscript{61}

Another was more specific:

Baa! Baa! Blue Sheep,
Have you got any wool?
Yes, Masters, of children's names
Forty Skins full!\textsuperscript{62}

A resolution in favour of the emancipation bill had already been carried in the Commons when posters in Bristol called on the citizens to assemble and greet the arrival on Saturday 4 April 1829, for the assizes, of the Attorney General and Recorder for the city, Sir Charles Wetherell, who had opposed it. The magistrates, alarmed at the prospect of disorder in the streets issued their own notices urging restraint,\textsuperscript{63} but the mob greeted Sir Charles with enthusiasm and marked the occasion by smashing the windows of the Catholic chapel in Trenchard Street and of houses in Marsh Street occupied by `lower orders of the Irish'.\textsuperscript{64}

When preparing their petition to Parliament the British Catholic Association, under the chairmanship of the Duke of Norfolk, had claimed that Roman Catholics, including the Irish, formed a third of the population of the United Kingdom.\textsuperscript{64} The Rev. Sydney Smith of Bristol gave their numbers as seven million, while the Duke of Clarence spoke in the Lords of eight million Catholics suffering `the degradation
SCHEDULE to which this Act refers.

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<th>Age</th>
<th>Place of Birth</th>
<th>Name of the Order, Community, or Society whereof he is a Member</th>
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of the Penal Laws'. Eventually, although the number of petitions opposing the bill were more than double those in favour, the act successfully passed through Parliament and received the Royal assent on 13 April 1829.

The Relief Act removed the civil restraints and disabilities which had previously been imposed on Catholics, but it boded ill for the Jesuits and other religious orders of the Catholic Church. Just as opponents of emancipation had seen fit to target the Jesuits as a particular threat to the constitution and the Established Church, so the government found it politic to make special provision for them in their bill, the final sections of which were framed with the specific purpose of securing 'the gradual suppression and final prohibition' of the Jesuits and members of other Catholic religious orders bound by monastic or religious vows. Section 28 required every Jesuit resident in the United Kingdom to register within six months or pay £50 for each month he failed to do so, while Section 29 stated that if a Jesuit, or member of any such religious order, were to enter the country after the commencement of the act he would be guilty of a misdemeanor and sentenced 'to be banished from the United Kingdom for the Term of his natural Life'. Those, however, who were Jesuits and members of such religious orders at the commencement of the act, would be allowed to return if they were natural-born subjects, provided they then registered as required by the new law. But the most telling clause forbade the Jesuits from accepting new members, and under Section 34 any person admitted to the Society or a religious order after the commencement of the Act would be permanently banished from the United Kingdom. It seemed that the Society, at the very time it had been formally recognised in England by papal decree, would be blighted by such measures, but in reality the government's intention was to assuage the sensibilties of the extreme
Protestant wing of the Tory party rather than bring about the demise of Catholic religious orders. We may consider, for instance, the attitudes of leading anti-Catholics in Bristol such as William Thorpe and Abraham Bagnell. Thorpe saw the Jesuits as 'the very soul of the hierarchy ... and the directors of every great and important event both in the religious and in the political world'. Bagnell's view was similar: 'Jesuit connexion ... pervades the globe.' His vision identified the Jesuits as the only real obstacle to Christian unity:

I fear not to expose myself to the malice of the Jesuits, if any expressions of mine can remove from their influence, those, over whom they now rule with an iron hand, covered with a silk or an iron glove, adapted for every possible occasion. If there were not any Jesuits, there would be soon only the one religion among Christians. That would be the true Religion of the Bible.

Prejudices, then, remained, but in the climate of the times there was little likelihood that the authorities, both nationally and at a local level, would enforce measures which granted rights to one section of Catholic society whilst imposing harsh penalties on another. The adverse measures, though staying on the statute book until the next century, remained inoperable, though as late as 1902 an unsuccessful attempt was made to enforce them. In practice, then, the Society of Jesus and other religious orders continued in being.

7.2 The End of Jesuit Hegemony in Bristol

In the years preceding the Emancipation Bill the Jesuits struggled to maintain their position, though the vicars apostolic, faced with their own problems, saw them as unhelpful. The inability of the provincial of the Jesuits, Charles Plowden, to meet Bishop Collingridge's request for an assistant for Joseph Tate at Bristol was symptomatic of a larger problem the Jesuits in England were facing at that time. On
3 July 1818 Plowden wrote to the Jesuits' agent in London lamenting the shortage of Jesuit missioners: ‘I have none to spare... Our numbers decrease. Few or none come from Ireland... In every negotiation with govt from the days of Cromwell, a sacerdotal party has always contended for the exclusion of the Jesuits.’ A year later, almost to the day, he was making the same point - a ‘host of foes’ seemed bent on making the utter destruction of Stonyhurst their aim and it was that which had reduced the Society in England to such straits for want of priests. The College was ‘drained’ - even the necessary offices were not filled. Discouraged by the enemies of the Society (who insisted that the Jesuits were not and would not be recognised in England) a dozen young men had recently abandoned the cause in England and gone to other countries, particularly America, or had simply resumed secular lives.

These were years when Charles Plowden, at his most despondent, feared for the future of the Society in England and considered whether it should move abroad. But the picture of Stonyhurst as a Jesuit college at bay was not one that the vicars apostolic readily recognised, for their own needs were pressing. In one of his Lenten mandates Bishop Collingridge spoke of some congregations in the Western District lacking chapels or the resources to support a missioner, whilst the funds for the education of priests were insufficient to ensure a succession. Those were matters, he told his flock, which claimed the utmost exertions of their benevolence, in preference to all others. The exchanges, then, between bishop and provincial were conducted in an atmosphere of suspicion and resentment.

The Jesuit provincial continued to press the Holy See for formal recognition of the Society in England whilst the Rev. Robert Gradwell, the rector of the English College and the agent in Rome of the vicars apostolic informed Bishop Collingridge
of the progress of events. The 'Plowdenian war' against him was not over, he said, and Charles Plowden was busy complaining 'with sobs and tears' of the inaccountable persecution that he and his fellow Jesuits had long suffered from the English bishops. Gradwell, no friend of the Society, encapsulated the Jesuit position in a sentence:

To make out his case he [Charles Plowden] represented your Lordship as a heretic, the other Bishops no sounder than they should be, talked about your Lordship's pastoral letter [of 1815], Dr Gibson's refusal to give orders and faculties, the designs of the Bishops on the property of the Jesuits, exemplified by the scandals at Wigan, Mr Thomson's pamphlet, the chapel at Bristol, etc., etc. [sic].

When raising the matter of Collingridge's pastoral letter of 1815 which had subsequently led to his brother's dismissal from Bristol, Charles Plowden also (as Robert had previously done) described Collingridge as a Jansenist. Although six years had passed, the matter was topical because Robert had written to the bishop a few months earlier from his mission at Wappenbury, near Coventry, renewing the confessional polemic and raising once again (though he was then eighty years of age) what he considered Bayistical errors (and therefore unorthodoxy) in the bishop's mandate. He even enclosed a copy of an article he proposed publishing criticising Collingridge's views on penance and confession, which he held to be contrary to the Catholic faith. Gradwell was dismissive of what he called the attempts of the Plowdens to raise the cry at Rome of Bayanism and Jansenism, and took the opportunity to read Robert Plowden's condemnation to Cardinal Fontana, who considered it (so Gradwell told Collingridge) 'the ravings of dotage'.

Charles Plowden thus made little headway at this time in Rome, for although he might claim that the pope had admitted the existence of the Society in England *vivae vocis oraculo*, the cardinals asserted that what really mattered was what the
pope wrote, not what he was reported to have said.  

It had originally been the intention of the Jesuits that Tate should serve at Bristol as their nominee, but his disaffection and their inability to find him an assistant (who would eventually replace him and reassert the Society's position) resulted in 1822 in the Bristol mission slipping completely from their control.

The calm which Bishop Collingridge hoped the Bristol congregation would enjoy following the departure of Plowden and Tate proved illusory or at best fitful. The laity continued to trouble Tate's successors. The Franciscan priest now in charge of St Joseph's, Francis Edgeworth, conveyed something of their desire to control events when he reported to the bishop on the school committee's determination to exclude Edgeworth's assistant priest, Henry Riley, from their proceedings: 'They abused Mr Riley, just enough to show their spirit and to prove to me what I might expect if I should ever betray fear of them or give them cause to censure me.'

The pessimism which had been expressed by Charles Plowden as to the fate of the Society in England should it not soon be formally recognised seemed justified as numbers continued to fall, and by 1826 it had but some hundred members. The Jesuits suffered another blow when their champion, Bishop Milner of the Midland District, the only one of the four vicars apostolic to recognise the Society in England at that time, died on 26 April 1826. But in the summer of that year Bishop Collingridge took an unexpected initiative which marked a turning point in the Jesuits' fortunes in England. Independently of the other vicars apostolic he wrote to Rome in favour of recognition for the English Society, arguing that even if the Jesuits were suppressed it did not seem that the government in England would be any more favourable to Catholic emancipation. His course of action now seemed clear to him.
and he signalled it by inviting the Jesuits to return in his own district to Bristol.

The Jesuit provincial received a letter from Bishop Collingridge on 27 October 1827, referring to the need to develop the Catholic church in the city in view of its growing congregation. 'Hundreds, I have been told, are precluded from entering the chapel from want of room,' he said and either the chapel had to be enlarged or 'galleries must be thrown round it'. He then affirmed that Bristol was a Jesuit mission:

The Bristol mission I look upon as belonging to your Gentlemen; and it is no fault of mine if it has not been constantly served by them...

Now most sincerely do I wish you will accept the invitation to serve that mission and take it back entirely in your hands.

What induced Bishop Collingridge's change of heart towards the Society generally is not clear. The only reason he himself gave was that he was impressed by the helpfulness of some Jesuits he had encountered when they were engaged in missionary work in North Wales. In The Eve of Catholic Emancipation Bernard Ward refers to the tradition among the Jesuits themselves that during his serious illness about this time, Collingridge thought over his past life and reproached himself for the part he had taken against the Society. The explanation given by the Jesuit historian, Francis Edwards, in his more recent study, The Jesuits in England (1985), is in that same tradition: 'Dr Collingridge ... underwent a dangerous illness about this time. Evidently it gave him the opportunity to rethink some of his earlier positions.' He must also have been influenced by the advice of his coadjutor, Peter Baines, then in Rome recovering from illness. At the beginning of 1828 he wrote to Collingridge suggesting he left the Jesuits themselves to settle the matter: if they said they were restored in England he should believe them. 'In doing so I am sure you will give no offence to the Pope.'
In December 1828 Bishop Collingridge, supported by his coadjutor, again petitioned the pope on behalf of the English Jesuits.\textsuperscript{87} The signs were now more propitious than formerly: the vicars apostolic, who previously saw the Jesuits as an obstacle to the granting of Catholic emancipation, no longer advanced the objections of old (Dr Poynter and Dr Gibson were dead) and there was a new civil administration. This time in response to Collingridge’s petition, Pope Leo XII issued a bull of Restoration, dated 1 January 1829, declaring that the vicars apostolic could ordain members of the Society of Jesus, wherever they might be, as members of a religious community (\textit{ad sacros Ordines titulo Religiosae paupertatis}) and that they could enjoy the same spiritual and canonical privileges as other religious orders in England (\textit{quibus reliqui ordines religiosi in Anglia ipsa fruuntur}).\textsuperscript{88} The canonical existence of the Jesuits in England was at last established.

Meanwhile some at Bristol regarded the return of the Society with apprehension. In December 1827 Anne Jerningham of Clifton, a prominent member of the congregation, fearing that Francis Edgworth would be posted as a result of any change, reacted with concern:

>You [Collingridge] did me the favour to mention having written to Stonyhurst ... I trust in God the purpose of it is not to give us up to their jurisdiction, for altho’ my early prepossessions are in their favour I know enough of the dissensions now subsiding here to believe that the very name of that would be most unfortunate.\textsuperscript{49}

Edgworth himself felt so aggrieved by the bishop’s intentions that he determined to leave the city, but despite his anxieties he remained at Trenchard Street. In the event it was not Jesuitism but his own bankruptcy and ensuing exile that marred his days.\textsuperscript{90}

On 7 August 1828 William Rowe, a twenty-five year old Jesuit priest from...
The Centre of Bristol, c. 1825. From this viewpoint the visitor to St Joseph's Chapel would go to the end of the street (just past the bridge) and then left for about a hundred yards.
Stonyhurst who had been ordained less than twelve months and who had spent most of the previous six years on the Continent, arrived in Bristol to join the two priests already there. The Rev. Francis Edgworth’s letter to Bishop Collingridge on 11 August 1828 announcing Rowe’s arrival revealed a community of priests in Trenchard Street - a Franciscan, a Jesuit and a secular priest - in some disarray. Henry Riley, whom Rowe was replacing, was still performing his duties, and Edgworth urged the bishop to post him as soon as possible to prevent mischief and lest ‘Mr Rowe’s mind be at all soured at the commencement of labour on a fearfully laborious mission’. His own relations with Riley were clearly strained: Edgworth claimed that he had always acted with the greatest delicacy to his colleague’s feelings, but Riley had very often abused his forbearance. He should be instructed to cease duties in the mission forthwith.

Edgworth also felt his own position vis-a-vis the Jesuits and his new colleague, Rowe, needed clarification. It had not been a promising beginning: reports, Edgworth said, from ‘various places occupied by gentlemen from Stonyhurst’ had reached Bristol several months previously and had created a feeling of suspense ‘which had been of no advantage to Religion’. As a Franciscan he was not in any way prepared to serve under the Jesuits or to be accountable to them. Rowe and he should be ‘on perfect equality’, but if any part of their affairs needed to be in the name or under the control of one of them, he, Edgworth, should be that person. He hoped that the mission would remain a strictly secular one though served by regulars.

Surprisingly, the letters Bishop Collingridge was receiving at this time from Bristol had as their main theme not the campaign for Catholic emancipation which was being waged locally and throughout the country, nor the arrival of William Rowe.
- claiming on behalf of the Jesuits 'their right to the congregation' (as the Rev. Henry Riley had expressed it to the Catholic community94) - but the departure of Riley himself. The similarity in the phraseology of several letters, all anonymous and protesting at Riley's removal, bear signs of collusion and weaken their force.95 Amongst other things they claimed that Edgworth neglected his confessional duties and that penitents were kept waiting outside the presbytery and had eventually to go away disappointed.96 Another of Riley's champions accused Collingridge of partisanship and favouring a fellow Franciscan. No priest, he said, who had served at Bristol was more respected than Mr Riley, not even Mr Plowden and Mr Tate who were 'both excellent men'.97 But Bishop Collingridge, who had for long held out against the protests of the Jesuits, was not one to heed the objections of a few laypersons, especially when told by them that the Bristol congregation would give him much trouble if he did not restore Riley and that his underhanded action was something he would answer for on judgment-day.98

Edgworth's more numerous supporters, fearing that he too would be moved, made plans to retain him. They recognised, they told the bishop, that the existing chapel of St Joseph's had been given up to the Jesuits, but sufficient funds were available for a start to be made on building a new chapel for the city's growing Catholic population and they requested that Edgworth be put in charge of it. To indicate wide support for the project one sympathiser assured Collingridge: 'Many Protestants are ready and willing to contribute a very considerable sum.'99 He compared Bristol with other places in England and found it 'very far behind in Catholicity', a situation he attributed to the lack of suitable missioners for the city which ought to be the 'metropolis of Catholicity in the west as she [was] in all other
Owing partly to Irish immigration, as in other coastal areas in the kingdom, and partly to conversions, the Catholic population of Bristol had steadily increased during the three decades of the new century. Francis Edgworth numbered it by the end of 1828 at around 5,000. A petition was drawn up to retain Edgworth in Bristol in order, it said, to serve a new chapel for which a ‘very considerable sum [might] very soon be raised’; at the same time the petitioners expressed no opposition to the return of the Jesuits. William Green, Collingridge’s wine merchant, who had regretted the departure of the Rev. Henry Riley, had a particular objection to the petition: ‘My Lord,’ he protested to the bishop, ‘I cannot approve of this tampering with my servants in order to induce them to sign a paper which their master rejects.’ It was clearly a breach of etiquette - a week later The Bristol Mercury reported that the wealthy parish of Clifton had set up an anti-Catholic petition: ‘There was the usual mode of obtaining signatures. Gentlemen had their lackeys to sign it and mistresses their maids.’

For their part the Jesuits saw the intention to build a new Catholic church in Bristol as creating a situation analogous to that which the Society faced at Wigan in 1818. The Jesuit provincial, Charles Brooke, viewed the idea of a new chapel as no more than a scheme to set up a rival establishment to the Jesuits’ - ‘in opposition to ours’ - and urged the bishop not to countenance it. William Rowe informed the bishop that the plan was calculated to excite party spirit and that he was sure his provincial would rather abandon the Bristol mission entirely than accept it under such circumstances. Edgworth, although affecting disinterestedness and declaring himself at the disposal of the bishop, nevertheless spoke of hundreds of signatures to
An early nineteenth-century photograph, showing, on the right, the entrance to Trenchard Street. The other road leads down to the harbour and is, today, Colston Street.
the petition to retain him, and of the impression that the good of religion had been sacrificed to the temporal rights of the Jesuits. 'Much evil, scandal and insubordination must arise if this impression be not effaced.' Rowe later complained to John Birdsall, the vicar general, that even the children of the poor school were allowed to add their names and there was someone on hand to sign for all who could not write, a practice not unknown to canvassers generally.

The petition to retain Edgworth was sent to Bishop Collingridge on 18 February, with copies to the provincials of the Franciscan and the Jesuit orders. Both superiors replied that the decision was the bishop's alone, though the Jesuit provincial had earlier made it known to the bishop that he would like Edgworth to be posted and the Bristol mission to be the entire responsibility of Rowe and another Jesuit priest whom he would provide. In a curt note to Collingridge, Rowe said that if Edgworth remained he would do his utmost to prevail on his superior to remove him from Bristol. On 3 March 1829, it was announced that the ailing bishop had died.

The situation at Bristol was deteriorating. As Bishop Baines later expressed it: 'The congregation began to be divided and to form itself into factions, one for the Bishop, another for the Jesuits.' The dealings between Rowe and Edgworth acquired the features that had characterised the relationship between Robert Plowden and Joseph Tate: the two priests were barely on speaking terms. Rowe complained to the vicar general that Edgworth neither came to breakfast at the usual hour nor dined at home, and he was concerned at the impression this was giving to people in the house. Edgworth had it in his power (by leaving) 'to prevent what [might] terminate in a very serious disturbance'. There would then be peace in 'this ever
tormenting mission ... this long distracted place'.111

But it was Edgworth’s supporters who finally got their way. On Collingridge’s death they petitioned Bishop Baines, claiming that his predecessor had given approval for Edgworth to remain at Bristol and asked if he would endorse it. Baines (still in Rome), undoubtedly influenced by the petition which, he had been told, contained 2,518 names, wrote to his vicar general: ‘If Dr Collingridge had not given his consent, do as you like, but I should advise letting Mr Edgworth remain.’112 Edgworth was now free to embark on the ambitious scheme of establishing a new church for the growing district of Clifton. It was to lead eventually to the building of Bristol’s pro-Cathedral, but in its early stages it was to prove the Franciscan priest’s undoing.

At last a determined group of laity in Bristol had successfully exerted pressure on their bishop and influenced his decision. The Jesuits had always opposed lay participation in matters other than temporalities, and their position was now firmly restated by their provincial, Charles Brooke. Writing to Bishop Collingridge, a few weeks before his death, on the proposal to retain Edgworth and on the proposed building of a new chapel, Brooke remarked:

My principal objection is to the allowing of the laity, by petitioning or otherwise, to exercise the least influence or control over the appointment, retaining or removal of the incumbents of missions. This presbyterian spirit of interference in the appointment of pastors, is, I am told, the most mischievous evil of religion in America, a greater evil even than whisky drinking. I think it cannot fail to operate most perniciously if ever encouraged here.113

In 1830 Rowe was to find his tenure at Bristol abruptly terminated by Bishop Baines. The bishop later explained in a statement to Propaganda in Rome that as Rowe and Edgworth could not work together he felt that Rowe should be the one to
PETER BAINES, O.S.B.
Vicar Apostolic, 1829-1843
leave because he could not entrust the Bristol mission to the sole care of such a young and inexperienced man. But the immediate reasons are to be found elsewhere, particularly in the intervention Rowe made in a quarrel between Bishop Baines and the Benedictines of Bath.

'The Downside Controversy' as it became known, had its origins seven years earlier, soon after Baines had become Collingridge's coadjutor. Of the four Catholic Districts, only the Western was without its own college for the formation of priests, and Baines, to remedy this and with Collingridge's approval, set about inducing the Benedictine community at Downside, a few miles from Bath, to make their house available as an episcopal seminary. The effect, as the Benedictines saw it, would be to give the bishop control over the monastery at Downside previously exercised by the President of their Congregation, and Downside would then cease to be part of the Benedictine organisation. Prior Barber and his Council refused Baines's request. In 1828 the bishop was again rebuffed, but regarding the District's need for a seminary as overriding he determined to press ahead: 'If it must come to a trial of strength,' he said, 'one or other of the party shall go down.'

Finding that persuasion and argument were unavailing Baines changed tactics. He questioned whether the Benedictine houses in England had ever been canonically established, and by 1829 he had succeeded in persuading Cardinal Cappellari, Prefect of Propaganda, that the legal status of the Downside monastery was very doubtful. The Benedictines, seeing their order seriously threatened, and arguing that they had been in possession of their monastery many years, with their privileges unchallenged, took their case to Rome. Baines, now, on Collingridge's death, vicar apostolic of the Western District, responded by withdrawing faculties from the
Downside priests. On 7 March 1830 the Holy See, doubtless seeing the dispute getting out of hand, accepted the de facto situation of the Benedictines in England and granted a sanatory decree which gave them the validity for their vows and monasteries which Bishop Baines had been questioning on technicalities.

But the situation was further aggravated when the bishop refused to grant faculties for a second priest to serve the Benedictine mission at Bath.120 Birdsall, the Benedictines’ President, warned Baines that if he did not stop interfering with the Bath mission (‘your attempt upon our Mission’121) and if he did not give faculties to a second monk, ‘a new appeal would be made in the chapel’.122 Birdsall then printed and distributed a handbill addressed ‘To the Congregation of the Catholic Chapel in Orchard Street, Bath’ in which he urged them to withhold the seat rents, which the bishop was claiming should be made over to him.123 The bishop’s response was to establish another chapel in an attempt to reassert his authority. He hired a house in Brunswick Place in the north of the town and set up two rooms capable of holding about sixty people where he preached and where his vicar general, Dr Brindle, worked as confessor.124 The Benedictines protested to Rome and the pope expressed himself highly indignant at Baines’s conduct, asking him ‘what [he] could mean by setting up altar against altar’.125

But Baines had not finished with the Benedictines and their Jesuit allies. He declared that the chapels at Bath, Cheltenham and Bristol were the only ones in his District where payment was asked at the church door from those worshippers who did not rent sittings,126 an ‘impost’ he considered ‘objectionable’, and on 4 October 1830 he issued an order forbidding the practice,127 on pain of suspension of any priest who ignored his instruction, and he insisted it be read publicly to the
congregation.\textsuperscript{128}

It was while these disputes were in progress that the Jesuit priest at Bristol, William Rowe, intervened, siding with the Benedictines and speaking of Bishop Baines in a manner to which he took exception:

He [Rowe] seems to think it incumbent on him to take part in a dispute which unhappily has taken place between me and some of the monks - and the epithets he has often applied to my motives and conduct are of the strongest and most offensive kind. He lately expressed a sort of surprise that some of the monks did not think of ‘killing the Bishop’.\textsuperscript{129}

Rowe had established good relations with John Birdsall, the Benedictines’ president, when the latter was serving as vicar general in the Western District immediately following Bishop Collingridge’s death, and he clearly regarded the events at Downside and Bath as yet another attempt by a vicar apostolic on the rights and privileges of a religious order.\textsuperscript{130} We may find precise parallels: just as Bishop Gibson of the Northern District had wished to bring the pontifical college of Stonyhurst within his control, so Bishop Baines wanted the Benedictines’ house at Downside for use as his seminary; and just as he denied that the mission at Bath was Benedictine property, had refused faculties for a second Benedictine missioner for the town, and had set up a rival chapel, so also he would not allow the Jesuits’ claim to the premises at Bristol, would not consent to a second Jesuit priest there, and was permitting Edgworth to build another (rival?) chapel in Clifton.

Although Dr William Coombes, the respected priest at Shepton Mallet, had advised Bishop Collingridge that Rowe was ‘eminently suitable’ for the post at Bristol,\textsuperscript{131} and Jeremiah Maher, a leading member of his congregation regarded him as ‘an amiable and talented individual’ who had won the sincere regard and esteem of hundreds of the congregation,\textsuperscript{132} Baines now considered Rowe a threat to his
authority and the situation at Bristol as getting out of control. He saw the dispute between Rowe and his fellow priest, Edgworth, as causing the congregation 'to be divided and to form itself into factions, one for the Bishop, another for the Jesuits',¹³³ and he regarded Rowe's intervention on the side of the Benedictines as insolent meddling in a matter which did not concern him. Baines demanded his immediate removal from Trenchard Street, and with scarcely three days' notice Rowe accordingly left on 23 December 1830. The Jesuits' return to the city had lasted two years and four months.

It was to be another seventeen years before the Society resumed its work at Bristol, during which time two new churches, staffed by secular and Franciscan priests, were opened to meet the needs of the growing Catholic population. With the departure, therefore, of William Rowe in 1830, the city ceased to be a solely Jesuit mission and the post-Reformation Jesuit hegemony at Bristol was at an end.
NOTES TO CHAPTER VII

1. BRL, Samuel Seyer, *A Defence of the Protestant Inhabitants of Bristol who have petitioned Parliament against the Roman Catholic Claims* (Bristol: Gutch, 1812). The Rev. Samuel Seyer was born in Bristol and was a graduate of Corpus Christi, Oxford. He was the author of a Latin grammar, but his best known work is *Memoirs: historical and topographical of Bristol*, 2 vols (Bristol: Gutch, 1821).

2. BRL, *Bristol Poll Book 1812* (Bristol: Mills, 1818 [sic]).


8. *Ibid.*, p.13. cf. ‘... the hardships our soldiers and sailors labour under in being compelled to attend the service of the Established Church‘ (CDA, *Correspondence 1804*, Douglass to Sharrock, 6 March 1804).


11. The other two priests were the Rev. James Parker and the Rev. Joseph Tate who were assisting Plowden that year.


13. BRL, J.E. Stock, *A Letter addressed to the inhabitants of Bristol on the subject of the Petition against the Catholic Claims* (Bristol: Mills, 1813).


18. France declared war on England in February 1793 during the administration of the second William Pitt.
19. CDA, Correspondence 1792-93, Flynn to Walmsley, 23 October 1793.
20. CDA, Correspondence 1794-95, Poole to Walmsley, 8 February 1795.
21. Ibid., Plowden to Walmsley, 10 January 1795.
22. CDA, Trenchard Street Chapel, Roche to Collingridge, 28 January 1829.
24. Ibid., 1 November 1828.
25. CDA, Trenchard Street Chapel, Bristol Catholic Petition to House of Commons, 14 May 1828.
28. BRL, Bristol Mercury, 4 February 1828.
29. BRL, T.F. Jennings, England’s Last Effort (Bristol: Wansbrough, 1829).
30. BRL, Felix Farley’s Bristol Journal, 15 November 1828.
31. BRL, Bristol Mercury, 11 November, 1828.
32. BRL, Felix Farley’s Bristol Journal, 6 September 1828.
33. BRL, Bristol Gazette, 6 November 1834.
34. BRL, Felix Farley’s Bristol Journal, 20 December 1828.
35. Ibid., 25 October 1828.
36. Jennings, op. cit., p.16.
37. Ibid., p.17.
38. Ibid., pp.17, 18.
40. BRL, Catholic Emancipation in Bristol 1829 (Original posters, addresses etc.).
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid.
56. Latimer, *op. cit.*, Ill, 128, gives the number as 25,000.
63. BRL, *Catholic Emancipation in Bristol 1829*.
64. Latimer, *op. cit.*, Ill, 129; *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*, 11 April 1829.
66. See Relief Act, Sections 28, 29. Female religious orders were exempt from these provisions (Section 37).
68. BRL, Bagnell, *Address to his Grace the Duke of Newcastle* (Bristol, 1829).
69. In 1902 the Rev. Charles Stirling unsuccessfully applied for a summons against three Jesuit priests under section 34 of the 1829 Act, which prohibited anyone in the country from becoming a Jesuit after the commencement of the act upon penalty, if convicted, of banishment from the United Kingdom for life. See Basset, op. cit., p.391.

70. ABPSJ, Letters etc. 1805-1818, C. Plowden to Scott, 3 July 1818.

71. 'The Government has an insuperable objection to the establishment of the Society, in any part of England' (CDA, Correspondence 1822, Poynter to Collingridge, 26 October).

72. CDA, Correspondence 1819, C. Plowden to Scott, 4 July; 18 July. See Basset. op. cit., p.379.

73. CDA, Correspondence 1822, Collingridge, Pastoral Letter, 11 February.

74. CDA, Correspondence 1821, Gradwell to Collingridge, 19 May.

75. On 20 February 1820 the Rev. Richard Thompson (Bishop Gibson's vicar general) published a letter from the Rev. Robert Gradwell (the agent in Rome for the vicars apostolic) and sent a copy to Bishop Collingridge. The printed letter, Thompson said, defended Gradwell from 'the foul charges imputed to him' in correspondence sent by Peter Gandolphy to the Orthodox Journal in October 1819. From Thompson's remarks the different alliances can be clearly seen: Thompson, Gradwell and Bishops Poynter, Gibson and Collingridge hostile to or suspicious of the Jesuits; the Orthodox Journal, Gandolphy and Bishop Milner (frequent contributors) sympathetic to them.

76. CDA., Correspondence 1821, Gradwell to Collingridge, 19 May.

77. Ibid., R. Plowden to Collingridge, 9 January.

78. Ibid., Gradwell to Collingridge, 15 September.

79. Ibid.

80. CDA, Trenchard Street Chapel, Edgworth to Collingridge, 18 November 1826.


82. CDA, Trenchard Street Chapel, Collingridge to Brooke, 27 October 1827.

83. Ibid.


85. Edwards, op. cit., p.171.
86. CDA, *Correspondence 1828*, Baines to Collingridge, 15 January.

87. Bishop Collingridge appointed Dr Peter Baines, OSB, as his vicar general in 1822 and as his coadjutor the following year. Baines advised Collingridge that he had the right to recognise the Jesuits in his own District.

88. CDA The documents are also published in Ward, *op. cit.*, pp.309-310.

89. CDA, *Trenchard Street Chapel*, Jerningham to Collingridge, December 1828.

90. In 1831 the Rev. Francis Edgworth, OSF, bought land and planned to build another church in Bristol to accommodate the growing Catholic population, but he experienced financial difficulties and was declared bankrupt. He went to live abroad and died at Antwerp on 16 November 1850.

91. CDA, *Trenchard Street Chapel*, Edgworth to Collingridge, 11 August 1828.

92. Ibid.

93. Ibid.

94. Ibid., Jerningham to Collingridge, 19 August 1828.

95. See Ibid., ‘A Catholic’ to Collingridge, 11 August 1828; Anonymous to Collingridge, 14 August 1828; Anonymous to Collingridge, 8 October 1828; Anonymous to Collingridge, 22 October 1828.

96. Ibid. Evidence of the practice at that time of hearing confessions in the presbytery in the absence of confessionals in many churches.

97. Ibid., M.J. to Collingridge, 30 November 1828.

98. Ibid., Anonymous to Collingridge, 8 October 1828.

99. Ibid., Roche to Collingridge, 28 January 1829.

100. Ibid.

101. Ibid., Edgworth to Collingridge, 24 December 1828.

102. Ibid., Green to Collingridge, 10 February 1829.

103. BRL, *Bristol Mercury*, 17 February 1829.

104. CDA, *Correspondence 1828*, Brooke to Collingridge, 28 October.

105. CDA, *Trenchard Street Chapel*, Rowe to Collingridge, 5 February, 3 February 1829.

106. Ibid., Edgworth to Collingridge, 5 February, 1829.
107. Ibid., Rowe to Birdsall, 14 March 1829.

108. CDA, Correspondence 1828, Brooke to Collingridge, 2 March 1829.

109. CDA, Trenchard Street Chapel, Rowe to Collingridge, 2 March 1829.

110. Ibid., f.204, Baines to Prefect of Propaganda, p.21.

111. Ibid., Rowe to Birdsall, 5 May 1829.

112. CDA, Bishop Baines's Letters, Box 4, Baines to Brindle, 28 March 1829.

113. Ibid., Brooke to Collingridge, 13 February 1829.

114. CDA, Trenchard Street Chapel, Baines to Prefect of Propaganda, f.204, c.1840.

115. Each of the other three Districts had its own seminary: Ushaw (Northern), Oscott (Midland), and New Hall (London).

116. See Abbot Butler, 'The Controversy with Bishop Baines', The Downside Review, 33 (1914), 91-117; and CDA, Bishop Baines's Letters, Box 12-17, Document 14, in which Baines gives his own version of the Downside Controversy.

117. The Downside Review, 33 (1914), 100.

118. CDA, Bishop Baines's Letters, Box 4, Baines to Barber, 7 November 1829.

119. Ibid., Birdsall to Baines, 10 November 1830.

120. CDA, Correspondence 1815-62, Birdsall to Baines, 2 August 1830.

121. Ibid.

122. CDA, Bishop Baines's Letters, Box 12-17, Document 14, p.47.

123. Williams, Bath and Rome, the living link (Bath: St John's, 1963).

124. CDA, Bishop Baines's Letters, Box 12-17, Document 14, p.47.

125. Ibid., p.48.

126. It was the custom at Bath for the monks to charge a shilling on entrance to the chapel to those who did not rent sittings. This amounted to about £100 a year. The rents for the seats averaged from £300 to £400 a year.

127. CDA, Bishop Baines's Letters, Box 12-17, Document 14, p.50. At Cheltenham the Rev. John Birdsall defied Bishop Baines's order. He 'took his station at the door of the chapel with a plate in his hand and intimated that tho' there was no compulsion to pay he should consider any person not paying
as taking the bread out of his mouth' (Ibid., pp. 50, 41).

128. ABPSJ, Old College of St Francis Xavier, f.191, Bishop Baines 'To all the Faithful, Clergy and Laity in the Western District', 4 October 1830.

129. Ibid., f.193, Baines to Brooke, 16 December 1830.

130. That the Jesuits sympathised with the Benedictines in their disputes with Bishop Baines can be seen when, in 1835, the Holy See intervened to impose pacification by means of a Court of Arbitration and the Benedictines nominated, as one of the five arbitrators, the Provincial of the Society of Jesus (The Downside Review 1914, p. 114).

131. CDA, Correspondence 1828, Coombes to Collingridge, 24 August.

132. ABPSJ, Old College of St Francis Xavier, Maher to Baines, c. December 1830.

133. CDA, Trenchard Street Chapel, f.204, Baines to Prefect of Propaganda, p. 21, c. 1840.
On the Quay. The earliest photograph of St Mary's in the Jesuit Archives. The River Frome, which can be clearly seen, was covered over in 1893; the area eventually became Colston Avenue. (Photo:}
Following William Rowe’s expulsion in 1830 the Jesuits returned to the city at the invitation of Bishop Ullathorne in 1847, serving firstly at St Joseph’s Chapel and then, in 1861, at the prominent city-centre church of St Mary-on-the-Quay. This handsome building had been built by the Irvingites in 1840 before being bought for the Catholic community in 1843; it was later bought by the Jesuits in 1871. In the meantime St Joseph’s, which was little more than two hundred yards away, was closed and adapted for use as St Mary’s school. The Jesuits’ new church (now Bristol’s oldest Catholic church) maintained a high profile in the Catholic life of the city and the number of priests serving there was usually three, though on occasions it reached five or even six. It was an enviable staffing level so it was surprising that in July 1996, after the number of priests at the church had for one reason or another fallen to just one, the Society should announce its withdrawal from the city after almost three hundred years. The Pontifical Commission for the Cultural heritage of the Church stated the general problem:

New developments as well as setbacks have occurred in the missionary activity of the Church. A need to restructure many institutions has been felt because of a decrease in vocations and religious practice as well as other adverse conditions which have affected primarily western countries. ¹

In the light of the history which this thesis has explored it is also interesting to note some words of Decree Nineteen of the General Congregation of the Society of Jesus held in Rome from 5 January to 22 March 1995:

The [Jesuit] parish opens itself progressively to ecumenical and interreligious dialogue and reaches out to alienated Christians as well
as to nonbelievers. It grows into a participative church through such means as basic human and ecclesial communities and promotes opportunities for lay participation and leadership. It may be argued that this modern ideal can serve as a commentary on the weaknesses and limitations in the past, or at the very least it shows the Church’s evolving understanding of parish life. As we have seen the reticent and discreet early eighteenth-century Catholic communities and their missioners - distanced from the informers and pursuivants of old, yet ever cautious in an uncertain world - were succeeded in time by a more confident and outspoken Catholic Church, developing in a more tolerant society and protected, albeit in piecemeal fashion, by successive relief measures. But throughout this period the threat to the Established Church (and thus, it was maintained, to the stability of the country) posed by the Jesuits was ever-present in the Protestant imagination. Since penal times, when, for instance, the reward for apprehending a Jesuit was more than twice (occasionally ten times) that for any other priest, the demonizing of the Jesuits remained an essential element in anti-Catholic propaganda, and the terms ‘Jesuit’ and ‘Jesuitism’ used as rebarbative cries whenever Catholicism threatened to advance.

More at ease in the climate of the second half of the century Catholics engaged with their fellows in religious discourse, but some, both lay and clerical, moved only too readily from dialogue to bitter controversy. ‘The demon of discord’ was the expression used by the Jesuit provincial, Charles Brooke, to Bishop Collingridge when he wrote yet again of the problems at Bristol. Dissension plagued the mission for decades. The Jesuits John Brewer, Robert Plowden and other priests, thinking primarily of the laity (‘this troublesome congregation’) described its cause as ‘the contention of power’, a continual struggle which made their urban apostolate ‘a
fearfully laborious mission'. We have noted examples of unbridled language when passions were roused. There were disputatious clerics too - secular at odds with regular, and missioner with bishop; and we have witnessed the parallel encounters of larger groups - Cisalpines with the vicars apostolic, and yet again the vicars apostolic with the religious orders, particularly the Jesuits.

In their clashes with the vicars apostolic, who found it irksome that their jurisdiction did not wholly embrace the religious orders, it would be wrong to think of the Jesuits as being deliberately confrontational. They were anxious to maintain good relationships and repeatedly protested their loyalty. In disputes they preferred reconciliation, and in the name of obedience accepted papal decisions which adversely affected them, such as the bull *Apostolicum Ministerium* in 1753 (which declared that faculties for the administration of the sacraments should be granted by the bishops), the Suppression of the Society in 1773, and the bull *Romanos Pontifices* in 1881 (which made it clear that regulars working in parishes were subject to supervision by the bishop and to his jurisdiction). At a local level (though news of it spread far beyond parochial boundaries) we may instance Robert Plowden's quarrel with his bishop. The Society of Jesus supported him, as long as possible, unreservedly, but in face of his determined defiance of episcopal authority insisted he must admit his error or quit Bristol immediately.

We have seen how, though lay-participation may have been the aim of some, it found no place in Jesuit thinking. Only in minor matters were the Jesuits prepared to share the administration of their churches with the laity; pronouncements by the provincials and comments by the Society's distinguished archivist, Henry Foley, make this clear. (Ironically, the middle and late years of the nineteenth century, the period
that saw the ascendancy of clerical control over the laity, also, as we have noted, saw the authority of the bishops strengthened over the Jesuits and the other religious orders.) Nevertheless it would be wrong to end merely by rehearsing these limitations many of which, as I have tried to show, were the result of the social and ecclesial situation in which the Jesuits found themselves.

It is now most unlikely that the Jesuits will return to Bristol: the needs of the British province are elsewhere, and today Jesuit-served parishes in England, Wales and Scotland number no more than fourteen. Bristol’s Catholic community is now well served by twenty-two churches, some twenty-eight priests, regular and secular, and nineteen schools. But though they have left the city there is, as in other parts of the world where they have served, the unmistakable sign that the Jesuits once passed that way, for written boldly above the sanctuary of their old church, St Mary-on-the-Quay, there remain the familiar words from their Constitutions which give perspective to their lives and tell why they came: *Ad Maiorem Dei Gloriam* - For the Greater Glory of God.
NOTES TO CONCLUSION


3. CDA, *Correspondence 1828*, Brooke to Collingridge, 28 October 1828.

4. CDA, *Trenchard Street Chapel 1787-1845*, Brewer to Walmsley, 30 April 1787.

5. CDA, *Correspondence 1772-88*, Plowden to Sharrock, 6 July 1788.


7. By the constitution *Romanos Pontifices* of Leo XIII, dated 8 May 1881, the bishop could also, if he saw fit, divide parishes which were under the management of regulars, though he had first to consult their superior. But he could then appoint rectors to the new missions without reference to the regulars if he so wished. The regulars could not claim preference in these appointments, nor could they establish new churches, schools or colleges without the permission of the bishop or the Holy See. See CDA, ‘A History of the Bull *Romanos Pontifices*’ by the Hon. and Right Rev. William Clifford, DD, Bishop of Clifton (1857-1893) (Typescript, 47 pages).

8. Today, the Jesuits have retained only those parishes in England, Wales and Scotland where they can maintain a variety of activities e.g. a school or an adult education centre or facilities for psychotherapy etc. (Interview with the British Provincial, the Rev. Dr James Crampsey, SJ, London, 5 August 1997).

9. From the *Constitutions* of the Society of Jesus, *passim.*
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The Provincial of the British Province of the Society of Jesus, the Rev. Dr James Crampsey, 5 August 1997
APPENDIX I

Jesuit Colleges (Districts) and Residences (Smaller Districts) in England and Wales in the Eighteenth Century

(Source: Foley’s Records, VII, pp.xii-xiv)

1. The College of St Ignatius (London District) - Middlesex, Surrey, Kent, Berkshire and Hertfordshire.

2. The College of the Holy Apostles (Suffolk District) - Suffolk, Norfolk, Cambridge and Essex.

3. The College of St Aloysius (Lancashire District) - Lancashire, Cheshire and Westmorland.

4. The College of the Immaculate Conception (Derbyshire District) - Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire and Rutland.

5. The College of St Francis Xavier (South Wales District) - South Wales, Monmouthshire, Herefordshire, Gloucestershire and Somerset.

6. The College of St Thomas of Canterbury (Hampshire District) - Hampshire, Wiltshire, Sussex and Dorset.

7. The College of St Hugh (Lincolnshire District) - Lincolnshire.

8. The College of St Chad (Staffordshire District) - Staffordshire.

9. The Residence of St Michael (Yorkshire District) - Yorkshire.

10. The Residence of St John the Evangelist (Durham District) - Durham, Cumberland and Northumberland.

11. The Residence of St George (Worcestershire District) - Worcestershire and Warwickshire.

12. The Residence of St Mary (Oxfordshire District) - Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire.

13. The Residence of St Stanislaus (Devonshire District) - Devon and Cornwall.

14. The Residence of St Winefrid (North Wales District) - North Wales.
APPENDIX II

The Number of Jesuits in the English Province in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, with special reference to England and the College (District) of St Francis Xavier

(Compiled from Foley’s Records, VII, clxviii)

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Details not available
The Society of Jesus is suppressed
APPENDIX III

Provincials of the English Province of the Society of Jesus, 1623-1830

(Source: Foley, *Records*, VII, lx-lxi)

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<td>John Edisford</td>
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<td>Robert Beeston</td>
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<td>Thomas More</td>
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**1773-1803 The Society is Suppressed**

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1803</td>
<td>Marmaduke Stone</td>
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<td>1817</td>
<td>Charles Plowden</td>
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<tr>
<td>1821</td>
<td>Nicholas Sewell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1826</td>
<td>Charles Brooke</td>
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</table>
APPENDIX IV

Old English Catholic Families Having Strong Connections with the Society of Jesus

(Source: Foley, Records, VII, xviii, xix.)

Anderton (Lancashire)
Arundell (Wiltshire) *
Bedingfeld (Norfolk, Suffolk)
Bruning (Hampshire)
Clifford (Devon) *
Clifton (Lancashire)
Coniers (Yorkshire)
Constable (Yorkshire)
Culcheth (Lancaster)
Darell (Sussex)
Dormer (Sussex, Hampshire)
Gerard (Lancashire, Staffordshire)
Hesketh (Lancashire)
Huddleston (Cambridgeshire)
Jenison (Durham) *
Keynes (Somerset) *
Mainwaring (Lancashire)
Maire (Durham)
Molyneux (Lancashire)
More (Yorkshire)
Mostyn (Flintshire)
Norris (Lancashire)
Petre (Essex) *
Plowden (Shropshire) *
Pole/Pool (Derbyshire)
Poulton (Northamptonshire)
Scarisbrick (Lancashire)
Shelley (Hampshire, Sussex)
Stafford (Staffordshire)
Stanley (Lancashire)
Talbot (Lancashire)
Tichborne (Hampshire)
Walpole (Norfolk)
Weld (Dorset) *

(Those families marked * had particular connections with Bristol or the Western District)
APPENDIX V

Priests at Bristol from 1727 to 1830

After the suppression of the Society of Jesus in 1773, the ex-Jesuits were held to be secular priests. Though claiming at various later dates that their Society had been restored in England, they had to wait until Leo XII's Bull of Restoration, 1 January 1829, before their status as regular clergy was again recognised by all the vicars-apostolic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>Years</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joseph Marshall, SJ</td>
<td>Earle Street</td>
<td>1727-1734</td>
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<tr>
<td>John Busby, SJ</td>
<td>Hook's Mills</td>
<td>c.1733-?1743</td>
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<tr>
<td>John Scudamore, SJ</td>
<td>St James's Back</td>
<td>1740-1778</td>
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Society of Jesus Suppressed, 1773

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>John Fontaine, ex-SJ</td>
<td>St James's Back</td>
<td>1778-1780</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thomas Brewer, ex-SJ</td>
<td>St James's Back</td>
<td>1780-1787</td>
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<tr>
<td>John Brewer, ex-SJ</td>
<td>St James's Back</td>
<td>1787-1787</td>
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<tr>
<td>Robert Plowden, ex-SJ</td>
<td>St James's Back</td>
<td>1787-1790</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>St Joseph's Chapel</td>
<td>1790-1815</td>
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<tr>
<td>John Reeve, ex-SJ</td>
<td>St Joseph's Chapel</td>
<td>1811-1812</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joseph Tate, later SJ</td>
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<td>1812-1822</td>
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Society of Jesus Restored, 1814

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<td>William Rowe, SJ</td>
<td>St Joseph’s Chapel</td>
<td>1828-1830</td>
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Note: Dr George Oliver (Collections, 1857) mentions John Lallart, SJ, as the first priest attached to Bristol, but Jesuit archives show that he was a member of the College of St Ignatius and therefore served the London District.