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Abstract

This thesis examines the life and ministry of William Van Mildert (1765-1836) and his membership of the early nineteenth century High Church group known as the Hackney Phalanx. It considers Van Mildert's experiences before ordination and as deacon, priest and bishop, and their influence on his conception of the nature and mission of the Church of England. It relates the measures initiated by the Phalanx for reforming and extending the work of the Church to its members' understanding of their social and political context, and indicates some features of their shared theological position, particularly their ecclesiology.

Among the undertakings of the Phalanx, the restructuring of the S.P.C.K. and the founding of new Church Societies to promote education and church-building receive particular attention.

Van Mildert's labours as a member of the House of Lords are considered in detail, especially during his Durham episcopate (1826-36), when he was prominent in the unsuccessful opposition to Roman Catholic emancipation and to the Church Temporalities (Ireland) Act of 1833.

The founding of Durham University owed much to Van Mildert. Besides contributing an estimated £10,000, he was closely involved both in developing the plans and in piloting the necessary legislation through Parliament.

Van Mildert's theological writings are more notable for their extensive acquaintance with the work of earlier theologians than for originality: he disliked innovation in matters of religion. Besides sermons and episcopal charges, he published Boyle Lectures taking a systematic view of the rise and progress of Infidelity and (while Oxford Regius Professor of Divinity) Bampton Lectures on the principles of Scripture-interpretation. He also produced a complete edition of the works of Waterland. Cited as a theological authority by the Oxford Movement, he nevertheless held aloof from the Movement's beginnings.

A STUDY OF WILLIAM VAN MILDERT, BISHOP OF
DURHAM. AND THE HIGH CHURCH MOVEMENT OF
THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY

by E.A. Varley

A thesis submitted in qualification for
the degree of Ph. D. in Theology
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in the Department of Theology

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Volume I



'...our champions and teachers have lived in stormy times; political and other influences have acted upon them variously in their day, and have since obstructed a careful consolidation of their judgments.'

J.H. Newman, Lectures on the
Prophetical Office of the Church

'Every great movement, like every great personality, has an inclination to put its neighbours in the shade, and concentrate all attention on itself. It can easily cast its shadow behind itself on the pages of history. A period, which was not worse than many others, is often unjustly criticised through the proximity of a time of uplifting and of heightened life. In a special degree was this the case with the first third of the nineteenth century in the history of the English Church.'

Y. Brilioth, The Anglican Revival

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Introduction

The Hackney Phalanx, a group of High Anglican clergy and laity active in the first half of the nineteenth century, is well known to church historians. The practical achievements and doctrinal position of the Phalanx receive mention in most studies of the relevant period in the history of the Church of England: examples are J.H. Overton, The English Church in the Nineteenth Century (1800-1833) (London, 1894), pp.24-50; S.C. Carpenter, Church and People, 1789-1889 (London, 1933), pp.68-85; Y. Brilioth, The Anglican Revival. Studies in the Oxford Movement (London, 1933), pp.22-28; G.F.A. Best, Temporal Pillars: Queen Anne's Bounty, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners and the Church of England (Cambridge, 1964), pp.61 n.1, 123; B.M.G. Reardon, Religious Thought in the Victorian Age: A Survey from Coleridge to Gore (New York, new edition, 1980), pp.31-7.

Despite this quality of familiarity, the Phalanx has attracted little detailed study. A.B. Webster, Joshua Watson: The Story of a Layman 1771-1855 (London, 1954) gives attention to most of the group's practical achievements as well as to its composition and ambience. A recent doctoral thesis, P.B. Nockles, Continuity and Change in Anglican High Churchmanship in Britain, 1792-1850 (Oxford, 1982), examines some aspects of the theological standpoint adopted by its members.

The present study is concerned less with what the Phalanx did than with its members' reasons for undertaking the programme they did. The defensive stance of their public pronouncements is frequently remarked; yet they were responsible for the launch of important new initiatives in education and church-building, as well as for a number of reforms to the structure and administration of the S.P.C.K. and S.P.G.

Working as far as possible from the surviving correspondence of Phalanx members and their associates, this thesis attempts to reconstruct the social, political and theological context of their activities as they themselves saw it, examining how this context influenced the content and the style of their programme. It identifies some of the general principles unifying the work of the Phalanx, among them a strong individual and collective commitment to education, a concern for more effective stewardship of the Church of England's material resources, and a vision of the Church as both servant and spiritual governor of the whole national community.

The means employed is that of a biographical study of William Van Mildert (1765-1836), son of a Southwark distiller and a core member of the Phalanx. Van Mildert was closely involved in most of the Phalanx's initiatives, and the study of his life offers a fresh perspective on the group's work and underlying concerns.

Van Mildert's theological writings, influential in their day, offer a developed and highly articulate account of the doctrinal position defended by the Phalanx.

His career cut a representative section through the strata of ministry in the Church of his day. He began as an impoverished and relatively friendless curate and ended as Prince Bishop of Durham, the richest see (Canterbury excepted) in the Church of England. In between, he served as parish priest of a variety of cures, as Preacher of Lincoln's Inn, as Regius Professor of Divinity in the University of Oxford, as a Canon of Christ Church, as Dean of St. Paul's, and as Bishop of Llandaff, the poorest see of all. His claim, as Bishop of Durham, to speak for the ordinary clergy thus rested on an unusually broad base of working knowledge.

During his years at Llandaff Van Mildert established himself as an effective member of the House of Lords, winning a reputation greatly enlarged after his translation to Durham in 1826. He was among the principal leaders of episcopal opposition to the political emancipation of Roman Catholics, learning skills of political management which later helped him secure the passing of the 1832 Durham University Bill. The wealth of Durham gave him a scope for public and private charity which he used to the full, grappling with problems familiar to him from his own experience: clerical poverty, lack of clergy accommodation, shortage of church-room. He played a large part in financing the founding of Durham University, although he did not, as is sometimes asserted, donate Durham Castle.

A number of Van Mildert's writings are extant, and Bibliography A lists his printed works. The list, although fuller than that appearing in the British Library Catalogue, is probably not exhaustive: Van Mildert's taste for printing his early sermons suggests that there may well be others unknown to the present writer.

Volume One of this thesis is concerned with Van Mildert's family and early life, his preparation for the Anglican priesthood, his curacies, his experiences in parochial ministry, his involvement in the early initiatives of the Hackney Phalanx, his Boyle and Bampton Lectures, his tenure of the Oxford Regius Professorship of Divinity.

Volume Two examines his episcopates at Llandaff and Durham, giving particular attention to his involvement in the political disturbances which shook the Church of England during the years 1820-33, and in the founding of Durham University.

The thesis owes a great deal to the help of a number of people.

The Master of Van Mildert College, Dr. Paul Kent, in addition to his support and encouragement gave considerable practical help, finding useful references, making introductions and passing on useful information.

The Vice-Master of Van Mildert College, Mr. A.T.S. Bradshaw, very generously allowed me to use the fruits of his own researches into the Van Mildert Papers held at the college, and discussed a number of points with me.

The Librarian of Christ Church and the archivists both of Christ Church and of The Queen's College, Oxford, gave every assistance with consulting the relevant records.

The Grocers' Company responded very helpfully to an enquiry concerning Van Mildert's chaplaincy to the Company.

The librarians of Durham University Library, the Bodleian Library, Cambridge University Library, the British Library and Lambeth Palace Library helped me with a number of difficulties, both face-to-face and by telephone.

The dons of the University of Durham Department of Theology offered their interest, encouragement and tempting nuggets of information; I am particularly grateful to Mr. Gerald Bonner, who helped me learn to appreciate the ambience of Van Mildert's age.

My husband Tom put up with a great deal over the last six years, and his ability to spot useful books in second-hand bookshops is a constant joy.

My son Owen helped me as only the under-fives can, and my daughter Ruth provided me with the maternity leave which enabled this enterprise to reach its conclusion.

To all of these, and to the many others, family and friends, who have assisted in this travail of the mountains, I am profoundly grateful.

Above all, thanks are due to my supervisor, Dr. Sheridan Gilley. Without his patient encouragement, this thesis would never have been completed; without his encyclopaedic knowledge of early nineteenth century High Anglicanism and its literature, there would have been nothing to complete; without his friendship, I should be much the poorer.

Dedication

To DR. SHERIDAN GILLEY
this offspring of his skill and patience
is humbly dedicated.

Chapter One

Juvenilia

Family background; early life; Nobody's Friends;
St. Saviour's School; Merchant Taylors'; Oxford.

Chapter One

In 1891 was published Dean Church's The Oxford Movement, which across fifty years looked back at the eventful period 1833-1845: 'I want....to preserve a contemporary memorial of what seems to me to have been a true and noble effort which passed before my eyes,' Church wrote to Lord Acton, 'a short scene of religious earnestness and aspiration, with all that was in it of self-devotion, affectionateness, and high and refined and varied character, displayed under circumstances which are scarcely intelligible to men of the present time.... For their time and opportunities, the men of the movement, with all their imperfect equipment and their mistakes, still seem to me the salt of their generation.'¹

Church's comments on the men of 1833 may also be applied to the generation of High Churchmen who preceded them: the 'forgotten men' who inspired and led the High Church movement of the early nineteenth century. Their achievement has been largely eclipsed by the far more spectacular proceedings of their successors: posterity has inclined chiefly to remember them as the despised 'Zs', high-and-dry, timid conservatives whose inclination was to defend the status quo at whatever cost in apostolic truth. 'A period, which was not worse than many others. is often unjustly criticised through the proximity of a time of uplifting and of heightened life. In a special degree was this the case with the first third of the nineteenth century in the history of the English Church.'²

Church himself drew attention to the fact that 'besides the

better, and the worse, and the average members' of the early nineteenth century Church party, 'there stood out a number of men of active and original minds, who, starting from the traditions of the party, were in advance of it in thought or knowledge, or in the desire to carry principles into action.'³ Among those he named was the Oxford divine Van Mildert.

William Van Mildert was born more than a century before the publication of Dean Church's book. At the time of his birth, American Independence had yet to be declared; the French Revolution lay some twenty-four years in the future. The Industrial Revolution was in its infancy, and the city of his birth, London, had barely begun the massive expansion in size and population it was to undergo during his lifetime.

His father, Cornelius Van Mildert, was a distiller by trade. A younger son who set up his business with initial capital of only about three hundred pounds, he does not seem to have been particularly successful at distilling: towards the end of his life, some new excise regulations drove him into early retirement. The Van Milderts were never wealthy. Cornelius Ives, William Van Mildert's biographer, who due to the successive unions of the two families was both William's cousin and his nephew, described Cornelius Van Mildert's income as 'only a respectable competency'.⁴

Cornelius' grandfather Daniel Van Mildert emigrated from Amsterdam with his father David, probably between 1662 and 1687. Daniel was 'naturalized in England, probably in the reign of Wm. the Third; tho' the act bears no date.' He lived at Homerton as 'a Gentleman',⁵ retaining close links with the

immigrant Dutch community. Daniel was a pillar of the Dutch Reform Church at Austin Friars, serving it as deacon and on several occasions as spokesman. Cornelius' father Abraham, although he married within the Dutch community in 1709 and was a deacon of Austin Friars in 1811, seems thereafter to have drifted away. The marriage of Cornelius' elder sister Anne to William Ives in 1748 should perhaps be seen as a part of the family's assimilation to the Church of England: the Ives family had held the estate and rectory of Bradden in Northamptonshire since 1677. Cornelius himself was a devout Anglican who apparently enjoyed a local reputation for piety.

Cornelius married Martha Hill, only daughter of one William Hill of Vauxhall. The Hills were moderately prosperous; in 1760 they acquired land in Kent, apparently as a result of moneylending, and William Van Mildert was later to benefit from his uncle Hill's influence with the Grocers' Company.

Cornelius Van Mildert's distillery was in Blackman Street, Southwark. He also rented a house in Newington, and it was here that William was born, on 6th November 1765, his parents' fourth child and second son. He was baptised on 8th December by the Rector of Newington, Dr. Samuel Horsley, a theologian and scientist who was to enjoy a brilliant career as the leading High Church bishop of his day. Horsley was said to have owed his preferment to the impression made on Lord Chancellor Thurlow by his Letters to Priestley, which fell into Thurlow's hands by 'an apparently trivial accident' when Thurlow asked a friend to lend him some reading matter for a solitary journey. 'The minds of Thurlow and of Horsley were of a kindred stamp,

and Horsley's fortunes were made.'⁹ The influence of Horsley on Van Mildert was to be very considerable.

A further profound influence on Van Mildert's childhood came from his father's fringe membership of the High Church circle surrounding William Stevens.

Stevens (1732-1807) was a successful hosier whose time and money were mostly devoted to the Church. Renowned for his generosity (he claimed to be too lazy to refuse people who asked him for money, and is said never to have given away less than half his income to those in need), Stevens was appointed Treasurer of Queen Anne's Bounty in 1782 and held the post until his death, when it passed to his friend and business partner John Paterson.⁴

Besides his generosity, Stevens was a man of great piety, punctilious in his religious observances: he 'regularly attended the service of the Church, twice every Sunday, even to the day of his death' and 'never missed an opportunity of receiving the Holy Sacrament'. 'Even the most minute observances of the church did not escape him; for he never omitted to stand when the praises of God were sung, even though in a congregation, where he might be the solitary instance of this decorous and becoming usage.'¹⁰ Unusually for his time, Stevens was a regular attender at weekly prayers, often going to St. Vedast Foster Lane, where he soon made friends with the curate, the Rev. John Prince. 'In his private devotions Mr. Stevens was regular and constant; and wherever he went to visit in the country, he carried with him his Hebrew Bible and Greek Testament - and uniformly read the lessons for the day, before

he left his chamber, in their original languages.'¹¹

With all his virtues, Stevens was neither prig nor ascetic but 'attractive, lively and sociable - a "clubbable man" after Dr. Johnson's heart'.¹² He never married, but loved to surround himself with close friends and 'good young people'.¹³ His closest friends were his cousin George Horne, President of Magdalen College, Oxford, and William Jones of Nayland.

Horne, ordained priest in 1754, was a man of considerable learning whose integrity and sweet temper became proverbial in Oxford. His best known work, A Commentary on the Psalms, was published in 1776, and won the esteem of John Wesley; he also produced an edition of Andrewes' Preces Privatae, an edition of the Manual for the Sick and 'other devotional tractates and versions'. He was a friend of Dr. Johnson and of Hannah More.

Jones, a Fellow of the Royal Society, was preferred to the benefice of Pluckley, Kent in 1765, and in 1777 became perpetual curate of Nayland in Suffolk. He shared with Stevens a taste for music, especially church music; the psalm tune Nayland, composed by Jones, is still in use today.

Horne's championship of the theological system of John Hutchinson,⁴ involved him in controversy with Kennicott; Horne and Stevens also entered into controversy against Kennicott on the accuracy of the textus receptus, arguing that 'much evil might accrue to the cause of revealed religion, much dishonour be cast on the sacred writings, and much advantage, however unintentionally, be given to infidelity, by an indiscriminate reference to every manuscript copy of the Hebrew Bible, that could be procured.'¹⁵

Another friend with whom Stevens was 'nearly of an age, and had been on terms of the greatest intimacy since their earliest youth' was a chemist, Thomas Calverley. Stevens habitually spent long weekends at Calverley's house, and even after his friend's death in 1797 continued for the rest of his life to pay regular visits to Calverley's wife and son. Calverley was also a friend of the Van Mildert family; his son, also named Thomas, was a contemporary and friend of William's. Although there is no direct evidence, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the Van Milderts may have become acquainted with Stevens through their friendship with the Calverleys.

On the scanty evidence available, William Van Mildert's home was a loving and a stable one. A servant, Ann Williams, commended in Cornelius Van Mildert's will (1797) for her 'long and faithful service', was still with the family when Martha Van Mildert made her will in 1825; she was certainly in their employ by 1795, and probably much earlier.

William grew up surrounded by sisters: Martha, Anna, Catherine (Kitty) and Rachel. His brother Cornelius, his parents' firstborn, died in his eleventh and William's sixth year; other children were born but failed to survive infancy.

There were no Van Mildert cousins, both Van Mildert uncles having died without known issue; but William and his sisters were on good terms with their uncle William Hill, his wife and daughters, and enjoyed a close relationship with their Ives cousins Cornelius, Anne (Nancy) and Eliza.

William will probably, like the Ives children, have been taught to read and write at home before being sent, at the age

of about eight, to school. The 'first school worthy of notice which received him'¹⁷ was St. Saviour's, Southwark, where his arrival will have coincided more or less closely with the appointment, in 1773, of the Rev. John Jennings as headmaster.

St. Saviour's was granted its charter by Queen Elizabeth I in 1562, being intended for not more than one hundred 'male children and youth as well of the poor as of the rich, inhabiting within the....parish'. The school building was on the south side of St. Saviour's Churchyard. It was described in 1819 as 'a spacious school-room, in which thirty boys receive their education in grammatical learning.' The original declared purpose of the school was 'the careful instruction and bringing up of children in the fear, love and knowledge of God, and in good literature and manners': the statutes prescribe that the schoolmaster should be 'well skilled in the Latin tongue, and able to teach grammar, oratory, and poetry, and the Greek; as also the principles of Hebrew.'¹⁸ The curriculum is unlikely to have changed much by 1773.

William appears to have worked well at his lessons without becoming unduly studious. Ives cites 'one who was his associate at this period' for the information that 'on returning home after school hours, he invariably took the first time to prepare his tasks, with a view afterwards to amuse himself the more freely, and that, by the combined quickness and perfectness which he displayed, he innocently deceived both his parents and his master; the former being led to suppose him superficial and inattentive; the latter, to imagine him remarkably diligent, and intent on learning.' In 1776 he won the

school silver medal for merit.¹⁷

The question of a career arose when William was about thirteen. At his own request, his father approached Thomas Calverley to ask if he would take William as an apprentice. Calverley, however, refused, on the ground that he intended to retire from business soon. This ambition of William's seems to have been due principally to his personal regard for Calverley: on learning of the refusal, 'he desired that no other situation of the kind should be sought for, and at once avowed his inclination to pursue his studies, with a view to become a clergyman.'²⁰

His father's reception of this announcement may have been less than rapturous. Clergy stipends were frequently small; to live comfortably required private means, or influential patronage to ensure lucrative preferment, and Cornelius Van Mildert was not in a position to provide his son with either of these. Due, in Ives' opinion, to his weak health, his contemplative habits and his unambitious temperament, Cornelius, 'although he obtained the esteem of all who knew him, as a man highly moral and religious,....never formed an extensive or lucrative connection'.

Horsley, now Rector of Albury and prebendary of St. Paul's as well as Rector of Newington, was consulted about Van Mildert's clerical ambitions, and 'is said to have expressed an unfavourable opinion, or to have remonstrated against "diverting the boy from trade".' Van Mildert, however, persisted, and it was duly decided to remove him from St. Saviour's to a public school to be groomed for Oxford, the most

respectable route to ordination. Westminster and St. Paul's were considered, but neither was prepared to allow Van Mildert to stay away in bad weather, and a childhood attack of smallpox had left him 'liable to inflammation in the eyes, if exposed to cold or rain.' Merchant Taylors' proved more accommodating, and was duly chosen.

Van Mildert entered Merchant Taylors' in 1779, a year after the death of the reforming headmaster James Townley. Among Townley's achievements at the school was the institution of 'repetitions every three to four months of select passages from the Bible in Hebrew and from English, Latin and Greek writers'; Hebrew had formed part of the Merchant Taylors' curriculum from the school's beginnings. The first of these Repetition Days, in 1761, featured two Psalms and extracts from Homer, Theophrastus, Sallust, Horace, Milton and Swift. Townley also added geography, and tried unsuccessfully to add mathematics, to the school curriculum.²¹

Townley's successor, Thomas Green, does not seem to have been a particularly memorable headmaster. He died in 1783 and was replaced by one of the under-masters, Samuel Bishop. Bishop, described by Ives as 'a very estimable man' who 'ranked high as a sound and an elegant scholar', was later to gain the reputation of a stern disciplinarian. His relations with Van Mildert seem to have been cordial.

At Merchant Taylors', Van Mildert enjoyed his greatest success in the composition of 'English exercises, both prose and verse'. The writing of verse became a lifelong hobby. In his last years at school, Van Mildert helped his friend Thomas

Percy, nephew of the Bishop of Dromore, to set up a literary society named The Council of Parnassus. In 1784 the society published a sixty-six-page pamphlet, Poems by A Literary Society, comprehending Original Pieces in the Several Walks of Poetry. This decidedly precious morsel, printed by J. Nichols, retailed for one shilling. It was, its 'Prefatory ADVERTISEMENT' explained, intended to solve the problem of the poet who, in 'an age in which criticism, and a refined taste for POETRY, shine forth in the zenith of Attic perfection', had not yet written enough to fill a book but deemed his work 'superior to the trivial and worthless pieces exhibited in the generality of Magazines'.²²

The Poems, packed with Strephons and Delias, fragrant mossy banks, undigested classical imagery and admirable sentiments, are not among the great lost treasures of literature. Van Mildert's four pieces avoided the worst excesses of his fellows, and show a certain breadth of technique if no breadth of imagination. He had a fondness for mild satire, the mildness of which was certainly deliberate: in the undated essay 'Observations upon the Works of Horace', he commented approvingly upon the Satires that 'whilst they lash in the severest manner the vices and follies of his age, [they] are free from that malice and personal sarcasm, which too frequently is made the principal object in satirical compositions'. Similarly, in a sonnet 'On reading Churchill's Poems', dated June 9th 1785, a strong contrast is drawn between those 'other Bards' who 'to Vice and Folly's View/Bid Satire shine in Humour's mild attire' and the vitriolic satirist,

whose fate it is to see his 'Muse's Trophies fade/Wither'd and shrunk in Slander's baleful shade'.²³ These views Van Mildert put scrupulously into practice. Thus, in the Poems, his satire 'Miss DIANA TOOTHLESS' Petition' presents a marked contrast to 'Methodism, a Satiric Poem' by W.B.P. In the latter, the Methodist preacher goes drunken into the pulpit, fornicates with most of the female members of his flock and steals purses, while the worshippers are graced with such names as Avaro, Iniquo and Libido. In Van Mildert's piece, a little gentle fun is poked at pious old ladies and curates.

Perhaps the fullest statement of the role assigned by Van Mildert to satire is that given in his lengthy 'Ode to Genius', the opening work of the pamphlet: of satirists, he explains

'Tis theirs, with satire's potent dart,
Pointed with humour's keenest steel,
Through falsehood's shield to pierce the heart
And curb mock virtue's crabbed zeal.'

The blackening of an opponent's character was one possible application which he sedulously avoided; neither does mere entertainment seem to have appealed to him much. Of his surviving verses, few are without evident serious intent. Among the lighter-hearted are the two birthday poems written to his cousin Eliza Ives in 1782 and 1783.

Despite his literary successes Van Mildert was not awarded one of the school's thirty-seven appropriated fellowships at St. John's College, Oxford, although his friend Thomas Percy was more fortunate. Ives lays the blame for this on Van Mildert's having entered the school at the comparatively late

age of fourteen: 'No moral fault, nor any defect of learning, was imputed to him; but he was too far advanced in years to wait for an opportunity of going off on a fellowship to St. John's....which, both by himself and his friends was much desired.'²⁴

Disappointed of this ambition, Van Mildert was on 21st February 1784 entered as a commoner at The Queen's College. His reasons for choosing this college, most of whose ties were with Cumberland, are not known. Thomas Calverley, with whom he remained close, went to Oriel.

From the relevant entries in the Queen's College Batells Book, Van Mildert seems to have avoided extravagance without living in undue austerity. Regular termly payments of half a guinea to the hairdresser - not a college fixed charge - suggest a certain concern for his appearance but, unlike some of his contemporaries, he never ran up bills to tailor, shoemaker, breeches maker, hatter, sempstress, shoecleaner or even laundress. His chamber, at £1.15s per term, was neither the cheapest nor the most expensive of the rooms available to commoners. Payments of something over four pounds every Hilary term for coal, together with occasional items to carpenter and painter, suggest some regard for comfort. His only recorded piece of self-indulgence over the three years was the reckless expenditure, in Michaelmas term 1785, of £1.9s.10d on fruit and cream.²⁵

Of his academic progress at Oxford, no records exist. In the unreformed Oxford of the late eighteenth century, university examinations had become a series of formal

set-pieces, with 'arguments' often being handed down from generation to generation of undergraduates on slips of paper. Teaching was college-based: John James, who went up to Queen's in 1778, attended Logic lectures by his tutor Thomas Nicolson for three years, although not much impressed by them. 'The Doctor construes a few chapters [of Sanderson's Logicae Artis Compendium], which the next lecture we repeat to him. He does not explain a single term, and were I only to rely on the instruction I receive from him, I should find myself very deficient.'²⁶ James, an able and determined student who in 1782 won the Chancellor's Prize for Latin verse, did not rely on the lectures, but pursued a formidable course of study laid out for him partly by his schoolmaster father, partly by Dr. Nicolson, partly by his own inclination. His letters refer to works by Lucian, Terence, Aristophanes, Anacreon, Xenophon, Sappho, Homer, Cicero, Livy, Plato, Horace, Virgil and Herodotus, as well as the New Testament in Greek and, in his fourth year, parts of the Old Testament in Hebrew. Besides the Logic lectures, Nicolson also lectured on Ethics, but an attempt to institute a mathematics class failed for lack of support.

Van Mildert's tutor was Septimus Collinson, who in 1793 became Provost of Queen's. Van Mildert's opinion of his lecturing ability is not on record, but Ives notes that he always spoke of his former tutor 'in terms of affectionate esteem'. That the two men found each other congenial is further suggested by a letter from Collinson to Van Mildert in 1793. The latter had written to remove his name from the College books; Collinson's reply, strikingly warm and charming,

concluded 'your very affectionate friend'.²⁷ Collinson has been described as one 'who belonged in spirit to the eighteenth century,....enjoying his comforts and preaching good sermons in a Cumberland accent so strong as to be scarcely comprehensible.'²⁸ He also 'gained some reputation by his letters on the Thirty-nine Articles, which were however never published,' and in 1798 became ^{Lady} Margaret Professor of Divinity.²⁹

John James noted that, as a tutor, Collinson used to recommend his pupils to 'obtain some knowledge of [chemistry] previous to the study of natural philosophy'. James himself attended the chemistry classes, which he found to consist in large part of 'clergymen, or men intended for the Church'.³⁰ Van Mildert probably took Collinson's advice, for he went up to Oxford with a professed interest in natural history, especially the study of fossils. This may have been due to the influence of Horsley, who 'thought that every clergyman had an obligation to possess a knowledge of science and to encourage its development in the universities. Horsley himself was a mathematician, a physicist, an astronomer....'³¹ Jones of Nayland had a strong interest in fossils, for the good Hutchinsonian reason that they provided evidence of the Flood: Hutchinson himself and many of his followers were 'diligent collectors of fossil bodies'.³²

Fossilology was in any case a respectable and gentlemanly pursuit, with the advantage of requiring no mathematical skills, although not yet as popular as it was to become in the early nineteenth century. The great geological controversies

lay in the future: Neptunists and Vulcanists had yet to clash, the date of the world's creation remained in 4004 B.C. where the calculations of Archbishop James Ussher had set it, the historicity and universality of Noah's flood had few serious challengers. Van Mildert pursued his hobby in civilised fashion, taking with him to Oxford letters of introduction from a distinguished naturalist, and purchasing his specimens from a labourer at Headington Quarry who hawked them round the colleges.

The letters of introduction were from Emanuel Mendes Da Costa, a Portuguese-Jewish conchologist and erstwhile Clerk of the Royal Society, whose chequered career had included being refused permission, in 1774, to read a course of lectures on fossilology to the University of Oxford. They brought Van Mildert the acquaintance of Dr. John Parsons, Christ Church professor of Anatomy; of 'Mr. Hornsby'; and perhaps also of Thomas Wenman, Keeper of the Archives and ardent naturalist, although when Van Mildert wrote to Da Costa in June 1784 he had been unable to find Wenman at the latter's rooms in All Souls, despite his claims to have called there frequently. None of these acquaintances can have been of long duration. Hornsby, who combined the Savilian chair in Astronomy with the chair in experimental philosophy, the Sedleian chair in natural philosophy and the posts of Radcliffe Observer and Radcliffe Librarian, was a busy man: 'He has lately been involved in a course of lectures upon Experimental Philosophy,' Van Mildert wrote to Da Costa, 'which takes up a considerable part of his time; his vacant hours are frequently employed in making

Astronomical Observations so that it is rather a difficult matter to meet with him disengaged.'³³ The elusive Wenman's chief interest was botany, a pursuit that cost him his life, for in April 1796 he was drowned in the Cherwell while collecting specimens. Parsons received Van Mildert kindly, warning him that 'the study of Natural History is very little pursued in Oxford', but promising to introduce him to 'two ingenious Gentlemen of Pembroke Coll: who are assiduous in the study of Fossils'. Parsons died of fever the following April.

The intrepid fossilologist took 'two or three walks to Shotover, and Heddington [sic] Quarry', but even the weather was against him: he 'had the ill luck to be caught in a violent Rain, which entirely prevented me from making any researches.' Da Costa did not prolong the correspondence.

Van Mildert may have attended Hornsby's lectures on natural philosophy. Although University lectures did not form an important part of Oxford teaching at this time, and some professors lectured rarely or never, courses were available to those who could and would pay to attend them. The usual terms, according to John James, were two guineas for the first course, one for the second and 'for ever after gratis'.³⁴

Students at Queen's were offered the chance of learning French: there was 'one master, Chamberlain, very clever, and a native of France.'³⁵ Since Van Mildert was able to read French when he wrote his first Boyle Lectures in 1802, and since modern languages do not appear to have been taught at Merchant Taylors' at this period, he may well have studied under M. Chamberlain.

Even for intending ordinands, there seems at this time to have been no formal requirement to study divinity. Outwardly at least, all Oxford studies took place in a religious matrix. The great majority of dons were in Anglican orders, daily attendance at College chapel was compulsory (John James, himself a candidate for the ministry, thought his tutor's insistence on this point excessive), Holy Communion was 'regularly if infrequently celebrated' in college chapels, and each student had to subscribe the Thirty-nine Articles not only, as at Cambridge, on presenting himself for his degree, but also at matriculation.³⁶ An Oxford or Cambridge degree was a recognised qualification for Anglican orders, and a good proportion of undergraduates were afterwards ordained. Not until 1800, however, was it enacted that 'at every examination, on every occasion, the Elements of Religion, and the Doctrinal Articles...must form a part',³⁷ as part of the religious reaction to the French Revolution. In Van Mildert's undergraduate days, some study of the New Testament in Greek was evidently customary, and the more highly motivated students tackled the Old Testament in Hebrew. Ives gives anonymous testimony that Van Mildert himself 'was of regular and studious habits, and from the first applied himself more particularly to theology'.³⁸ It is likely that the foundations of the encyclopaedic knowledge of Anglican theology for which Van Mildert was later to become famous were laid during his undergraduate days. Perhaps he followed some approximation to the plan recommended by Daniel Waterland (1683-1740), a Cambridge divine whose works he was later to edit, in Advice to

a Young Student: Waterland recommended undergraduates to devote their Sundays and holydays to the study of divinity, and intending ordinands to give up their evenings as well, warning that 'it will require a long time to be but competently skilled in divinity.' He advocated the use of English sermons: 'They are the easiest, plainest, and most entertaining books of divinity....[and] contain as much and as good divinity as any other discourses whatever.' To gain the full benefit, the student should read and make an abridgement of two sermons on every Sunday and holyday, besides 'the reading the best English writers, such as Temple, Collier, Spectator, and other writings of Addison, and other masters of thought and style'. To round off his theological education, the student should read church history, doctrinal controversies, Pearson on the Creed and Burnet on the Articles.³⁷ Van Mildert's published works bear evidence of a theological diet very much as prescribed by Waterland.

The examinations, which John James regarded as annoying interruptions to his studies, had three main components. The first, disputationes in parviso, had two phases: 'doing generals', which consisted of two hour disputations during which three questions in grammar or logic were considered, and in which each student had to participate twice, and in the third year 'doing juraments', which meant going into the Schools each term to propose one syllogism juramenti gratia. The second, answering under bachelor, also consisted of disputations, usually in logic though they might cover grammar, rhetoric, ethics or politics. The rite was performed in Lent,

each undergraduate again being required to participate twice; a B.A. acted as moderator, thereby fulfilling an M.A. requirement.

Finally came the viva voce Examination. In theory, the subjects covered were grammar, rhetoric, logic, ethics, geometry, Greek classics and Latin, and the examiners were three Regent Masters nominated in rotation by the Senior Proctor. The examination was rarely searching in scope or in depth, and it was quite usual for a candidate to choose his own examiners. The examiners, for their part, seem to have taken their responsibilities no more seriously than tradition demanded. John James fixed his examination for a Monday, then found it postponed to the Friday 'for want of Masters'. As to the intellectual rigour of the proceedings, one of James' fellow examinees claimed not to have 'looked in any Latin or Greek book since his matriculation; and as for the sciences, he was hardly acquainted with their names.' He passed. So did James, who found little difficulty in answering the examiners' questions and construing 'a few lines in my classics', and dismissed the whole proceeding as 'trifling and farcical'.⁴⁰ In 1787, Van Mildert also passed.

If this atrophied parody of mediaeval scholarship too often produced, as John James complained, only 'bad Latin, bad arguments, and bad philosophy',⁴¹ failing to take cognizance of many areas of contemporary learning, it is possible to exaggerate the intellectual degeneracy of late eighteenth century Oxford. For the student willing and able to work on his own, without the inducement of rigorous examinations ahead, it

was possible to follow a challenging course of study in classics and classical philosophy, or in divinity. Unreformed Oxford could still produce a classicist of the calibre of Thomas Gaisford, or a scholar as familiar with the byways of divinity as Van Mildert himself. It was not only the disciplines on which Oxford was notoriously weak, such as mathematics, which however lacked a quality of inspiration. The stifling of Van Mildert's embryonic interest in geology was symptomatic of a wider disinclination to be excited by the new and unexplored. At this period the University of Oxford neither was, nor aspired to be, a focus of intellectual advance. At a time when both the quality and the quantity of British scientific research showed a marked rise, 'the functions that the universities might have performed were undertaken in scientific societies and private institutes which grew up in the last quarter of the century',⁴² notably in London, Edinburgh and Birmingham. In philosophy also, new movements were afoot which found little sympathy in Oxford. The values of the University were those of conformity, not criticism; fidelity, not originality, was the desired academic virtue. 'If, in fact, both universities were less torpid in the eighteenth century than their critics then and later would have us believe, it is yet plain that their spiritual and intellectual temper became perceptibly lower. They had been left high and dry by the more important philosophical and intellectual developments of their age.'⁴³

Closely linked with this conformity to academic tradition was an increasing attachment to the political status quo. 'In

the last years of the eighteenth century the University of Oxford, which for two generations had dabbled in opposition or even treason, came to regard itself as a bastion of the protestant order in church and state, a pillar of the establishment in the broadest sense.⁴⁴ The last acknowledged Pretender died in April 1788, but his cause had already been dead in Oxford for some time. Horace Walpole observed that 'even the University of Oxford had almost ceased to toast the Pretender by 1771',⁴⁵ and on George III's highly successful visit in August 1786, the University's new loyalty was made abundantly plain. If the Divine Right of Kings had been laid quietly aside, yet its transformation product, the Divine Utility of the Constitution, was to bind Oxford tightly to the established order in Church and State through the years of political turbulence ahead.

If Oxford men no longer drank the health of the Pretender, they do not seem to have lacked other excuses for drinking. Large amounts of alcohol were consumed both by students and by dons.⁴⁶ The University's reputation as a place of dissipation and extravagance may have contributed to the decline in numbers of the undergraduate population during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Freshman admissions, although somewhat higher after 1750, remained low, with an annual average of 254 in the years 1780-89. Another contributory factor, the exclusion from Oxford of all those unwilling to sign the Thirty-nine Articles at matriculation, became increasingly important with the spread of Dissent. A proposal in 1772 to abolish the subscription requirement was roundly defeated by

the House of Commons, but the topic was to remain a hardy Parliamentary perennial. Subscription was generally popular in Oxford, and proposals in 1787 and 1789 to repeal the Test and Corporation Acts, which extended the principle of subscription to government, caused an upsurge of opposition and general High Church sentiment in the University.⁴⁷

The numerical decline was particularly noticeable at opposite ends of the social spectrum. On the one hand, the more powerful and influential aristocratic families were increasingly inclined to make other arrangements for their sons' education, sending them to travel abroad with a tutor or to study at Continental universities. By 1785-6 only five per cent of matriculants were the sons of peers, baronets or knights. This fall was compensated by a rise in the proportion of students drawn from the lesser landed gentry and those more prosperous businessmen who claimed the title of Esquire. The aristocratic pattern of leaving Oxford without taking a degree continued to be followed by some forty-eight per cent of matriculants - not all, presumably, of their own volition. At the same time, the number of undergraduates from lower-class homes fell sharply as the cost of University study rose and the scholarships originally intended for poor students were increasingly appropriated by the wealthy and influential. The main motive for study at Oxford by members of the lower social groups was entry into the Church; but the prevalence of pluralism meant a diminished number of opportunities, and moreover 'the lower classes were being squeezed out of jobs in the church, as the latter became a more socially respectable

and economically attractive profession....The proportion of B.A.'s drawn from the ranks of esquires and above rose during the eighteenth century from five percent to thirty percent, the great majority of whom were aiming at a career in the church.⁴⁸ Thus the Oxford of Van Mildert's undergraduate days was a society of growing social and vocational homogeneity, where as the son of a 'gentleman' he was one of the poorer members of the largest social grouping and as an embryo clergyman he shared the aspirations of most of his fellows. Under the circumstances, it was not to be expected that his experiences there would teach him to question the rightness either of the social hierarchy to which he belonged, or of the ecclesiastical hierarchy to which he hoped to belong.

Van Mildert seems to have enjoyed his three years. 'He was fond of the elegancies of social life, and had a taste for polite accomplishments. Besides music, drawing and poetry were his recreations; in both of which he seems to have been respectable as an amateur.' Besides Calverley, he made a number of friends, 'among them Mr., afterwards Serjeant, Pell, and other young men of considerable talent and literary promise.'⁴⁹ His uncle William Hill sent him at least one food hamper; the Ives family entertained him at Bradden, and he was no doubt present when in July 1787 his sister Anna married his cousin Cornelius Ives.

Van Mildert took his B.A. on 23rd November 1787, and with the end of the Michaelmas Term ended his first period of residence at Oxford University. On 17th July 1790, having completed the necessary formalities,⁵⁰ he received his M.A. His

formal education for the priesthood of the Church of England was now complete.

1. R.W. [Church], The Oxford Movement: Twelve Years 1833-1845, London (Macmillan, 1892), p.vi
2. Y. Brilioth. The Anglican Revival, London (Longmans, 1925), p.6
3. Church, p.11
4. C. [Ives], Sermons on several Occasions, and Charges, by William Van Mildert, D.D. Late Bishop of Durham. To which is prefixed a memoir of the Author. Oxford (J.H. Parker, 1838), vol.1, p.4
5. Genealogical notes in Van Mildert Papers: Durham University Library Add. Ms. 974.207V2. Probably in Van Mildert's own hand. The note on Daniel Van Mildert includes the information that his 'fine' collection of natural curiosities passed to the British Museum.
6. R.A. [Cochrane], William Van Mildert, bishop of Durham 1826-1836. Durham (M. Litt. thesis. 1950), pp.2-12. documents the history of the early Van Milderts exhaustively.
7. The Times, 23rd November 1820, p.2 column 4. In Cochrane p.138
8. E. [Churton], Memoir of Joshua Watson, Oxford (Parker, 1861), vol.2, p.264. Thurlow was a Cambridge contemporary of Horsley, as also was Beilby Porteus.
9. G.F.A. Best, [Temporal Pillars]; Queen Anne's Bounty, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, and the Church of England, Cambridge (C.U.P., 1964), p.134
10. (J.A. [Park]), Memoirs of William Stevens, Esq., London (1812), p.54
11. Ibid., p.59
12. Temporal Pillars, p.122
13. Park, p.117
14. See below, pp.97 ff.
15. Park, p.115
16. Ives, vol.1, p.6
17. Ibid., p.5
18. Londina Illustrata. Graphic And Historic Memorials of Monasteries, Churches, Chapels, Schools, Charitable Foundations, Palaces, Halls, Courts, Processions, Places of Early Amusement And Modern & Present Theatres, In the Cities

and Suburbs of London & Westminster. London (Published.... by Robt. Wilkinson. 1819), pp.58-9, 62-3

19. Ives. vol.1. p.5

20. Ibid. p.6

21. (W.C. Farr. ed.). Merchant Taylors' School: Its Origins, History, and Present Surroundings. Oxford (Blackwell, 1929). pp.55-9

22. Poems by A Literary Society, comprehending Original Pieces in the Several Walks of Poetry. London (1784), pp.v-viii. This oeuvre was reviewed by the Rev. John Duncombe in The Gentleman's Magazine vol. LIV, January 1874, p. 43-4. Duncombe thought Van Mildert's imitation of Swift 'not without merit'. but wished 'the satire called Methodism had been omitted'.

23. W. Van Mildert. manuscript essay 'Observations Upon the Works of Horace', also sundry pieces of verse. in Durham University Library Add. Ms. 274.207V21P8

24. Ives. vol.1. p.7

25. The Queen's College Batells Book 1779-91. pp.135-8

26. [Letters] of Radcliffe and James. ed. M. Evans. Oxford (Oxford Historical Society, 1888), p.50

27. Ives. vol.1. pp.9-10

28. R.H. Hodgkin, Six Centuries of an Oxford College, Oxford (Blackwell, 1969), pp.165-6

29. J.R. Magrath, The Queen's College, Oxford (Clarendon, 1921), p.145. As Provost Collinson encouraged the study of chemistry: he also showed himself a moderate reformer. regulating the servants' perquisites, attempting to curb 'spendthrift anticipation of revenue' and insisting that examinations be used in the selection of scholars.

30. Letters. pp.177-8.

31. C.C.[Gillispie], Genesis and Geology, New York (1959), pp.31-2. Like Jones of Nayland, Horsley was a Fellow of the Royal Society.

32. W. Jones, The Works of the Right Reverend George Horne, D.D., Late Lord Bishop of Norwich: to which are prefixed Memoirs of his Life, Studies, and Writings, second edition. London (F.C. & J. Rivington, 1818), pp.xxiii.11

33. Van Mildert to E. Mendes Da Costa, June 10th 1784. Durham University Library Ms. Add. 274.207V1

34. Letters: James mentions lectures in chemistry, mathematics, botany. Arabic, Hebrew, 'and, I believe, Law', as well as free lectures by the Regius Professor of Divinity, supposedly restricted to graduates and those of three years' standing. The chemistry lectures, by Dr. Martin Wall, on occasion included 'a spice of divinity...if observations on some names of chemical substances in the Bible may be so called.' [p.171] Sir William Scott, afterwards Lord Stowell, who from 1773-85 was Professor of Ancient History, also lectured.
35. Ibid., pp. 50-1
36. V.H.H. [Green], Religion at Oxford and Cambridge, London (SCM Press, 1964), p.179
37. W.R. [Ward], Victorian Oxford, London (Cass, 1965), p.13
38. Ives, vol.1, p.7
39. D. Waterland, Advice to a Young Student, in W. Van Mildert (ed.) The Works of the Rev. Daniel Waterland..., 10 vols., Oxford (1823), vol.VI
40. Letters, pp.160-1
41. Ibid., p.143
42. Gillispie, pp.20-1
43. Green, p.175
44. Ward, p.xiii
45. Quoted in C.E. Mallet, A History of the University of Oxford, London (Methuen, 1927), vol.3, p.142
46. As late as 1811, the Queen's S.C.R. drank in one year '1470 bottles of port, 171 of sherry and 48 of madeira in addition to considerable quantities of gin, punch and rum.' V.H.H. [Green, A History] of Oxford University, London (Batsford, 1974), footnote, p.115
47. Ward, p.2. On the Test and Corporation Acts, see below, p.317 ff.
48. L. Stone, ed., The University in Society, Princeton (Princeton University Press, 1974), vol.1, pp.38-9. See also Green, A History, p.109
49. Ives, vol.1, pp.8-9. See also the verses Van Mildert wrote to his sisters on his return to Oxford, February 16th 1786. Durham University Library Add. Ms. 274.207V2108
50. These were, firstly, Determination, held on Ash Wednesday, when prayers and contio in St. Mary's were followed by the

procession of the Dean of each college at the head of his determining bachelors to the Schools, where a four-hour disputation was held. 'He reads a copy of verses, proposes arguments upon three questions to every determiner of his house: which questions are to be defended against him by a determined or senior bachelor, who responds for the determiner and is therefore called his Aristotle ("Aristoteles pro me respondebit").' Since the Vice-Chancellor was usually present as well as the deans, the Ash Wednesday exercises had a certain dignity; the two further disputations which each determiner was required to hold during the ensuing Lent, lacking so august an audience, were frequently arranged for the mutual convenience of the determining bachelor and of an undergraduate 'answering under bachelor' for his B.A.

Next came Disputationes apud Augustinienses, which had declined from the original contest of logic between Oxford scholars and Augustinian monks to a two-hour ritual attended only by the candidate and the moderating master of the Schools; disputationes quodlibeticae, when the candidate was required to answer a regent master upon three questions and any other disputant on any subject at all, and which had come to be regarded as a joke; and sex solennes lectiones, three in natural and three in moral philosophy. These 'were intended to stimulate original invention and research, but had so degenerated that they were held pro forma in an empty school, and had long since obtained the title of Wall Lectures.' The process was completed by binæ declamationes, to be delivered from memory before the proctor on an approved topic, 'as an exercise in polite learning and elegant composition', and finally an oral examination, similar to that for B.A. but with the nominal syllabus widened to include 'geometry, natural philosophy, astronomy, metaphysics, and history (including geography and chronology), greek classics, and hebrew, and latin conversation yet more perfect.'

C. Wordsworth, Scholae Academicae; some account of the Studies at the English Universities in the 18th Century, Cambridge (Deighton Bell, 1877), pp.219-21. For the undergraduate examination requirements, see pp.216-7

Chapter Two

The Little Dutch Curate

Ordination; Van Mildert's first sermon; Romney
Marsh; Witham; courtship and marriage; the
French Revolution; journey to the Low Countries.

Chapter Two

Van Mildert was ordained deacon on May 18th 1788 by the Bishop of Oxford, Edward Smallwell, then newly translated from St. David's. First, he had to satisfy the Bishop's Examining Chaplain, Houstonne Radcliffe of Brasenose,¹ of his suitability. In the examination of candidates for Holy Orders, success was not entirely automatic: when John James was examined in June 1783, one of his fellow ordinands was ignominiously plucked, because in 'transcribing from an old bit of dirty paper which, not being able in some places to understand himself, he got a neighbour to explain to him', he 'shewed up an affair that neither the examiner nor himself could construe'. James' examination reflected less concern for a good knowledge of Scripture than for good latinity: having written his theme on 'An humana ratio sit per se sufficiens ad salutem consequendam? NEG.', he was required only to 'read a verse or two in the Greek Testament for form's sake', and to be an agreeable companion at dinner.²

The content of Van Mildert's examination for orders is not known, but he seems to have created a favourable impression on Houstonne Radcliffe. Two years later, Radcliffe's recommendation was to help Van Mildert to the curacy of Witham.

At his ordination, Van Mildert was licensed as curate of Sherborne and Lewknor, two villages near Watlington. He preached his first sermon on June 1st 1788 at Pyrton in Oxfordshire, upon a text highly regarded by William Stevens: Ecclesiastes 1.14, 'I have seen all the works that are done

under the sun, & behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit'. Van Mildert's treatment of his text seems to have been prompted by consideration of Eccles.1.16-2.11, and his argument stayed close to Ecclesiastes throughout, to the concluding quotation of Eccles.12.13-14. The major part of the sermon was devoted to an analysis, clearly stamped with the mark of the Schools, of the proposition that Wisdom, Pleasure, Power and Riches can lead to human happiness. His style was portentous and formal: 'General assertions can....only be deduced from particular proofs. It will be necessary therefore in illustrating the text to lay down some concise & regular plan in order to shew the vanity of human affairs....'

The standpoint for Van Mildert's lofty denunciation of earthly pleasures was that of Ecclesiastes, showing no hint of specifically Christian asceticism. A certain academic austerity appeared in the claim that '[sensory] gratifications fall far short of those of our intellectual faculties'. His main criteria were hedonistic: Wisdom, Pleasure, Power and Riches were good insofar as they conduced to human happiness, but 'vain' insofar as their finitude made them incomplete. Wisdom, which he treated as synonymous with Knowledge, brought with it a painfully insatiable thirst for more knowledge, and an exaggerated awareness of this world's blemishes; Pleasure led to boredom; Power was flawed by insecurity; while, having dismissed the miser's delight in the mere possession of Riches as likewise subject to insecurity, Van Mildert inferred that wealth's only function was in procuring other means to happiness. He could then produce the rabbit from his hat: 'But

we have already seen that neither Wisdom, Pleasure, nor Power, have that in them which can constitute real happiness. If, then, Riches have no other claim than that which arises from the purchase of these, their pretensions to felicity must of course fall to the ground.'

The triumph of Christianity, he concluded, was that it offered, to those who had made correct use of their earthly blessings, the eternal enjoyment of transcendent equivalents: true and complete knowledge (1 Cor.2.9), 'joys without ceasing, & pleasures at God's right hand for evermore' (Ps.16.11), unassailable heavenly riches (Mt.6.20) and, for the virtuous possessors of earthly power, 'a crown of glory that fadeth not away' (1 Pet.5.4).

These prizes were to be won by obedience, principally to the Decalogue. Chastity gained no mention: the sermon did not concern itself with sins of the flesh, the pursuers of earthly pleasure being eirenically described as 'the gay & chearful'. Poverty Van Mildert did not regard as a virtue: 'everyone must allow that Riches are in themselves things totally indifferent, only productive of good or evil according to the uses to which they are applied'. Christian love and charity were also passed over in silence; the sermon barely registered the existence of those not possessed of Wisdom, Power, Pleasure or Riches, beyond the suggestion that 'the poor man might comfort himself by observing that the rich are overwhelmed with thought & anxiety, & sinking under the fatigue of the duties of their situation'. This argument, however unconvincing, was a favourite with representatives of the Establishment extolling

to the lower orders the virtues of resignation, but can hardly be said to reflect a burning concern for the unfortunate.⁴

Here was the inoffensive gospel par excellence, Christianity with all the tactless bits missed out. Van Mildert was proud of his opus. He preached it from five pulpits that year, and twice in the year following. In July 1788 he took it to Horsley's church at Newington. He does not, however, mention preaching it at either Sherborne or Lewknor, which suggests that his connection with his first parishes may have been something of a formality. Ives says that he served the curacy from Oxford, adding that 'this his first engagement was of short continuance, and no particulars respecting it are known.'⁵

At some time during 1789, Van Mildert moved to the diocese of Canterbury to undertake a rather more substantial commitment, becoming curate of Newchurch and Bonnington, two villages on Romney Marsh. Ashford, the town where Van Mildert found lodgings, housed a number of clergy from the surrounding area, 'and thus contained within itself a society, of a kind more intellectual and satisfactory than is commonly to be found in provincial places'.⁶ The fact that Van Mildert had preached his Ecclesiastes sermon at Ashford in November 1788 suggests that he already had friends among the clerical colony.

Van Mildert preached his sermon at Newchurch and Bilsington on August 9th 1789. On December 10th he was ordained priest by Beilby Porteus, Bishop of London, acting on letters dimissory from Archbishop Moore of Canterbury. Before the end of the year he had conducted one wedding at Newchurch

and two at Bonnington.■

Van Mildert's new curacy had its drawbacks. Bonnington was some six miles from Ashford, Newchurch nearer ten. The roads from Ashford to the two villages were small, unimportant and not very direct. Travel upon them can have been neither fast nor comfortable, especially in bad weather. Besides this, the marshes had a deserved reputation for unhealthiness: malaria was still prevalent in Romney Marsh well into the nineteenth century.→ Health was a favourite preoccupation of the time, a rule to which Van Mildert was certainly no exception. For most of his life he was dogged by 'maladies....mostly of an irritable cast, and he seems to have inherited from his parents a highly sensitive constitution, both of mind and body.' This dubious legacy included a 'tendency to haemorrhage of the lungs, or throat, [which] repeatedly shewed itself, in a degree to excite considerable alarm'.¹⁰ Van Mildert rapidly decided to seek a more salubrious post.

Besides these practical considerations, Van Mildert found the curacy lacking in challenge. He 'was unable....to hold sufficient intercourse with his parishioners, for the purpose of enlightening their minds, and stimulating his own to exertion, in the way of ministerial duty.'¹¹ Part of his anxiety to move on was due to a fear of mental and spiritual atrophy.

Van Mildert's quest was soon successful. Houstonne Radcliffe, now Rector of Gillingham and Bobbing, also in Kent, provided him with a letter of recommendation. A second testimonial came from a friend of Cornelius Van Mildert's,

Robert Finch. Finch was a former pupil of Merchant Taylors' School, a Doctor of Divinity, Rector of St. John the Evangelist, Westminster, and a prebendary of Westminster, with a reputation as a preacher and divine. From 1775 until 1802 he was treasurer of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.¹² With the help of these references, Van Mildert secured the curacy of Witham, Essex, in 1790.

Geographically, Witham was a great improvement on Newchurch and Bonnington. Its situation, near Colchester, was not only healthier but also more convenient: it was about thirty-eight miles from London along the good London-Ipswich turnpike road.

The Rector of Witham, Andrew Downes, was grandson of a Bishop of Derry and son of a Bishop of Raphoe. He resided in his parish, but due to his weak constitution the bulk of the parochial duties fell to his curate. During his five years at Witham, Van Mildert took sixty-two of the seventy-five weddings 'and probably a similar proportion of the two hundred and fifteen Baptisms, and of the two hundred and four burials.'¹³ For health reasons Downes never preached, so Van Mildert delivered two sermons every Sunday - although his new parishioners seem to have been spared the Ecclesiastes sermon.

It was evidently at this time that Van Mildert compiled a sizeable collection of original sermons, each hand-written and sewn into a simple pamphlet, numbered, and annotated with the dates and places at which he preached it. According to Ives, Van Mildert began his duties at Witham by producing two original sermons each week; but Downes soon 'advised him to abate somewhat of so arduous an undertaking; thinking it

likely, not so much to improve, as to exhaust his mind, and prevent him from advancing in theological knowledge.'¹⁴ Van Mildert adopted this advice, supplementing his original compositions, to judge by his own later advice to young clergymen, with material abridged or compiled 'from the most approved authors, especially from some of our older divines' and selections from 'the Homilies of our church', divested of 'quaintness of style, and of any peculiarities adapted only to the times in which they were written'.¹⁵ By the time he left Witham, Van Mildert's collection of manuscript sermons numbered at least two hundred.¹⁶

During these years, Van Mildert worked hard at divesting his own style of quaintnesses. All his manuscript works of this period show signs of one or, frequently, several editorial processes, aimed principally at improving the balance of sentences or refining shades of meaning. Pedantries such as 'Let us see whether this comes to pass', 'Let us then enquire into this matter', were ruthlessly struck from his first sermon and did not appear in his subsequent writings. Although he continued to use the first person plural for hortatory passages, he developed a preference for passive rather than active constructions. His style became more spare, and his use of stock phrases less frequent. For the rest of his life he remained critical of all that he wrote, making stylistic corrections even to his private correspondence.

Theologically, Van Mildert's early sermons show many of the characteristics of his later work. He showed no interest in the broader areas of social concern; his understanding of Christian

morality was negatively conceived, individualistic and rooted in eschatology. For Van Mildert, the Kingdom belonged in an emphatically discontinuous 'next world', and on this other world the Christian must keep his attention firmly fixed. To gain salvation, he must cultivate a detached acceptance of his worldly status and an indifference to the vicissitudes of earthly fortune. His principal concern must be to avoid actions which might weigh against him at the Last Judgement. Christian virtue Van Mildert presented chiefly in terms of the Decalogue, or even of 'natural law', supplemented by a strong insistence on the duty of gratitude to the Creator, to be expressed in private prayer and public worship.

Van Mildert's Ascension Day sermon, preached for the first time in May 1792, offers an early use of the main apologetic plank of his Boyle Lectures. Taking the absolute historical accuracy of the Gospels and Acts as axiomatic, Van Mildert claimed the miracles performed by Jesus and his disciples, and the miraculous events surrounding the Saviour's life, as an unchallengeable divine endorsement of the whole Christian revelation. It followed that belief in Jesus' divine origins and credentials, and acceptance of all his teachings, were binding not only upon Christians but also upon all believers in the One God, deists included.

This argument had a long pedigree. By making it his own, Van Mildert placed himself squarely in the succession of divines such as Leslie and Waterland, who had fought the Trinitarian corner in the long christological struggles of the past hundred years. The argument rested upon a watertight

understanding of the inerrancy of the Bible. The proponents of this doctrine were to find themselves placed increasingly on the defensive as the nineteenth century advanced, and in his maturity Van Mildert gave more careful attention to the nature of the inspiration of Scripture.

Interestingly, while at Witham Van Mildert was involved in the running, and perhaps also in the setting-up, of a Sunday school. The Sunday Schools movement gained momentum in the mid-eighties from the advocacy of Thomas Stock, master of the Cathedral School and Rector of St. John's, Gloucester, and of Robert Raikes, editor of the Gloucester Journal. The movement had an ecumenical flavour: the principal co-ordinating body, the Sunday School Union, formed in 1785, boasted a 'mixed committee of Churchmen and Dissenters'.¹⁷ The complexion of the Witham Sunday school is not known. It was run by a Mr. Kynaston, whose company Van Mildert evidently enjoyed.¹⁸

Among the notabilities of Witham was the home of General Douglas, 'a good, substantial country house'. The General himself was long dead when Van Mildert first came to Witham; he died in Dublin in 1778 after a long and moderately successful career in the army and in politics. Although his father, William Douglas of Fingland, had in his youth been a noted Jacobite,¹⁹ the son was immune to the charms of the House of Stewart: his commission as Captain in the 4th Dragoons, dated May 1745, was signed by Cumberland. In 1756 he was made aide-de-camp to King George II, 'with whom he was in great favour'. His military career climaxed in 1761, with his promotion to Lieutenant-General. In the sphere of politics, he

was elected M.P. for Dumfries Burghs in 1754 and remained in Parliament until 1774, changing his seat to Dumfriesshire in 1761. Both seats were probably owed to his kinship with Charles, third Duke of Queensberry.²⁰

By 1790, the General's family was farflung. His wife was dead. Of their five surviving sons, Archibald, the eldest, had married an Irish wife and settled in Dublin. He was cut off with a shilling in his father's will, but there seem to have been no hard feelings, and his family were on good terms with the rest of the Douglasses. William, the second son, went to India in 1773 with the East India Company and made himself a good career, being raised to Judge in 1790. Alexander was a lieutenant in the Royal Navy. Promoted to Commander in 1790 and Captain in 1791, he died at Plymouth in 1793. Philip, whose father's will had made provision for 'the college education he must have', was Joint Tutor of Bene't [Corpus Christi] College, Cambridge. Robert, the youngest, was the same age as Van Mildert. He too was a curate, having abandoned a career in the army to go into the Church. He had inherited the house at Witham under his father's will, but his curacy was at Knightwick in Worcestershire.

Although Philip and Robert were probably frequent visitors, the only Douglasses permanently resident at Witham in 1790 were their three sisters, all of whom were unmarried. The twins, Katherine and Elizabeth, were thirty-six; Jane, thirty, was five years Van Mildert's senior. By the autumn of 1791, the Witham grapevine was busy with the news that the curate was courting Jane Douglas. In September Van Mildert wrote to tell

Philip Douglas that Jane had accepted his proposal, and to ask his consent to their marriage.

Philip's reply breathed tactful caution. He had, he claimed, found the news 'entirely unexpected.' He was aware of the rumours but, 'not having received the least hint, either from you, or my sister, that there was any foundation for them,' had paid no attention. He protested his attachment to Van Mildert as a person: 'I had long regretted the want of a companion at Witham, &....since your arrival there I have experienced not only the pleasure of an acquaintance but the recourse of a valuable friend. I know indeed of no person to whose Manners, Disposition & Principles I could less object than to your own, or to whose connection with our family in case of a Competency I could give my consent with less reluctance or Hesitation.' The problem was purely financial. Philip did not feel that an income of less than £400 per annum could properly 'be called a Competency', and did not see how Van Mildert could find even this minimum. His private means were small; he would need to find preferment in the Church. 'Your views of obtaining this by the Interest & Exertions of your friends, - however justly founded,- you must still allow to be precarious'. Jane had little money of her own and 'no prospect of increasing it either from near or distant Relations'.²¹

Philip Douglas organised his own life as he had recommended. He did not marry until 1797, choosing as his wife a niece and ward of the Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity. By this time his future was satisfactorily assured: on 1st January

1795 he became Master of Bene't, and in 1796 he was presented to a living in Lincolnshire. Van Mildert and Jane, however, seem to have become engaged almost at once, despite Philip's warning of the unwisdom of entering into 'an Engagement which may never be fulfilled'. Their engagement lasted for the rest of Van Mildert's stay in Witham: they were not so rash as to marry while he remained a curate. During this time he made at least one journey to Scotland, perhaps to make the acquaintance of some of Jane's Scottish relations. He also received at least one invitation to preach at Bene't.

If Van Mildert's wooing of Jane dominated his private life at this time, public life was dominated by events in France. As early as 1791 George Horne, now Bishop of Norwich, recognised that the 'rising storm' threatened to 'tear us away from our comforts, our possessions, our liberties, and our lives'.²² The French Revolution gave to the imaginations of a whole generation a shock from which, for better or worse, they never recovered. In 1838 Bishop Maltby of Durham, who was not a conservative churchman, still blamed the 'ignorance, bigotry and uncharitableness' of contemporary opinion on the continuing influence of 'the war of the French Revolution', adding 'That unhappily turned every thing into bitterness; in Religion as well as Politics.'²³

The impact of the Reign of Terror was considerable even in circles sympathetic to revolutionary principles. Robert Hall, the eminent Baptist preacher, had 'in his youth, defended the French Revolution, and rebuked a preacher who advised all ministers to have nothing to do with politics'. He 'lived to be

of another opinion and to speak of the vanity and ferocity which spring from sceptical infidelity.'²⁴

Van Mildert had never sympathised with revolutionary principles. His childhood was spent in the neighbourhood of St. George's Fields, a favourite point of assembly for protest mobs, which on 2nd June 1780 saw the mass parade of the 'Gordon Rioters'.²⁵ The American Revolutionary War broke out shortly before his tenth birthday: his sympathies were entirely with men like Jonathan Boucher, a Cumberland man who went to America at the age of sixteen, later entering the ministry and becoming George Washington's tutor. Expelled for his opposition to the American Revolution, Boucher preached a thunderous parting sermon on Nehemiah 6.10-11, taking a pair of pistols into the pulpit with him. On his return to England he was discreetly provided for by William Stevens and his friends until, in 1785, he became Vicar of Epsom.²⁶

Van Mildert's youthful attitude to revolutionary theories is illustrated by his poem 'Janus Clusus', written shortly after the end of the American War in 1783. The subject of the poem was the reception by the London mob of the news of peace. It was probably inspired by a riot in Fleet Street on October 6th, the night before the ceremonial proclamation of Peace and the opening of the gates at Temple Bar: 'several persons were very ill treated by a numerous mob, who put the constables at defiance....the Deputy City Marshal, in endeavouring to keep the peace was grossly abused, and knocked down, with two of his men.'²⁷ The poem has a vividness rare in Van Mildert's verses, suggesting that he felt strongly about the topic.

'There tost in the air see a dead Dog approaches,
Here crowded and falling advance broken Coaches;
Broken Shins, broken Arms, shattered Heads, bloody Nose,
And Battles the Nation to Peace shall compose....
Hail, Liberty, Liberty! hail, happy Souls,
Whom Justice, nor Law, nor Good Order controuls!'²⁶

To Van Mildert, Revolution was already a synonym for lawless violence.

On the doctrine of Equality, he agreed entirely with George Horne: 'A natural equality amongst mankind is contrary to the actual condition of human nature. Women are not equal to their husbands, children are not equal to their parents, the foolish are not equal to the wise, the idle and dissolute are not equal to the sober and industrious. They cannot have equal rights, because the rights of man in society, so long as we admit that there is a divine law, and a moral government of the world, are the rights of duty, and virtue, and religion; and no other rights can subsist in a state of civilisation. The society which admits the rights of violence and rapine, is felo de se.'²⁷ Van Mildert expressed the same views in a 'Ballad' entitled 'Rights of Men', disputing the teachings of 'wise Thomas Paine'.³⁰ If Van Mildert and his associates lacked sympathy for radical ideas, they would however have repudiated with indignation the allegation that they were deaf to the cry of Liberty. Charles Daubeny(1745-1827), Archdeacon of Salisbury and an ally of William Stevens, warned that 'it is a matter of importance, to prevent people from running away with words; because there is a certain unaccountable magick in the sound of

some words....' Liberty was a rallying-word for the High Church group too, but to them it was grounded in an entirely different system of thought, based on the secure enjoyment of property and the defence of the law-abiding against the lawless. Their reply to the accusation that their kind of liberty was only of value to the well-to-do was to point out that revolution as a means to reform inflicts its worst sufferings on the poor, who lack the resources to cushion themselves against hardship.

The French Revolution confirmed their worst suspicions about the nature and ultimate aims of political radicalism. When American churchmen suffered by their Revolution, this was generally through maintaining their allegiance to King George. It was left to the French Revolution to elevate anti-clericalism into a principle and a policy. The Times greeted the order of September 1789 for the surrender of church plate to be melted down for coinage as 'a bold and wise regulation [which would]....hurt no individual', adding that 'as the nation has for centuries been the slave of the Church, it is but fair that the latter should now repay the obligation'.³² To the High Church group the order was spoliation and sacrilege: Roman Catholic the French National Church might be, but for the State to assume rights of ownership over sacred things in this way threatened principles which should be unassailable. In the controversy over the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, imposed by the French Constituent Assembly in November 1790, the sympathies of Stevens and his circle were entirely with the clerical non-jurors.

The group was active in ministering to the exiled French clergy. Horsley, now Bishop of St. David's, wrote commending them to the charity of his own clergy: the French priests had, he explained, been driven into exile through the imposition of 'conditions with which conscientious men could not comply'. They were the victims of 'inveterate and avowed enemies of God, and of his Christ: who, having succeeded in their nefarious project, to destroy their national church, under the pretence of making room for an universal toleration, do in fact persecute every thing but atheism'.³³

In this matter the High Church group, whose spiritual kinship with the English non-jurors and ties with the dispossessed Episcopal Church of Scotland informed their fellow-feeling, showed a more liberal sentiment than many. Daubeny, taking a collection in his parish, was shocked to find 'an almost general disinclination among dissenters from the Church to contribute. At length one, more open than the rest, furnished the following reason for it; by telling me that "Christ never died for those priests; and therefore he had no feeling for them, or concern about them." Another, who had learnt his Christianity in the same school, upon my application to him on the same occasion, immediately exclaimed, "What, Sir, to a Roman? give to a Roman! one that lives in such errors; if I had ten thousand guineas, I would not bestow a single mite upon him!"'³⁴

The group's response to the French restatement of the relationship between national church and national government went beyond giving thought to the welfare of the casualties.

They were also impelled to clarify their own convictions about that relationship. They denied in strong terms that the Church was in any sense a department of government. 'Making establishment necessary to the existence of the Church, as many are apt to do, is a grievous mistake,' wrote William Stevens to Bishop Skinner of Aberdeen, who, as Primus of the disestablished Episcopal Church of Scotland, undoubtedly agreed; 'but to be sure it is a convenient appendage; and there is no harm in Kings being nursing fathers, if they will nurse it properly.'³⁵ Horsley, in his Charge to the St. David's clergy, denounced the kind of 'high-churchman...who claims for the hierarchy, upon pretence of a right inherent in the sacred office, all those powers, honours, and emoluments, which they enjoy under an establishment; which are held indeed by no other tenure than at the will of the prince or by the law of the land'. If the State had some right to determine the circumstances of the Church's existence, it had however neither right nor power over her essential being. The sacred ministry was to this group of High Churchmen self-existent, independent of any 'rights and honours, with which the priesthood is adorned by the piety of the civil magistrate', and 'he who thinks of God's ministers as the mere servants of the state, is out of the church - severed from it by a kind of self-excommunication.'³⁶

Here in germ was the conception of the nature of the Church to be developed more fully by the Oxford Movement in response to the 'National Apostasy' of 1833.

If adorning the priesthood with rights and honours was the

mark of piety in the civil authorities, stripping away its rights and honours was a proof of impiety. The group watched events in France with horrified fascination, fearing that worse was still to come.

The events of 1793-4 surpassed all prediction. Much of the horror directly affected the Church. Besides the exile of non-jurors ('of 160 bishops, seven became jurors, only four being diocesans', and the number of non-juring priests who left France was between thirty and forty thousand), there were killings, imprisonings and many lesser forms of harassment for Christians both ordained and lay. In the prison massacres of 2nd September 1792 there died three bishops and two hundred and twenty priests. There were mass drownings, guillotining, shootings in the pulpit. Eight hundred and fifty priests were imprisoned in three old slaving ships at Roquefort; only two hundred and seventy-four survived. The total number of priests executed may have been as high as five thousand. The constitutional clergy were not safe: any priest could be deported on the mere demand of six citizens and, more conspicuous than their refractory brethren, they provided a ready source of victims for the de-Christianizers. Large numbers were made to prove their civisme by renouncing their priestly vocation, often in public. The laity were not safe: remaining an open Christian was proof of political unsoundness, and men and women were put to death for concealing non-juring priests. Churches were looted, desecrated, smashed up, some entirely demolished. 'Bells, grilles, and railings were dragged away to be melted down for armaments....Church buildings were

taken over for military use as ration stores, prisons, saltpetre factories.' From Paris came accounts of sacrilegious orgies, with 'naked dancers and drunken children in the ruined churches and among the gravestones'.³⁷ Attempts were made to promote a non-Christian state religion, begotten on Deism by neo-classicist nature worship: 'Robespierre's new civic religion of the Supreme Being, complete with ceremonies, which attempted to counteract the atheists and carry out the precepts of the divine Jean-Jacques.'³⁸ The conviction that revolutionary notions posed an authentic threat, not merely to the privileges of an Established Church but to Christianity itself, acquired a sudden plausibility.

Groping for a framework within which to understand such events, the minds of many seized upon the language of apocalyptic. 'What an eventful period is this!' The Times announced in 1792, excited by its own accounts of murders, assassinations and church-robbery across the Channel. 'What an awful perspective!....The phial of wrath is poured out from the hands of the avenging Angel, and one of the greatest WOES mentioned in the REVELATIONS is on the point of being accomplished. A solemn lesson this to surrounding nations! read to them with all the solemnity of a voice from Heaven!'³⁹ 'Predictions of the Antichrist rising from the chaos of revolution were plentiful in the 1790's, and the emergence of the apparently invincible Napoleon certainly strengthened the argument...the approaching end of a century was itself an apocalyptic stimulant that took on added significance in such times.'⁴⁰ Even so level-headed a prelate as Beilby Porteus, who

refused point blank 'to pronounce, whether we are now approaching (as some think) to the Millennium, or to the Day of Judgment, or to any other great and tremendous and universal change predicted in the sacred writings', was convinced in 1794 'that the present unexampled state of the Christian world is a loud and powerful call upon all men, but upon US above all men, to....prepare ourselves, as well as those committed to our care, for every thing that may befall us, be it ever so novel, ever so calamitous.'⁴¹

Apocalyptic speculation both nourished and was nourished by the explosion of British missionary activity, beginning with the foundation of the Baptist Missionary Society in 1793, which blossomed as French seapower and colonial dominion were trimmed by the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars.⁴² Jones of Nayland took an interest in the eschatologically significant question of the conversion of the Jews, and hoped that the reception in 1799 of three Jewish converts into the Church of England might be 'the first fruits of an harvest not far off'.⁴³

Theologians of varying weight and ecclesiastical allegiance produced an enormous volume of writings on eschatological themes. Horsley's apocalyptic speculations, elaborated by G.S. Faber, Vicar of Stockton upon Tees, achieved an international reputation.⁴⁴ It was into this already overheated atmosphere that the independent works of Barruel and Robison⁴⁵ burst in 1797.

As the Revolutionary Wars opened in continental Europe, Van Mildert made his first and only excursion outside the British Isles. In July and August 1792 he toured the Low Countries with

five companions. His travel diary has survived, giving an account of the greater part of his travels, from July 15th to August 4th. It is not known exactly when he returned to England, but he was probably back at Witham by August 15th, and certainly by August 19th.⁴⁶

The diary gives the bare minimum of information about Van Mildert's travelling companions. They were all English; only one of the party spoke German; and none of them was sufficiently keen to join Van Mildert when, the Sunday they were in Brussels, he rose at seven and went to hear a sermon in Flemish (of which he 'understood not a single syllable') at St. Gudule's church. Since the party set out from Ashford, it is likely that at least some of them were friends made during his previous curacy.

Van Mildert was interested in his Dutch ancestry. Among his papers are genealogical notes on the Van Mildert and Wittenoom branches of his family. When he visited Antwerp, the discovery of some pieces of sculpture by 'a person of the name of Jean Van Mildert' prompted him to make enquiries, and he noted with disappointment that no Van Milderts still lived in Antwerp. He was, however, at pains to stress his own Englishness, and an incomplete poem on the flyleaf of the diary declares that his travels only strengthened his 'Patriot Passion' for England.

Dutch reality disappointed him. He was not impressed by the Dutch roads ('such miserable roads can hardly be conceived by an Englishman') nor by 'the homely simplicity of a Dutch Kirke', found the Dutch custom of keeping one's hat on in church shocking, and was 'miserably annoyed...by the effluvia

from the canals, which is more offensive than I could have believed. The "bonus odor lucri", seems the only gratification which a Dutchman attends to.' Dutch gardens inspired him with particular scorn.⁴⁷

Even the opposite sex failed on the whole to please him. In Breda he disparaged the 'broad flat faces' of the women, while allowing that 'we observed some who were very pleasing, & even beautiful.' In Amsterdam, jaundiced perhaps by the smelly canals, he was still more censorious: 'It is impossible to imagine a less attractive set of beings than the women of Amsterdam.'

Much of the trip was devoted to the pursuit of the fine arts. In each town they visited, the six companions toured the notable buildings, visited cabinets of paintings, examined the churches and passed judgement on the general standard of architecture and the layout of the town. In Brussels they spent an evening at 'the Comedie Francoise....a handsome theatre, nearly as large as Covent Garden', but were not impressed by the performance. In Amsterdam the German Comedie pleased them rather better, despite the language barrier: 'The acting was excellent, & the piece very lively & spirited, possessing much of that broad farcical humour which is in general so acceptable to the taste of John Bull.' In Haerlem they visited 'the finest organ in Europe....The variety of stops, the exquisite delicacy of some, & the astonishing grandeur of others, from the softest notes of a german flute, to the full concert of drums & trumpets, struck us all with admiration....'

Broader aspects of culture were not neglected. In Leyden

they visited the university, disappointed to find that, 'as it was now the vacation, the professors as well as students were absent'. They were shown around by a 'menial servant', and saw 'a very compleat philosophical apparatus, a fine anatomical collection, & a numerous assortment of specimens of natural history; most of which, except the shells, are valuable & in good preservation'. They 'wandered about' the botanical garden, but to their mortification could find nobody to explain it to them. In the Hague they visited the Stadtholder's cabinet of natural history, which Van Mildert thought excellent, especially the stuffed birds; but he complained that 'the apartments in which it is contained are small & confined, & the persons who shew the collection hurry the company so rapidly thro' the rooms, that it is difficult even to glance at half the rarities they contain'.

In Amsterdam the travellers visited the principal hospital, the 'Spin-house, or house of industry for vagrants, thieves & prostitutes' and the 'Rasp House, or Bridewell'. Van Mildert's strictures on the Rasp House - 'a miserably close confinement, exhibiting nothing but filth and wretchedness' - suggest an outrage more aesthetic than moral; his comments on the people encountered during the journey reflect an interest in the quaint or picturesque aspects of their appearance and behaviour rather than in the quality of their lives.

Van Mildert seems to have undertaken the diary chiefly as an exercise in literary elegance and polite culture; a half-finished anecdote about a cannon-ball was sternly crossed out, evidently as insufficiently edifying. The great political

events of the day receive one brief mention: Van Mildert and his companions shared the boat from Dover to Ostend with 'three or four French Aristocrats who having been stripped of their property in France, were proceeding to Flanders to join the emigrant party.'

After his return from the Low Countries, Van Mildert resumed his duties as curate of Witham. The five years he spent in Essex held pleasant memories: 'He always considered his character to have then mainly received the impulse and direction, which qualified him for his subsequent elevation; and never ceased to speak of the friends of his youth in that place, with sentiments of gratitude and esteem.'⁴⁶ He felt particularly indebted to Andrew Downes, and 'in the later years of his life thought himself happy if he could shew any kindness to the members of his family.'⁴⁷

Early in 1795, the Ives family living of Bradden in Northamptonshire fell vacant, and Van Mildert's cousin/brother-in-law Cornelius Ives offered to present him as the next incumbent.

The decision to accept the Rectory of Bradden was not an easy one. It fell well short of what Philip Douglas regarded as a minimum basis for marriage. Van Mildert's biographer, himself Rector of Bradden, explained frankly that its value 'was then considerably under two hundred pounds a year, and there was need to build on it almost a new house, at an expense of nearly a thousand pounds'.⁴⁷ Nevertheless Van Mildert accepted. He saw 'only an uncertain prospect of any thing more eligible being offered to him', and on 24th April 1795 he was formally

instituted as Rector of Bradden. How 'the little Dutch curate' persuaded Philip Douglas to view this very minor stroke of good fortune as sufficient to ensure his sister's future happiness is not on record, but before the end of the year he and Jane Douglas were married.

Van Mildert's cousin-in-law Thomas Grant, who had married Nancy Ives in 1776, helped him to put the building work on the parsonage in hand. Grant acted as executor to the previous incumbent, and living in nearby Towcester was well placed to supervise the work. Towards the end of April, Van Mildert wrote to Grant that 'circumstances have arisen which render it absolutely necessary that I should make another journey to Scotland, & probably I may be delayed two or three months before I can with propriety return.'⁵⁰ Whether Van Mildert in fact made the journey referred to is not known.

Van Mildert hoped to keep the cost of building operations to about £400, but if Ives is correct the final total was more than twice as great. Perhaps his preference for high ceilings and for a slate rather than a tiled roof betrayed him into added expense; perhaps his notions of the likely cost were unrealistic. The building work dragged on throughout his tenure of Bradden, and was still uncompleted when he left; it is possible that he never lived in his fine new parsonage. The revenue from his short incumbency did little to defray the cost of the works, and the only real beneficiary from his efforts was Cornelius Ives as patron of the living.

Among the anxieties of 1795 was a deep personal grief: Van Mildert's youngest sister Rachel, then aged twenty-seven,

became gravely ill. 'Poor Rachel is much as before,' he wrote to Grant on April 21st, 'only weaker and weaker.' She died later that year; Cornelius Van Mildert's will commends his servant Ann Williams for her 'constant careful attendance on my late daughter Rachael'.⁵¹

The parsonage being unusable, Van Mildert rented a 'temporary habitation' in Bradden, and on December 22nd 1795 he and Jane were married.⁵² The following July came an unexpected development. The important London living of St. Mary-le-Bow, Cheapside, fell vacant. It was the turn of the Grocers' Company to present. Uncle William Hill exerted his influence, the only other candidate withdrew before the election, and Van Mildert was unanimously elected Rector of St. Mary-le-Bow, St. Pancras Soper Lane and Allhallows Honey Lane.⁵³

1. The name is variously spelled. The version used is that of Alumni Oxonienses 1715-1886. vol.III. p.1169. Radcliffe, made a prebendary of Ely in 1787. became Archdeacon of Canterbury in 1820.
2. M. Evans (ed.). Letters of Radcliffe and James. Oxford (Oxford Historical Society. 1888). pp.233-4
3. Van Mildert's first sermon. Van Mildert Papers
4. The griefs of the poorest never cut Van Mildert very deeply; perhaps his own qualitatively different experience of 'poverty' insulated him against understanding their full plight. His comments to his nephew Henry Douglas on the cholera epidemic of 1831-2 in Sunderland reflect the callousness of incomprehension: 'its fatal effect is almost exclusively among the most squalid of the Poor. whose wants I fear, have hitherto been much neglected. But....I trust that good may result from it. in improved habits of cleanliness and sobriety among the lower orders.' Van Mildert to Henry Douglas, November 26th 1831. In P.W.L. [Adams]. A History of the Douglas family of Morton in Nithsdale (Dumfriesshire) and Fingland (Kirkcudbrightshire) & their descendants, Bedford (The Sidney Press, 1921), pp.552-3.
5. Ives, vol.1. p.10
6. Ibid., pp.10-11
7. Bilsington is a third village, about two miles from Newchurch and a little less from Bonnington.
8. Cochrane, p.42
9. L. Clarkson, Death, Disease and Famine in Pre-industrial England. Dublin (Gill & Macmillan, 1975), p.50
10. Ives, vol.1. p.154
11. Ibid., p.11
12. W.O.B.[Allen and] E. [McClure], Two Hundred Years: the History of The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1698-1898, London (S.P.C.K., 1898), p.132
13. Cochrane, p.44
14. Ives. vol.1. p.12
15. Ibid., pp.12-13
16. Durham University Library Add. Ms. 274.207V21S4 has Nos. 119 and 200 in the series. No. 119 is dated May 20th 1792. no. 200 is dated May 18th 1794.

17. Allen and McClure. p.151. See also W.R. Ward, [Religion and Society] in England 1790-1850, New York (Schocken Books, 1973), pp.12,15. High Churchmen could also enthuse about the Sunday schools: George Horne hoped that 'the late practice of gathering such multitudes of children together in our Sunday schools, and accustoming them early to the service of the church' might produce a generation more inclined to zeal in devotions than his own. G. [Horne], A Charge intended to have been delivered to the Clergy of Norwich, at the Primary Visitation of George, Lord Bishop of that Diocese, Norwich (Yarington and Bacon, 1791), pp.39-40

18. Ives, vol.1, pp.11-12

19. William Douglas of Fingland 'followed the fortunes of King James II and the Royalist Regiment abroad, rising to be Captain'. He was a suitor of Anne Laurie of Maxwellton and wrote the song 'Annie Laurie' for her; but she married Alexander Fergusson of Craigdarroch, a Covenanter and supporter of King William. Adams, pp.362,334-5

20. Ibid., pp.361-2

21. Philip Douglas to Van Mildert, 27th September 1791. In Adams, pp.449-50

22. Horne, p.34

23. Maltby to Earl Grey, November 5th 1838. Papers of 2nd Earl Grey

24. J. [Hunt], Religious Thought in England in the Nineteenth Century, London (Gibbins, 1896), p.85. Similarly the Whig Sir James Mackintosh, who in 1791 had written Vindiciae Gallicae as a refutation of Burke's Reflections on the French Revolution, in 1800 'entirely recanted its sentiments, declaring that he now "abhorred, abjured, and for ever renounced the French Revolution, with all its sanguinary history, its abominable principles, and for ever execrable leaders, and hoped to be able to wipe off the disgrace of having been once betrayed into an approbation of that conspiracy against God and man."'

J.H. Overton and F. Relton, The English Church from the Accession of George I to the end of the Eighteenth Century, London (Macmillan, 1906), p.220

25. J. Stevenson, Popular Disturbances in England 1700-1870, New York (Longman, 1979), pp.67-8, 71-2, 77-8, 171

26. Churton, vol.1, p.20. The hereditary patron of Epsom, who gave the living to Boucher, was the Revd. Dr. John Parkhurst, the celebrated Hebrew and Greek lexicographer and another member of William Stevens' circle. Boucher befriended John James (see above, p.7) and married James' widow after the young man's tragically early death.

27. London Chronicle, vol.LIV, no. 4204 (Wednesday October 8th 1783). For the proclamation of Peace, see vol.LIV no. 4207 (October 11th 1783).
28. W. Van Mildert, 'Janus Clusus', dated October 10th 1783. Durham University Library Add. Ms. 274.207V2108.
29. Horne, p.28
30. W. Van Mildert, 'Rights of Men, a new ballad'. Durham University Library Add. Ms. 274.207V2108.
31. C. [Daubeny], A Guide to the Church, in Several Discourses, London (T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1798), p.120
32. The Times, 3rd October 1789, p.2, column 2.
33. Horsley to the St. David's clergy, May 1793. Letter reprinted in (D. Jones), Tracts published under the signature of the Welch Freeholder, London (ca. 1794), tract vi, pp.v-x. The quotation is from p.vi.
34. Daubeny, pp.86-7
35. W. Stevens to J. Skinner, May 1st 1797. In (J.A. Park), Memoirs of William Stevens, Esq., London (1812), p.138.
36. The Charges of Samuel Horsley, late Lord Bishop of St. Asaph; delivered at his several Visitations of the Dioceses of St. David's, Rochester, and St. Asaph, Dundee (1813), pp.40-1, 43. From Horsley's 1790 St. David's Primary Visitation Charge.
37. J. McManners, The French Revolution and the Church, London (S.P.C.K., 1969), chapters 10-12.
38. E.J. Hobsbawm, The Age of Revolution 1789-1848, London (Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1962), p.95
39. The Times, March 12th 1792, p.3, column 2.
40. R.A. Soloway, Prelates and People: Ecclesiastical Social Thought in England 1783-1852, London (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), pp.38-9
41. B. Porteus, A Charge delivered to the Clergy of the Diocese of London, at the Visitation of that Diocese in the year MDCCXCIV, London (F. & C. Rivington, 1794), p.29
42. Religion and Society, p.44. See also J.A. [De Jong], As the Waters Cover the Sea: Millennial Expectations in the Rise of Anglo-American Missions 1640-1810, Amsterdam (1970), chapter V.
43. W. Jones, A Letter to Three Converted Jews, lately Baptized and Confirmed in the Church of England, London (F. & C. Rivington, 1799), p.3

44. De Jong pp.163-4, 202, 213

45. See below. pp.111-3

46. W. Van Mildert, travel diary, 1792. Van Mildert Papers. An abridged version, ed. A.T.S. Bradshaw, is in Durham University Journal. vol. LXXI, no. 1, pp.45-53. Ives' opinion (Ives, vol.1, p.13), 'it contains nothing which could now be interesting', does not do it justice. Cochrane was not able to consult it, but thought it would be 'most entertaining and illuminating' (Cochrane, p.45).

47. 'Every thing is laid out with an elaborate & old-maidish neatness, which is really ludicrous. In the gardens, most of which are not larger than a good-sized Drawing room, instead of flowers & shrubs, the walks are decorated with party-coloured borders of various materials & in various shapes. Some partitions are filled up with broken pieces of marble, others with coals, & others with shells, or large glass beads of different colours. At a small distance these ridiculous assortments look like dishes of pastry & sweetmeats. As a defence for these elegant borders you see little clumps of yew trees cut into the forms of dogs & cats, birds, other animals, & furniture of various denominations. It is impossible to conceive anything more perfectly absurd & infantile. The whole reminds one exactly of a child's baby house.' Travel diary, entry for July 30th.

48. Ives, vol.1, p.12

49. Churton, vol.1, p.63

50. Ives, vol.1, pp.13-14

51. Van Mildert to Thomas Grant, 21st April 1795. Durham University Library Add. Ms. 274.207V2L4

52. Will of Cornelius Van Mildert, 27th September 1797. Durham University Library Add. Ms. 274.207V2

53. The Gentleman's Magazine & Historical Chronicle, 1795, vol. LXV, part 2, p.1054

54. Information supplied by the Grocers' Company. The other candidate was a Rev. John Sharp.

Chapter Three

A Reputation Established

St. Mary-le-Bow; the Hackney Phalanx; the
Afternoon Lectureship; The Excellency of the
Liturgy; prosecution for non-residence.

Chapter Three

In moving from Bradden to London, Van Mildert may be said to have moved from the eighteenth century into the nineteenth. Bradden was a fair example of the kind of rural parish which was to become the nostalgic ideal of a new generation of church spokesmen. Linked to the local gentry by ties of patronage and often, as in Van Mildert's case, of blood, the parson in theory occupied a well-defined role as a bridge figure between the different social strata among his parishioners and as one of the principal guardians of law and order - many clergymen were also magistrates. It was the parson's responsibility to urge upon his flock the wisdom of adherence to traditional virtues and obligations, invoking Divine Law backed by Divine Judgement as a spiritual counterpart to the civil constitution. The principal problems of such men concerned the collection of tithes and the inadequacy of traditional financial provisions in the face of a progressive 'gentrification' of the clergy. As the social expectations of incumbents rose, existing parsonages often seemed too humble and incomes too meagre. Pluralism and non-residence were practised on a scale that came to be seen as threatening the stability of the whole parochial system, and thus the very fabric of traditional society. Again, the rise in social status of the clergy tended in itself to alienate the parson from his poorer parishioners. While clerical exhortations about mutual obligations were supposed to be directed impartially to all classes and conditions, in practice sermons were generally much more definite about the

duties of lower to higher than about reciprocal responsibilities.

While disaffection from the Church had set in even in rural areas, in the new urban centres, and above all in London, the effect was greatly exacerbated by the social pressures which were to dictate the shape of nineteenth century Church anxieties. The London to which Van Mildert returned in 1796 was expanding at a frightening rate. By 1800 St. George's Fields, which had been open land during his boyhood, had vanished under urban sprawl. The accepted wisdom that discontent among the 'lower orders' was to be held in check by the authority accorded to the local gentry and parson (where gentry and parson were resident) crumbled before urban realities. In the bloated metropolitan parishes, especially those in poorer areas, 'gentry' were not to be found, and the incumbent, however conscientious, faced a pastoral task of impossible dimensions. The French Revolution had left the defenders of the established order with a bad case of collective paranoia concerning the corruption of the urban masses by radical and infidel ideas; but as the expansion of the towns proceeded, they came to represent 'more than merely political contagion. They seemed to harbour in an aggravated form most of the evils to which society was subject - vice and profligacy, intemperance and profanity, mendicity and crime, Dissent and irreligion, as well as turbulence and sedition.'

Adapting a decentralised and agricultural social model to meet the needs of an urban and industrialised social reality was the most serious of the problems facing the nineteenth

century church leadership; but most of the solutions attempted were concerned more with a shoring-up of the old order than with a prophetic embrace of the future. Inter-denominational experiments with itinerant ministry in the late 1790s met episcopal disapproval strong enough to secure the withdrawal of Anglican evangelicals;² the mainstream of Anglican thought on urban ministry remained committed to the parochial model. The turn of the century was marked by a general disinclination on the part of the Church of England authorities to countenance experimentation with new possibilities for the life of the Church: John Randolph, Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford, who became Bishop of Oxford in 1799, Bangor in 1807 and London in 1809, summarised this attitude in a letter of 1799. There was, he wrote, 'an increasing danger of which people are scarcely aware, which is the adopting and forwarding religious projects without the authority and assistance of the church and its rulers. The end is ostensibly good, and the intention perhaps is such, but inasmuch as it tends to dissolve or weaken the tie by which the established church is held together, it becomes a cooperation with levellers and reformers (falsely so called) and is a parallel case with the present attempts to dissolve the tie of civil government.'³

The fear underlying this attitude was that the 'French disease' would leap the Channel; and the course of events during the decade to 1800 gave this threat considerable plausibility. In October 1792, Parson Woodforde of Weston Longeville was troubled by 'the late long propensity of the discontented to a general Disturbance, so prevalent at present

in France,' and saw the shadow of the Mob hanging over St. Faith's Fair.⁴ Times grew harder and unrest worse after the declaration of war in 1793. In 1795, a bad harvest brought widespread food rioting; the King was stoned by a mob demanding bread and peace while on his way to open Parliament. Naval mutinies at Spithead and the Nore in 1797, rebellion in Ireland, continuing disorders over food and also against naval recruitment combined with the openly professed Jacobinism of groups such as the London Constitutional Society and the 'Revolution Society',⁵ and the vast sales of Tom Paine's writings, to create a widespread feeling that only heroic efforts by 'the friends of order' could preserve England from disaster on the French scale. New and unauthorised initiatives of all kinds became suspect from a fear that they might be productive of, or subverted to, evil political ends.

For Van Mildert and his associates, and for many with whom he was not associated, religious Dissent formed a part of the same threatening phenomenon. Watching the interlinked overthrow of Church and government in France, Van Mildert conceived a vision of the Church as citadel, as the means of defence provided by the astounding grace of God whereby the sinful individual and the sinful State could find shelter from the just and awful consequences of that sin. To the individual the Church offered personal salvation, asking in return obedience: regularity in attendance at public worship, assiduity in private devotion, charitable giving as individual means and circumstances might allow, avoidance of immorality, deference to the duly appointed authorities of the Church. To the State,

the Church offered the only true basis of just government, prosperity, peace and national greatness, asking in return loyalty: the State should use its powers to promote and defend the interests of the Church, in token that those powers rested ultimately on the lordship of God. To Van Mildert, the price demanded seemed so ludicrously small by comparison with the benefits conveyed as to make it simply inconceivable that any fair-minded person could reject God's gracious offer.

Dissenters, from this perspective, had renounced the appointed means of defence, membership of the national 'branch of the Christian church', and their title to salvation was a matter of uncertainty. Daubeny's Guide to the Church (1798) offered the classic formulation of his circle's attitude: 'When you leave the church...., it should be remembered, you leave the ministers and sacraments of Christ behind you. You may indeed appoint other ministers, and institute other sacraments; but let it be observed, these ministers are not the ambassadors of Christ; nor are the sacraments which they administer the sacraments of Christ....The difference between the condition of a member of the church of Christ at the bar of trial, and of one that is not, appearing to us to be this: the former, in arrest of judgment, pleads a covenanted title to the benefit of an act of grace passed by the Judge in his favour; the latter, having no such title to plead, is obliged to throw himself unconditionally on the mercy of the court.'

The accusation that this view was bigoted and uncharitable made the group indignant. 'As to the doctrine being uncharitable,' William Stevens wrote in 1798, '....to warn

people of their danger is surely the truest charity; and we know what was to be the fate of the watchman who did not warn the people. And the adulterer and the drunkard may as justly call it uncharitable to be told, that such shall not inherit the kingdom of God, as the Schismatic that he must be of the Church to be saved.'⁷

To refuse membership of the Church for the fancied advantages of some other organisation of Christians was thus an act of incomprehensible stupidity, most easily understood as a perverse failure of obedience. The involvement of some Dissenters with political radicalism seemed a natural development; it had historical precedents. Horsley, in a sermon preached in January 1793 on the anniversary of the martyrdom of King Charles I, drew explicit parallels between the French Revolution and the English Civil War.⁸ To illustrate the political perils of Dissent by the example of 'the Fanatics who, in this country, succeeded in subverting the Government both in Church and State' became a commonplace of High Church apologetic, used by Van Mildert in his Boyle lectures⁹ and by Southey in his Book of the Church.¹⁰

Stevens and his allies regarded separation from the Church of England as wrong and dangerous, but they did not therefore believe that those within her communion ought to be complacent. The violence of the times meant that strenuous efforts were demanded in her defence. A young man named Henry Handley Norris, only son of a wealthy London merchant, came down from Cambridge in 1793. The conviction grew in him 'that the dangers of the time, and the conflicts to which the Christian cause was

subjected....were only to be effectually met by a spirit of earnest self-devotion, and large sacrifices of private wealth, and liberty, and ease.'¹¹ Against his father's wishes, he decided to become a candidate for Holy Orders.

In June 1794, while fundraising to give a public dinner on the King's birthday to 'a company of the Shropshire militia.... quartered at Hackney', Norris met up with a young City merchant of his own age named Joshua Watson. Watson was a partner in his father's firm of wine merchants, then piling up a considerable fortune from government contracts as a result of the war. Norris found Watson immediately congenial. 'In him is centered every requisite to complete the character of a pleasant companion and sincere friend. For the former capacity he possesses a strong mind, well stored with thoughts on every subject, which a most retentive memory enables him to draw forth at pleasure....For the latter, unaffected good-nature, generosity, and every Christian virtue, stimulated and enlivened by a fervent piety and zeal for religion.'¹² Watson introduced Norris to his elder brother, John James Watson, curate of Epsom, and to his friends: Thomas Sikes, Vicar of Guilsborough, childhood friend of John James Watson and son of a merchant banker, whose sister Mary became Joshua Watson's wife in 1797; Baden Powell, a City merchant and the son of a City merchant, whose sister Henrietta became Norris' wife in 1805, and whose other two sisters were married to John James Watson and Thomas Sikes; Jonathan Boucher, who besides being John James Watson's vicar was a schoolfriend of the Watsons' father; and William Stevens, who was greatly attached to Joshua

Watson, seeing in him a younger version of himself. Norris was rapidly swept up into the circle's activities: a Society for the Reformation of Principles which, if it failed to reform principles, at least brought the group to understand the importance of the Press in Christian witness; a fund founded in 1792 to help the bishops and clergy of the Episcopal Church of Scotland; a journal, the British Critic, arising from the abortive Society; various other literary undertakings; and membership of the S.P.C.K. and S.P.G. When John James Watson became Vicar of Hackney in 1799, Norris acted as his (unpaid) curate.

Van Mildert was instituted to St. Mary-le-Bow in October 1796, and was almost immediately recruited to the cause by Joshua Watson. It is not clear whether this was their first meeting: Watson had been educated in Newington as a child, and William Stevens formed a second link between their families. On Van Mildert's return to London, however, they rapidly became intimates, finding themselves in 'harmony of opinions, and frequent mutual conference on points of faith and practice'.¹³

The move to London faced Van Mildert with the same problem he had already encountered in Bradden: his new living was not provided with a suitable parsonage house. He was now Rector of the three neighbouring parishes of St. Mary-le-Bow, St. Pancras Soper Lane and Allhallows Honey Lane, which had been amalgamated in the aftermath of the Great Fire, as part of the process of union which enabled fifty-one new churches to serve the eighty-five parishes whose churches had been destroyed. St. Mary-le-Bow had two glebe houses and St. Pancras Soper Lane

one, but Van Mildert found 'no proof that any Incumbent, since the Fire of London, has resided in either of them.' Only one had ever demonstrably 'been considered as a Parsonage House'; that one was unsuitably small, and it was 'not practicable to enlarge the ground plot of it, as it is bounded by the Vestry Room & other Buildings contiguous. It...has been for many years....laid into another house,....& cd. not now be separated from it without building a party wall, & incurring considerable expence; after doing which, it does not seem practicable to have more than one room on a floor, & that not above 10 or 12 feet square. Add to which, that the situation is extremely confined & incommodious to the greatest degree, not to say detrimental to health....'¹⁴ The other two houses were worse. All three had besides been leased out by Van Mildert's predecessors, and the tenants could not, he claimed, be evicted.

Rented accommodation was the obvious answer, but it proved impossible to find a house 'fit for an Incumbent to reside in,' at an affordable rent, in any of the 'United Parishes'. When first instituted to his new benefice, Van Mildert took a house 'in Charles street, Manchester square; but at Lady-day of the ensuing year, having experienced much inconvenience during the winter on account of the distance from his parish, he removed to No. 14, Ely place, Holborn.'¹⁵ He was now 'within 10 minutes or a quarter of an hour's walk of every part of the United Parishes', and the arrangement proved so satisfactory that he stayed there until 1812. The house at Ely Place became a regular haunt for Joshua Watson and his friends; it was

probably at this time that Van Mildert acquired the use-name 'Van'. In 1797 his name appeared for the first time on the membership lists of the S.P.C.K.,¹⁶ in whose affairs Stevens' circle took a keen interest. From the beginning of his collaboration with the group, Van Mildert was enlisted most particularly to help with literary projects: in company with Joshua Watson and Henry Handley Norris he edited a two volume anthology of reprinted tracts published in 1802 and 1803 under the title The Churchman's Remembrancer, which included works by Waterland, Barlow and Plaifere.¹⁷ He also gave 'some literary assistance to the editor of the "Anti-Jacobin"'.

In the spring of 1800 was founded Nobody's Club (later Nobody's Friends), an exclusive dining club named from William Stevens' habit of referring to himself as Nobody.¹⁸ Fifteen founder members pledged themselves to meet each November, March and May; they included, besides Stevens' himself, the Watson brothers, Norris, John Bowdler the elder, and two young lawyers, James Allan Park and John Richardson, both later to be made Justice of the Common Pleas. Nobody's two closest friends were never members: Horne had died in 1792, Jones at Epiphany 1800, shortly before the club was launched. Van Mildert did not become a member until November 29th 1802, when he was elected on Stevens' own nomination. His election set the seal on his acceptance by the group who were to be his friends and fellow-workers for the rest of his life.

St. Mary-le-Bow was a peculiar of Canterbury; Van Mildert's diocesan was thus not Beilby Porteus but Archbishop Moore. Soon after Van Mildert's institution, this fact offered him an

opportunity of bringing himself to the Archbishop's attention. Along with his parishes Van Mildert inherited a longstanding wrangle over an endowed lectureship. Under the terms of the endowment, 'some honest Godly zealous & learned Preacher' was to be chosen by twelve respectable parishioners to read 'a Lecture or Sermon' on one afternoon each week. Problems arose because it was not specified how the choosers were to be chosen.

Such parishioner-appointed lectureships were common in London at the time, and regularly led to friction. 'For various reasons, among them the fact that Dissenters voted, the successful candidates were often Evangelicals, and, if the more orthodox incumbents refused the use of their pulpits, disorder and riot might ensue.'¹⁹ Cases of this kind were common enough to lead John Randolph, in his 1810 Primary Visitation Charge to the London clergy, to allege the existence of a conspiracy of covert Methodists who remained in membership of the Church of England only to subvert it, and who 'were getting into their hands all the lectureships in the city churches'.²⁰

The quarrel at St. Mary-le-Bow went back to 1774 when the then Rector, Dr. Sclater, having lost the election to the Revd. Thomas Clarke, denied his pulpit to the victor and commenced delivering the lectures himself. Sclater considered legal action to make the churchwardens pay him the preacher's fee, but in the event it was the parishioners who sued, filing an Information in Chancery in 1776. The situation was saved by Sclater's death, and his successor Dr. Apthorp reached agreement with the parishioners at a vestry in April 1778,

which laid down strict criteria for the lectures. Following the directions given by George Palyn when endowing the lectureship, it was specified that the purpose was 'Catechising for the good Instruction of the Youth of the sd. Parish in the Principles, & Rudiments of the Religion established & practised in this Kingdom'. Van Mildert found the preachership in the hands of a Mr. Abdy, who had been Lecturer since 1784, and whose sermons, delivered 'ad libitum, every Sunday Evening', were not what Van Mildert expected catechetical lectures to be.²¹

This state of affairs struck Van Mildert as intolerable. After researching the details of the case, he presented a full account in a handwritten pamphlet to Archbishop Moore. It is not clear whether he did this on his own initiative or at Moore's request; but Moore's interest was certainly aroused, as also was that of Horsley, now Bishop of Rochester. In January 1799 a vestry resolved to sell the lands constituting the endowment of the preachership and invest the proceeds differently, and Moore took the opportunity of settling the matter. To sell the property required an Act of Parliament. Included in the Act were regulations drawn up by Horsley, providing for the annual election of a preacher by twelve duly appointed trustees. The Rector, while retaining his advisory capacity, was made an ex officio trustee; emphatic reference was also made to 'the inherent & inalienable right, still reserved to him, with respect to granting or refusing his Pulpit.' The Archbishop gained the power of veto, with the provision that the lecturer must be licensed by him.²²

The outcome of this affair was entirely to Van Mildert's

liking. A displeasing outbreak of ecclesiastical democracy had been controlled, with the provisions for vetting the twelve electors and their appointee. Van Mildert himself was the first lecturer chosen by the new trustees. The chief importance of the affair, however, lay in 'the conversations with which Mr. V:M: was favoured by the Abp. of Canterbury and the Bp. of Rochester.' Van Mildert had made good use of the opportunity to establish himself in the eyes of his diocesan, and it was probably in connection with this affair that he became 'regularly known to his Grace, and....dined on public days at his table.'²³

Besides being a peculiar of Canterbury, Van Mildert's new benefice was rich in historical associations, on which he made careful notes. The three parish churches had originally stood close together, each serving its own small parish. Soper Lane vanished along with its church in the Great Fire, and Honey Lane became the site of a market, but St. Mary-le-Bow was rebuilt: 'one of Wren's loveliest churches, famous for its bells [and] for the romanesque crypt that had given its name to the Archbishop of Canterbury's provincial court'.²⁴ The rebuilding, begun in 1671, was finished in 1680 and, Van Mildert noted, omitted an arcade from Wren's original plan. The site was of archaeological interest: 'The Steeple is founded on the old Roman Causeway, which lies about 18 feet below the Level of the present street: & the Church on the Walls of a Roman Temple.'²⁵

St. Mary-le-Bow was also noted 'among the ecclesiastically learned, as the traditional scene of the Boyle Lectures, which

had rather gone downhill since Richard Bentley had delivered the first series in 1692 and Samuel Clarke the tenth in 1704.²⁶ The church was a popular venue for charity sermons and anniversary meetings: in 1802 the S.P.C.K., which usually held its Annual Service at St. Paul's Cathedral, went to St. Mary-le-Bow instead in protest at the replacement of 'the usual verses of the 113th Psalm' by an anthem.²⁷ Among the commemorative services held at Bow was one endowed by John Hutchins, a London goldsmith, for 'the Children belonging to the Cordwainer and Bread Street Wards' Charity School'. In addition to receiving 'a Threepenny White Loaf of Bread and Threepence in Money' each, the children were to be edified with a sermon on 'the excellency and use of the Liturgy of the Church of England,' and the advantages to 'poor Children' of being 'educated in the Doctrine and Principles of the said Church'.²⁸ In 1797 the Trustees of Hutchins' Charity, who included the Lord Mayor of London, chose Van Mildert to deliver the sermon.

The task was much to Van Mildert's taste. Hutchins, he explained, had an exemplary understanding of true charity: 'The charity that provides for the body, but neglects the soul, is perishable and, comparatively, of little moment. Lay the foundation of good Christian principles in the hearts of those whom you take under your protection, and you prepare the way for making every other gift you can bestow upon them, a real blessing. But without this, though you could give them all this world's goods, it would avail little to their true happiness.' Educating poor children was far more securely a blessing when

that education was connected to 'the doctrines and liturgy of our Church'.²⁷

Van Mildert devoted his sermon chiefly to eulogising the Anglican liturgy and its compilers. Its 'excellency' he presented as a matter of balance: between the opposed errors of Enthusiasm and Lukewarmness, between the corruptions of Popery and the excesses of over-zealous reformers.

The essential features of valid prayer he expounded in terms of 1 Cor.14.15, 'I will pray with the Spirit, and I will pray with the Understanding also', a text used to similar effect in Daubeny's Guide to the Church.³⁰ 'To "pray with the Spirit," is to pray with faith, with fervour, and a certain elevation of soul towards the great object of our devotions.' To fail in this was to fall into Lukewarmness, 'the error of those who, ambitious of being thought rational worshippers, suppress....every emotion of the heart, approaching the Almighty with cold and phlegmatic apathy, or with the familiar ease of colloquial intercourse, rather than with the deep sentiments of contrition and reverence, due from sinful creatures to an offended Creator.' Enthusiasts, who 'imagine that devotion consists in certain vehement effusions of the spirit, poured forth with unpremeditated ardour, dictated by internal feelings only, and yielding implicitly to the impressions of a heated imagination', had fallen into the opposite error of failing to 'pray with the understanding' - 'to pray in a clear and intelligible manner, with a composed frame of mind, with a just regard to the nature of our petitions, and with a right apprehension of the relation....

between God and ourselves.' The 'peculiar and acknowledged excellence' of the Anglican liturgy was the 'most happy medium' which it exhibited, 'being eminently distinguished, on the one hand, by the spirit of piety that pervades it, and...on the other, by its perspicuous and beautiful simplicity'.³¹

In elaborating the balance that made the Liturgy 'a model of judicious reform', Van Mildert made it clear which of the extremes he regarded as the more dangerous. He was careful to protest against the 'profane or idolatrous tenets' of the 'Romish church': adoration of the Host, 'the worshipping of images', invocation of saints 'and such like unscriptural devotions' (on revising the sermon in 1817 he added invocation of the Blessed Virgin to the blacklist). The 'Romish Ritual', however, despite being in Latin and 'clogged with superstitions and exceptionable forms,' was in many places 'truly scriptural, and well calculated for the comfort and edification of pious worshippers....some of the most admired parts of our Book of Common Prayer, were taken almost literally from the Romish Ritual'.³²

Passion was reserved for Van Mildert's denunciation of those Reformed churches which, 'impressed, at first, with just indignation at the corruptions of the Church of Rome,...seem to have thought it impossible to separate from her too widely; and in their zeal to correct abuses, to have forgotten, that to reform is not to destroy. Hence, the primitive ordinances, and even the primitive faith, of the purest ages of Christianity, have by some of these Churches been....rudely shaken, or inconsiderately abandoned. In some, episcopacy has been totally

abolished, and with it, many essential qualifications of the priesthood. Others have proscribed the use of any pre-composed liturgies. Almost all have, in some particulars, relinquished doctrines or ceremonies plainly deducible from primitive and even apostolical practice, as well as agreeable to the general tenor of the Scriptures.' Excessive reform created 'an opening for a vast inundation of licentiousness and disorder'.³³

The purpose of Van Mildert's analysis was to deny any necessity for further reform of the Liturgy. It was, he argued, both comprehensive and concise: it contained 'devotions adapted to all persons, under all circumstances, and in all conditions of life', but such was its simplicity that no part of it 'could be omitted, without at the same time omitting some precept, some instruction, or some petition, which is really proper and necessary.'³⁴ While no-one could 'be so blindly attached to it as to suppose it perfect' (in 1817 he added 'its framers and compilers laid no claim to Infallibility'). Van Mildert asserted with confidence that its contents could not 'give offence to any who believe in its doctrines....' Proposals for review of the doctrines, authority and discipline of the Church, however apparently innocent, were to be resisted: given 'the avowed principles of many of these reformers, and the connection they maintain with persons in open hostility to our establishment, little doubt can be entertained of the end proposed by such innovations....'³⁵

The sermon was published at the request of John Hutchins' Trustees; Van Mildert was pleased enough with it to polish and re-use it twenty years later, and the revised version was

included in Ives' memorial collection of Van Mildert's sermons and charges.

The experience seems to have given Van Mildert a taste for seeing his work in print. The following February (1798) he had a sermon entitled 'Cautions against Innovation in Matters of Religion' printed by Messrs. Rivington for distribution among his parishioners. Rivingtons, who handled a large volume of Church business, were to remain Van Mildert's regular publishers for the rest of his life.

The sermon, on Jeremiah 6.16 ('Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls; but they said, We will not walk therein'), began with a vigorous defence of the conception of Christian truth which Van Mildert and his circle regarded as one of the great fundamental axioms of theology. 'Whatever advancements may be made in human knowledge, by the labour of succeeding generations, Religion (I mean revealed religion) is not....susceptible of similar improvement. It is not the invention of the human mind; and therefore is not to be amended by any exertion of the human facilities....men are not able, and if they suppose themselves able, they are not authorised, to improve upon the word of God. Speculation is excluded. The divine will is law. Obedience is the duty enjoined: and this duty remains precisely the same in all cases, and under all circumstances, to the very end of time.'³⁶ Bringing the human intellect to bear on the Bible was not proscribed, but its legitimate role was exclusively hermeneutic: 'To expound the Scriptures, is one thing; to sit

in judgment upon them, is another.' The biblical scholar must not 'read them as we do the works of uninspired writers, cavilling, censuring, or admitting certain portions only....All that the most accomplished critics or scholars of the most enlightened age can justly pretend to on the subject of Revelation, is to apply their talents to the removal of difficulties, the solution of doubts, the arrangement and harmonious assortment of the whole of the Scripture truths.'³⁷ This understanding of the scholar's task was to colour all Van Mildert's own theological labours; his own primary task he saw, however, not as hermeneutic but as apologetic.

Van Mildert's view of moral reality was similarly static: human nature was not capable of progressive amelioration. 'Men are now what they always were; subject to be led astray by passion, by appetite, by prejudices of various kinds....' The Christian therefore needed to maintain himself in constant readiness 'to combat the host of spiritual enemies that hourly beset us'. Van Mildert's Boyle lectures were soon to make it clear that his talk of 'spiritual enemies' was not a pious platitude but a firmly held conviction.

As an aid in spiritual warfare, Van Mildert counselled his hearers to be punctilious in observing their religious duties, whether scriptural - 'sanctifying the Sabbath,....receiving the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper,....public worship, and....private prayer and meditation' - or ordained by the Church: 'The devout observation of fasts and festivals, the attendance on weekly prayers in the church, the charitable office of visiting the sick, the appointment of sponsors in

baptism, and many other customs....' He lamented the contemporary fashion 'to consider many of these ordinances, as obsolete, or superstitious; and more particularly to hold in contempt those which have apparently no other foundation than church-authority....(which, although so indecently contemned, is deserving of much more consideration than some are aware of)....Hastily to root up ancient customs, merely because they are ancient, is no proof of wisdom.'

In an unpublished sermon of the same period, Van Mildert gave further attention to the place of the Sacraments in the scheme of salvation, and particularly to the controversial issue of baptismal regeneration. Van Mildert argued that baptism was a necessary but not a sufficient condition for salvation; the believer at baptism 'put on Christ', but also undertook a lifetime's commitment to 'conform his whole life & conversation to the precepts of his Lord & Master.' This entailed 'the practice of piety, righteousness & sobriety,' the reverent study of God's 'holy will and pleasure in all things', and 'benevolence & justice towards Man'. Living the Christian life would be too demanding a task for human frailty without the 'assistance of the Holy Spirit', conveyed at baptism and confirmation, and replenished by 'that most comfortable & important duty of Prayer'. Defining the role of participation in 'the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper' in assuring the salvation of the believer gave Van Mildert some trouble: he described the Sacrament as a 'high & important Ordinance', a 'duty positively enjoined by our Blessed Lord,....therefore of as great authority as Baptism itself'. The words 'and

necessity', which originally followed 'authority', he struck out; but he was satisfied with the phrase 'Neither Baptism, nor Confirmation, can....be considered as sufficient without it'.³⁷ The sermon also included a strenuous defence of infant baptism.

After his pleasant experience with Hutchins' Trustees, Van Mildert cast about for fresh laurels. He had already been made chaplain to the Worshipful Company of Grocers⁴⁰. According to his biographer in the Gentleman's Magazine, he delivered Lady Moyer's Lecture at St. Paul's Cathedral 'early in his city residence'; Van Mildert himself, in a careful note to his edition of *Waterland* (1823), implied that Lady Moyer's Lecture had ceased to be delivered at some time after about 1764, and made no mention of having himself served as Lecturer.⁴¹

In about 1799, Van Mildert applied to Archbishop Moore, senior trustee of the Boyle Lectureship, for a three year appointment as lecturer. The Archbishop's reply was that Lord Frederick Cavendish, whom Ives described as the only other influential trustee, had already promised the next turn elsewhere, but Van Mildert was given a written promise that he should be appointed in three years' time.⁴²

1799 was in other respects a disastrous year for Van Mildert. In April his father died, leaving him to grapple with the difficulties of executing the will. Cornelius Van Mildert died richer in ideas than in possessions. After his executors had paid twenty pounds to the trustees of 'the Charity School of the parish of St. Mary Newington', had bought thirteen mourning rings for various members of the family, had paid thirty pounds to Ann Williams 'in consideration of her long &

faithful service' and fifty pounds to William Hill to compensate him for his trouble in acting as his brother-in-law's executor, and had provided a small investment income for Cornelius' wife, daughters and 'niece Ann Bagshaw', the residue provided each of his children with a princely inheritance of £62.9s., less 5s. stamp duty. Besides his share of the residue, Van Mildert received his father's 'pictures prints & drawings Watches Watchchains seals & a gold headed Cane'.⁴³

In May, William Hill also died, depriving Van Mildert of an affectionate uncle and patron, and leaving him with another will to execute - a blow which cannot have been much lightened by bequests of twenty pounds for mourning and fifty pounds as a recompense for the toils of executorship. A much richer man than his brother-in-law, William Hill had property as well as investments to dispose of.⁴⁴

At the end of September Van Mildert contracted an 'eruptive fever' caused, as Ives cryptically notes, by 'incautious conduct, during his time of mourning'. He was seriously ill for some months, 'confined....to Ely Place, of which both my Physician & Apothecary can bear full testimony', and was obliged to pay a curate to undertake his clerical duties for him. Not until the following February was he able to dispense with the curate's services, although from December he 'was able, occasionally, to take some part of the Duty.' This illness, 'on abating, became partly chronic, and obliged him frequently to resort to Harrogate for relief, throughout the course of his after life.'⁴⁵ Jane, too, suffered a serious illness a little later. They had been married for four years,

and Jane was almost forty: they must have begun to realise that their marriage was to be childless.

Ill health helped to make Van Mildert's two executorships an almost intolerable burden. William Hill's will had been drawn up with care and consideration; but his death left Van Mildert and his mother to cope alone with the protracted, bedevilled and expensive business of executing Cornelius Van Mildert's will. The residue was not settled and paid until December 1801, and in January 1802 Cornelius Ives was still writing to query points of detail.

Van Mildert found himself substantially out of pocket over the business. He was faced with 'many expensive Charges for Coach hire & other expenses, during my Convalescence [which] bore heavily upon me, but which I never inserted in the Ex[ecut]orship Accts.' The different charges for registering the probate of the two wills 'on a variety of occasions' confused him, and he paid some of them at his own expense. A number of errors were found in the accounts, some of which Martha Van Mildert rectified, thereby adding to her son's anxieties: 'I know that she has suffered exceedingly from what she has already refunded, &...has taken it very much to heart'. In the end, the four residuary legatees shouldered a deficiency of '£35.5.4, or £8.16.4 apiece'. 'I have laboured so arduously, (though not quite effectually) to settle all those complicated accounts,' Van Mildert wrote to Cornelius Ives in February 1802, 'most of which were current during the time that I suffered under very severe indisposition of health & spirits, & a great part of which were settled without any legal advice

or assistance, that I trust it will not appear surprising that some errors & improprieties have occurred. If I cd. have afforded it, I wd. cheerfully have made all smooth & even, by taking every loss upon my self. But I know not how to bear such a burthen when I can already scarcely sustain my manifold hopes.'⁴⁶

Van Mildert was still ill and embroiled with matters testamentary when the last blow fell. 'In 1800 a small group of lawyers began to claim the rewards due under the acts of Henry VIII to common informers against non-resident clergy. Gross injustice was done to clergy who were technically non-resident, though performing their spiritual duties, and chaos was threatened in a church whose parish life was dominated by clerical poverty and lack of parsonage houses'.⁴⁷ Van Mildert did not live within the boundaries of his parish, and had never obtained a licence of non-residence from the Archbishop. An 'unprincipled informer' denounced him.

The case came to court in December 1800. Van Mildert, who was 'unavoidably detained in the country by ill-health', was found guilty in his absence and sentenced to 'all the penalties', fines totalling £110. His counsel appealed on a technicality, thereby no doubt increasing the legal costs; the appeal was quashed. The fine, 'and still more perhaps the expenses of the trial, were for some time so heavily felt, as to render expedient a contracted mode of living.'⁴⁸

Van Mildert did not find himself friendless in this affair. A number of his parishioners testified in his favour. Archbishop Moore took his part to the extent of making a personal

appearance in court, arriving 'at the Guildhall before half past nine o'clock', in order to bear 'very honourable testimony' to Van Mildert's character.⁴⁹ After the trial, the Archbishop's registrar wrote to inform Van Mildert of the outcome, adding 'It is his Grace's particular charge to me, to desire you not to let this matter affect your spirits in the smallest degree; for from the very high, and deservedly high character given of you by a very numerous and respectable part of your parishioners, as well as by your adversaries, his Grace is almost inclined to think, that, even if the penalties were to be recovered, you would have occasion to be pleased, that such an opportunity had been given to purchase fame at so easy a rate.'⁵⁰ When the case was finally lost, the Archbishop is said to have paid half Van Mildert's fine.

As it transpired, the Rector of Bow gained some very good publicity for his £110 plus costs. The case was tried before the Lord Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, Lord Eldon, who in April 1801 became Lord Chancellor. Although Eldon did not allow his sympathy for Van Mildert to influence him in the matter of penalties, he intimated at the trial his hope that the consideration of Van Mildert's case 'would induce the legislature to interfere, and take these matters out of the hands of a common informer.'⁵¹

Six months later, there was introduced into the House of Commons 'a Bill to protect and relieve, under certain Provisions and Regulations, Spiritual Persons from vexatious Prosecutions by common Informers....in consequence of their Non-residence on their Benefices, or their taking of Farms.'⁵²

Transformed by parliamentary sleight-of-hand at the committee stage into a temporary suspension of the prosecutions, it passed its third reading on June 24th and was sent to the Lords.

During the second reading debate on June 26th, Eldon commented that 'when he presided in the Common Pleas, he tried actions founded on that Statute, in which though the law went against the Clergymen, their case was the most severe and cruel that could be conceived.'⁵³ The comment was reported by the Press, as was his elaboration of it at the third reading debate on June 29th, when he cited Van Mildert as the classic example of a virtuous clergyman thus severely and cruelly treated.⁵⁴

Van Mildert had been exonerated of all blame with the greatest possible publicity, in the presence of no less a person than his Highness the Duke of Clarence, who was in the House to examine a witness in a particularly juicy divorce case, and who expressed his entire agreement with Eldon's sentiments. For the first time in his career, Van Mildert received a mention in The Times; not by name, but by unambiguous description.

Horsley, while sensible of the need to protect clergy who 'did the duty of their parishes, [but] could not reside in them on account of the glebe houses being in a state of decay', was only willing to give the Bill qualified support. In both second and third reading debates, he urged the equal necessity of a measure to compel culpably non-resident clergy to 'do their duty', arguing that 'the practice of Clergymen absenting themselves from their parishes had been carried to an extent

the most shameful and scandalous that could be conceived, and which if not put a stop to, would overturn the established Church, and destroy the Christian religion in this country.'⁵⁵

While many concerned churchmen were ready to agree in deploring the scale of clerical non-residence - for one reason or another, only about half of the eleven thousand livings had resident incumbents - the question of enforcement was a vexed one. Wide disparities in ecclesiastical incomes made pluralism an economic necessity for many clergymen: 'If the sees of Canterbury and Durham enjoyed a princely £19,000 p.a., there were 4,000 livings below the £150 p.a. which established itself as the clerical breadline, including about 1,000 below £50 p.a. Even the Bishop of Llandaff could hardly be expected to reside in London during sessions of Parliament and work a see which had no bishop's house, on an income of £900 p.a.'⁵⁶ Equalisation of clerical incomes was a step so radical as to be virtually unthinkable, involving as it did interference with the rights of existing incumbents, tinkering with the value of patronage, and violation of the pious intentions of past benefactors. Queen Anne's Bounty, established in 1704 'for the augmentation of the maintenance of the poor clergy',⁵⁷ did not command resources commensurate with the problem. Pluralism therefore remained, and so perforce did non-residence.

Horsley, himself a pluralist whose see was among the poorest,⁵⁸ did not propose to compel every incumbent to reside on his benefice. He was, he declared in 1796, 'well aware, that many non-residents are conscientiously engaged in various ways in promoting the general cause of Christianity; and are perhaps

doing better service than if they confined themselves to the ordinary labours of the ministry in a country parish.' His object was to ensure that every non-resident incumbent should 'maintain a resident curate, with such a stipend...as may supply the curate with a decent maintenance, without his engaging in a second cure, and doing but half the duty of both parishes.' Yet even this modest ideal was impossible of fulfilment. As Horsley remarked, non-residence had worse effects on poor benefices than on rich ones, because the incumbents of such benefices were unable to pay their curates properly; but these were precisely the men forced into pluralism by poverty.

Faced with this impasse, Parliament picked at the problem for a few years: the suspension of prosecutions was extended for further short periods, and in 1803, 'at the third attempt, and solely by means of government support', Sir William Scott, Eldon's brother and M.P. for Oxford University, succeeded in carrying 'an act enlarging the grounds of clerical non-residence, broadening the clergy's scope for earning a living, and strengthening the authority of the bishops.' Also passed in 1803 was enabling legislation to facilitate the financing of parsonage-house construction. None of these measures offered a realistic hope of solving the problems of non-residence. In reform-minded circles both outside and inside the church, at all levels of churchmanship, the conviction remained that something would have to be done.

Levels of income meant difficulties for a large proportion of the clergy, but the urban clergy often faced particularly

acute problems. The rural system of tithes was scarcely applicable, endowment often inadequate, and it was not unknown for urban incumbents to subsist on a meagre income from pew-rents and Easter offerings. The Fire Parishes, of which St. Mary-le-Bow was one of the wealthiest, were better provided for than some: the Fire Act fixed the incomes of the fifty-one new parishes and provided for them to be 'assessed and raised on the Houses & other Hereditaments within the Parish'.⁶² This replaced an earlier system whereby the clergy received a rate levied on property rents, fixed under Henry VIII at 2s.9d. in the pound. The new arrangement had the disadvantage that the value of the livings remained static, while the value of money did not. By 1804, Beilby Porteus calculated that 'from the present enormous Price of all the Necessaries of Life (which is more than three times what it was when the Fire Act passed) the London Clergy cannot possibly support themselves & Families with that Decency and Respectability which their Situation in a rich commercial City requires....'.⁶³ The same year, he successfully championed a Bill to raise the values of the Fire Act livings by a minimum of two thirds, with the support in the Lords of Horsley (now in his final diocese of St. Asaph) and Dampier, Horsley's successor in the see of Rochester. Porteus rather wistfully hoped that the passing of this Act might 'ultimately lead the way to a reasonable Augmentation of all the poorer Livings throughout England and Wales, a consummation most devoutly to be wished'.⁶⁴ In 1804 dreams of this kind could still be dreamed; they were to lose all shreds of plausibility as the century advanced.

Van Mildert's chief preoccupation during the years 1802-5 was the preparation and delivery of the work which established his reputation, the 'series of Sermons preached for the Lecture founded by the Hon. Robert Boyle'.

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2. W.R. Ward, [Religion and Society] in England 1790-1850, New York (Schocken Books, 1973), pp. 48-52
3. Quoted in W.R. Ward, [Victorian Oxford], London (Cass, 1965), p.2
4. J. Woodforde, The Diary of a Country Parson, ed. J. Beresford, London (Oxford University Press, 1924), vol.3, p.377
5. Churton, vol.1, p.82. On the London Constitutional Society see E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class, London (Penguin Books, 1968), pp.120-1. On the London Revolution Society (named after the 1688 'Glorious Revolution') see J. Stevenson, Popular Disturbances in England 1700-1870, New York (Longman, 1979), p.137
6. C. [Daubeny], A Guide to the Church, in Several Discourses, London (T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1798), pp.179,182
7. W. Stevens to an unnamed correspondent, September 8th 1798, in (J.A. [Park]), Memoir of William Stevens, Esq., London (1812), pp.104-6
8. Cited in R.A. Soloway, Prelates and People: Ecclesiastical Social Thought in England 1783-1852, London (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), p.31
9. W. Van Mildert, An historical view of the rise and progress of Infidelity, with a refutation of it's principles and reasonings: in a series of Sermons preached for the lecture founded by the Hon. Robert Boyle, 2nd edition, London (F.C. and J. Rivington, 1808), vol.1, p.347
10. S. Gilley, 'Nationality and liberty, protestant and catholic: Robert Southey's Book of the Church', in S. Mews (ed.), Religion and National Identity, Studies in Church History, vol.18 (Oxford, 1982), pp.409-32; pp.419-20
11. Churton, vol.1, pp.54-5
12. Ibid., p.59
13. Ibid., p.62
14. Unaddressed and undated letter by Van Mildert, in collection headed '[Documents] relating to the Parish of St. Mary le Bow, London', Van Mildert Papers.
15. Ives, vol.1, p.15
16. Cochrane, p.60

17. Churton, vol.1, p.65. An earlier similar volume, The Scholar Armed against the Errors of the Times, was prepared by Jones and Stevens.
18. Park, p.118, gives Stevens' own account of why 'he must indeed be NOBODY'. On the founder members of Nobody's Club see M.H. Port, 600 New Churches, a Study of the Church Building Commission, 1815-1856, and its Church Building Activities, London (S.P.C.K. for the Church Historical Society, 1961), pp.2-3. Other founder members were Boucher (Park, p.171), the Solicitor General (ibid., p.163) and John Frere, M.P. for Norwich (ibid., p.181). Churton, vol.1, p.65, gives the details of Van Mildert's election.
19. Coleman, p.69
20. Cited in J. Hunt, Religious Thought in England in the Nineteenth Century, London (Gibbings, 1896), pp.11-12
21. W. Van Mildert, handwritten pamphlet 'Account of the Evening Lecture at Bow Church, drawn up from Authentic Documents, for His Grace, the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury, by W:V:M: April 1797', in Documents.
22. W. Van Mildert, handwritten pamphlet 'Sequel to the Account of the Evening Lecture at Bow Church drawn up by W:V:M: April 1800', in Documents.
23. Ives, vol.1, p.19
24. G.F.A. [Best], 'The Mind and Times of William Van Mildert', in Journal of Theological Studies, New Series, vol.XIV, part 2, October 1963, pp.355-70; p.358
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26. Best, p.358
27. W.O.B. Allen and E. McClure, Two Hundred Years: the History of The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1698-1898, London (S.P.C.K., 1898), p.149
28. 'Extract from the Will of Mr. John Hutchins' in W. Van Mildert, The [Excellency of the Liturgy], and the Advantages of being Educated in the Doctrine and Principles, of the Church of England. A Sermon, preached in the Parish Church of St. Mary Le Bow...., London (1797), p.19
29. Ibid., pp. 17-18
30. Daubeny, pp. 187 & ff.
31. Excellency of the Liturgy, pp.7-8, 11
32. Ibid., pp. 12-13

33. Ibid., p.14
34. Ibid., pp.13-14
35. Ibid., pp.15-16
36. W. Van Mildert, Cautions against Innovation in Matters of Religion, A Sermon, preached in the Parish Church of St. Mary Le Bow...., London (1798), pp.3-4
37. Ibid., pp.6-7
38. Ibid., pp.13-17
39. W. Van Mildert, 'The nature & obligation of the Baptismal Vow. A Confirmation Sermon.' Durham University Library Add. Ms. 274.207V21S4
40. The chaplaincy is not mentioned by Ives, Churton or the obituary in the Durham Advertiser, February 26th 1836 (attributed to T.L. Strong). The obituary in The Gentleman's Magazine, New Series, vol.V, pp.425-7, says that it was because Van Mildert 'happened to be Chaplain to the Grocers' Company' that he was nominated to the living; this obituary was not wholly accurate in its details (see Ives, vol.1, p.107, footnote). Cochrane, p.60, says Van Mildert was made chaplain to the Company on his appointment to St. Mary-le-Bow. Enquiry of the Company failed to produce a conclusive answer, but the record of his election as Rector of St. Mary-le-Bow describes him simply as 'Clerk Master of Arts'. There are subsequent mentions of Van Mildert in the records of the Minutes of the Court of Assistants at Grocers' Hall, regarding his duties as Chaplain.
41. The Gentleman's Magazine, April, 1836, New Series, vol.V p.425; see note 40. D. Waterland, Works, ed. W. Van Mildert, London (1823), vol.1, pp.50-1, note d.
42. Ives, vol.1, pp.20-1
43. Copy of the Will of Cornelius Van Mildert, 27th September 1797. Receipt of Cornelius and Anna Ives for Anna's share of the residue, 17th December 1801. Durham University Library Add. Ms. 274.207V2
44. Copy of the will of William Hill, 6th May 1799, Van Mildert Papers.
45. Ives, vol.1, p.15. Undated letter by Van Mildert in Documents.
46. W. Van Mildert to Cornelius Ives, 15th February 1802. Durham University Library Add. Ms. 274.207V2L4
47. Victorian Oxford, p.23

48. Ives, vol.1, pp.16-19
49. Van Mildert's 'legal agent and adviser' to Van Mildert, December 1800. In Ives, vol.1, pp.17-18
50. Archbishop's Registrar to Van Mildert, December 1800. In Ives, vol.1, p.18
51. Van Mildert's 'legal agent and adviser' to Van Mildert; see note 49.
52. Journals of the House of Commons, vol.56, p.548, 12th June 1801.
53. The Times, June 27th 1801, p.2, col.1
54. The Times, June 30th 1801, p.2, cols.1-2
55. The Times, June 27th 1801, p.2, col.1, and June 30th 1801, p.2, col.1
56. Religion and Society, p.106
57. Temporal Pillars, pp.30-1
58. Rochester was the fifth poorest see; its average income was only £2,180 by about 1835 (Temporal Pillars, p.545).
59. The Charges of Samuel Horsley, late Lord Bishop of St. Asaph; delivered at his several Visitations of the Dioceses of St. David's, Rochester, and St. Asaph, Dundee (1813), pp. 83-4. The passage quoted is from his 1796 primary visitation charge to the clergy of Rochester.
60. Victorian Oxford, p.23
61. 43 Geo. III c.107 enabled Queen Anne's Bounty to 'offer its augmentations for the provision of residences'; 43 Geo. III c.108 encouraged 'gifts and bequests for "the Promotion of Religion and Morality" by providing churches, chapels, glebes and residence-houses' (Temporal Pillars, p.205)
62. Notebook of Beilby Porteus, 1804, p.18. Lambeth Palace Library Ms. 2105
63. Ibid., p.19
64. Ibid., p.25

Chapter Four

Boyle Lectures: The Diabolic Conspiracy

The Boyle lectureship; Hutchinsonianism; the inspiration of Scripture; the role of reason; the true history of Infidelity.

Chapter Four

When Van Mildert applied for the post of Boyle Lecturer, he did so 'with a view to revive, or render profitable, an institution, which had ceased to attract the public notice'.¹

The Hon. Robert Boyle, motivated, according to Van Mildert, by 'zeal....for the honour of God and the best interests of man', bequeathed money to endow an annual series of lectures 'for proving the Christian Religion against notorious Infidels, viz. Atheists, Theists, Pagans, Jews, and Mahometans, not descending lower to any Controversies that are among Christians themselves.'² The Boyle Lectures were first preached in 1692. The early series formed a notable part of that flowering of Latitudinarian theology which followed the Revolution of 1688-9. In the aftermath of the political upheaval, and the consequent deprivations in 1690 of nine leading High Church bishops, 'the Latitudinarians, who were a small minority within the Church of England before the Revolution, rose to the most prominent positions within the Church.'³ The Boyle Lectures, prestigious and influential, attracted men of significance in the new order: Kidder, the second lecturer, was Ken's 'intruded' successor in the see of Bath and Wells, and of the next five 'Boyle preachers', four achieved the mitre in due course.⁴

The products of the early Boyle lecturers, if too Rationalist for Van Mildert's taste, were far from being political ephemera. The first series, published by Richard Bentley under the title A Confutation of Atheism (1692), still

appeared high on lists of recommended reading for divinity students more than a century later. Dr. Samuel Clarke lectured in 1704-5; the resultant Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God and A Discourse concerning Natural and Revealed Religion acquired a lasting reputation, as did Gastrell's The Certainty and Necessity of Religion in General (1697) and Kidder's A Demonstration of the Messiah (based on his series of 1693-4). Most popular of all were the lectures of Dr. William Derham, delivered in 1711-12 and published as Physico-Theology, or a Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God from his Works of Creation: they appeared in 'thirteen English editions by 1768, three new editions by the end of the century, and translations into Dutch, French, Swedish, and German....'

Further into the eighteenth century the prestige of the Boyle Lectures diminished, as their fruits came closer to Van Mildert's conception of orthodoxy, and the elevation of former Lecturers to the episcopal bench became infrequent. Some published series continued to win esteem. Thomas Newton's Dissertations on the Prophecies, delivered 1756-8 and later published in expanded form, became a minor classic, and its author received his lawn sleeves in 1761. Biscoe's The History of the Acts of the Holy Apostles confirmed from other Authors, and considered as full Evidences of the Truth of Christianity (published 1742) had its admirers, among them Van Mildert, who used it in preparing his own later sermons. But the literary reputation of the Lectures declined rapidly after 1760, and when Van Mildert committed his sermons to the press in 1806,

they were the first Boyle text to be printed in thirty-three years.

Van Mildert was entirely happy to prove the Christian Religion against notorious Infidels, but found it impossible to abstain from 'descending lower' to interdenominational Christian controversy. The semi-ecumenical strand in eighteenth century latitudinarian Christianity was as alien to him as the willingness of his Evangelical contemporaries to collaborate with Dissenters. Van Mildert recognised that 'the Institution of these Lectures' forbade him to enquire into 'a detail of the unhappy divisions and errors that have subsisted among Christians', but did not feel inhibited thereby from regular castigation of his twin bugbears, Popery and excessive Protestantism. He attached special odium to 'a tribe of [unnamed] Theologians' in Germany and Holland 'and, perhap, in other parts of Europe....who, professing a desire to make Christianity more acceptable to men of a philosophical and sceptical turn of mind, have manifested a disposition to abandon almost all it's distinguishing and essential doctrines, to explain away some of it's most important facts as merely allegorical representations, and to renounce it's claims to Divine authority, by throwing doubt upon it's miraculous testimonies, and treating it's sacred records as works of merely human composition.'

Boyle's further direction, 'to be ready to satisfy such real scruples as any may have concerning these matters, and to answer such new objections and difficulties as may be started, to which good answers have not yet been made', was no more

congenial to Van Mildert. 'Are we bound to notice all the captious objections that may be advanced, to clear up every difficulty that wanton ingenuity can frame....?' he demanded. '....Certainly we are not obliged to undertake the refutation of sneers, invectives or jests on Revealed Religion; but to notice arguments only, and such arguments as may be consistent with a sincere desire of obtaining the truth.'⁹

The same suspicion of perversity in the enquirer coloured Van Mildert's thinking on scruples. 'To an honest and ingenuous mind, it should seem that where a Divine Revelation is the subject in question, the only necessary enquiry to be made is that which relates to the matter of fact, whether such a Revelation has been made or not.' To apply external standards, whether of morality or of consistency, to an alleged Revelation was to 'set up reason as an object of idolatry', to be guilty of uncreaturely arrogance.→ Van Mildert saw questions of belief not in intellectual but in moral terms: 'To a truly benevolent mind there is nothing so painful as the contemplation of Infidelity....whatever sins may oppress the wounded spirit, none are absolutely remediless but wilful and obstinate Unbelief.'¹⁰

Van Mildert laid no claim to the role of theological knight-errant, riding into the unknown forest to seek out, make trial of, and accept or overthrow new insights. His concern was with the defence of the beleaguered citadel, and principally with the morale of the defenders. He examined the fortifications in order to pronounce them strong; he examined the foes in order to declare their villainy. 'Liberality of

sentiment' was a luxury he could not afford. In his terms, it must be equated with 'indifference to truth'.¹¹

There was a further radical disparity between Van Mildert's theological position and that of the early Boyle lecturers. 'Both in retrospect and at the time, the most significant intellectual achievement of the Boyle lecturers in the period 1692-1714 was the integration of Newtonian natural philosophy as the new underpinning of liberal Protestant social ideology.'¹² Van Mildert drew his main inspiration from the 'High Church counterblast to the new philosophy and the natural theology based on it',¹³ the Hutchinsonian school.

John Hutchinson (1674-1737) was the son of a Yorkshire yeoman who made a career as a superior servant to the gentry, finally becoming land steward to the Duke of Somerset. Having learnt some mathematics as a boy from a gentleman lodger of his father's, Hutchinson became interested in theological approaches to natural history through acquaintance with John Woodward, the Duke's physician.

Woodward was an amateur of geology with 'a wider first-hand experience of rocks and fossils than any of the other writers of the period'. In 1695 he published his Essay toward a Natural History of the Earth, which argued that 'all fossiliferous strata had been laid down horizontally at the time of the Deluge'. Woodward's work had a strong theological aspect: he 'gave the concordance of nature and scripture as one of his chief motives for writing the work', while at the same time offering his own novel interpretation of the Deluge, 'not...as a punitive event but as a means of reforming the Earth into a

physical state more suited to fallen men'.¹⁴

Hutchinson, fascinated, supplied Woodward with a quantity of valuable fossils acquired through his work as superintendent of the Duke's mines. He understood that Woodward intended to use them as evidence for a book establishing the historical accuracy of the Genesis Flood narrative. When it became apparent to Hutchinson that Woodward had no serious thought of writing such a book, he tried in disgust to repossess his fossils, but was outmanoeuvred when Woodward bequeathed his collections to the University of Cambridge. He also decided to take over the literary project himself.

In 1724, Hutchinson resigned his position to free himself for theology. His first work, Moses' Principia, appeared later that year, to be followed by regular sequels. By the time of his death, thirteen years later, his published and unpublished works filled twelve large volumes.

Hutchinson was neither polished nor diplomatic in his writings, and many of his theories were highly unorthodox - as was his educational background. The contemporary academic world treated him for the most part with scornful indifference. Hutchinson in his turn lavished invective on those who disagreed with him, a habit which some in particular of his Scottish followers maintained, and which alienated many potential sympathizers. 'It is not....easy,' the Scottish Bishop Gleig wrote to Boucher in 1802, 'for a man to keep his temper when he hears a blockhead call Bishop Bull a deist, and Newton an atheist, merely because the former conceived of the Trinity in Unity in a way somewhat different from Hutchinson,

and because the latter made use of terms in science which Hutchinson did not approve....The intolerance of the Scottish Hutchinsonians is the greatest objection that I have to them. '15

Hutchinson's theology was founded on a revolutionary new method of interpreting the Hebrew language, designed by himself and entirely unfettered by academic respectability, which involved the abandonment of all pointing as a late Jewish invention intended to mislead the faithful. Central to his thought was the conception of God's self-revelation to mankind as a threefold action in which the initiative was wholly with the Divine. Mankind had never been left without a sufficient knowledge of God, because the cosmos itself had been designed to offer a perfect illustration of the nature of the Triune - the ultimate visual aid. Nature, Hutchinson held, is sustained in being, and all its phenomena produced, by the action of a mystic trimorphous fluid or aether. Known as the $\text{ד}^{\text{א}} \text{ש} \text{ו}$ (Names, or Heavens), or sometimes the Cherubim, this fluid assumes the three interconvertible states of Fire, Light and Air/Spirit ($\text{א} \text{ל} \text{ו}$), whose relationship is an accurate analogy of that between the Persons in the Godhead. 15 All idolatry is ultimately reducible to a misplaced worship of the $\text{ד}^{\text{א}} \text{ש} \text{ו}$, the created mechanism, rather than the Creator. Hutchinson is thus enabled to offer explanations, persuasive on their own terms, of the Old Testament fire miracles, and of much else besides.

Because fallen mankind's understanding of the primal revelation was so readily corrupted, God as an act of grace revealed the secret of writing to Moses, inaugurating a second

phase of theophany - the inspired composition of the Old Testament. For this purpose the Hebrew language was 'framed in Paradise' to be the perfect vehicle for the expression of all religious and philosophical truths, 'with this particularity, that each root is taken from some particular beast, bird, plant, flower, or some other sensible object, and employed to represent some very obvious idea of action or condition raised by such sensible object, from whence it is further carried to signify spiritual or material things, of which we can frame ideas only by the help of material or bodily things.'¹⁷

Of the third divine act, the Incarnation of the Second Person of the Trinity to correct mankind's corrupt understanding of the Law and Prophets, Hutchinson had comparatively little to say - the main thrust of his lifework was directed elsewhere. But it was axiomatic to his system, that the three phases of God's self-revelation were mutually consistent. Suggestions that parts of the Old Testament might be incompatible with parts of the New, or that either might conflict with the established truths of natural philosophy, offended Hutchinson deeply. However well-reasoned the suggestion might be, however eminent the proponent, it could be due only to probably wilful misinterpretation, to ignorance, or to an obstinate refusal to acknowledge divine truth.

Hutchinson's reconciliation of the Book of God's Works with the Book of God's Word depended on extensive rewriting of both; his writings were filled with the ramifications of his maverick Hebraic etymology 'and dealt much in types and emblems, to which, however, it is impossible to deny the praise of great

ingenuity';¹⁶ the fancifulness of his interpretations, and his habit of emending the Sacred Text where it had become so corrupt as to refuse the interpretation he wished it to bear, provided his opponents with plenty of useful ammunition in the controversies which followed. Politically, too, Hutchinson's writings were little to the authorities' liking. His exposition in The use of reason recovered by the data in Christianity of the biblical basis for a high doctrine of kingship had a sinister sound in Hanoverian ears. His followers' defence of 'the justly exploded doctrine of absolute passive obedience'¹⁷ caused Benjamin Kennicott - who, as a leading Hebraist, had his own reasons for resenting Hutchinson - to accuse them openly of Jacobite sympathies, in his anonymous A Word to the Hutchinsonians (1756). On all these grounds, Hutchinsonian beliefs were an obstacle to ecclesiastical preferment: 'the Bps are all entered into a league never to promote them [Hutchinsonians]' wrote Horne in his commonplace book, adding 'Gods will be done Sir & we are content - we shall always reverence and obey our superiors in the church....'²⁰ Hutchinson's followers remained unpopular throughout 'the long Whig hegemony which covered the reigns of the first two Georges. Only after the accession of the "Tory" monarch George III was any Hutchinsonian given preferment by the state.'²¹

Hutchinson's ideas proved far more resilient than their glaring deficiencies might suggest. The first major Hutchinsonian controversy was generated by a sermon which Alexander Stopford Catcott, an early convert to the school, preached before the Corporation of Bristol in 1735; the last,

at the end of the century, by the publication of Jones' Life of Horne. Jones, Horne, Stevens, Daubeny 'and most of their theological allies, were Hutchinsonians. Jones, in particular, defended the Hutchinsonian principles with some rigour; and he was not without the zealous support of some younger disciples.' Among the younger members of the circle, Van Mildert 'was in early life a convert to this system', but neither Joshua Watson nor Norris was convinced of its validity.²² Hutchinsonianism was an integral part of the theological ambience of Stevens' circle: for most of the older members, Moses' Principia and its sequels had been the great cause espoused in their youth, not lightly to be thrown aside. As late as 1832 one of the circle, William Kirby (1759-1850), gave Hutchinson's physico-theology an airing, albeit without acknowledgement, in his Bridgewater treatise.²³ Such durability is a convincing demonstration that Hutchinson's theology, however 'aptly chastiz'd' by Kennicott's quotation from the Dunciad,²⁴ touched upon themes of abiding concern, offering answers to some of the questions which most perplexed High Churchmen in his day.

Hutchinson's thought was radically anti-Enlightenment. No part of his work shows any of the 'marks of enlightenment: an indifference to sectarian ecclesiology, a respect for secular learning and science, an increasing tolerance, an undogmatic moralism, a zeal for the practical good works of education and charity, a tendency to ignore all but the few essential doctrines of the faith.'²⁵ Hutchinson's lack of tolerance was proverbial; ecclesiology was, to him and his followers, not a peripheral matter but central to the basis of redemption; and

few indeed were the doctrines of the faith which he regarded as inessential. As to the proper role of secular learning, the Hutchinsonian view was that 'What commonly passes under the name of learning, is a knowledge of Heathen books: it should always be admitted with great precautions.'²⁶ Science they valued, but only on their own terms; they parted from the accepted Newtonian model at a number of points. Secular metaphysics and moral philosophy, in particular, were 'held so detestable by the founder of This Sect, that in a book called the Religion of Satan or Antichrist delineated, he treats the duties taught by Nature and Reason as the Religion of the Devil.'²⁷

The dominating characteristic of Hutchinson's thought was its God-centredness. To him, certainty was grounded not in the perceptions of the individual, which can give knowledge only of the merely material, but in the gracious initiative of the Trinity. Fallen mankind could recognise spiritual truth only because God chose to reveal it to them. Hutchinson thus articulated High Church anxieties about the anthropocentric individualism of much rationalist theology. No less concerned than the early Boyle Lecturers to combat Deism and Infidelity, Hutchinson adopted an entirely different battle-plan. Cruising with blindfold innocency among the ontological paradoxes, he eschewed all attempts to defend Christianity by reason alone: not only 'that simple and sublime argument a priori, which, by offering to us infallible demonstration, cuts off at once all doubt and difficulty',²⁸ but the Argument from Design as well.

Hutchinsonians were always at pains to deny that they

disputed the reasonableness of Christianity. Although the corrupt human reason was unable by itself to form a correct theological opinion, it was fully capable of recognising revealed truth; for the human intellect was created to enable mankind to contemplate the self-revelation of God. Those who refused to accept the Gospel did so not because of sincere inability to recognise its truth, but from a perverse and sinful reliance on their own intellectual self-sufficiency, for which they were justly damned. Their need was for repentance. Well-meaning attempts to lead them to God by arguments from first principles would only reinforce their idolatrous trust in the primacy of their own judgement.²⁷ It was the reasonableness of rationalism that Hutchinsonians disputed.

What gave urgency to their condemnations of Natural Religion was their conviction that a man's salvation depended wholly on his willingness to accept the Gospel. Hutchinsonians had no patience with the Enlightenment's Pelagianizing concern for 'undogmatic moralism'. 'A system may be fabricated, and called natural; but a religion it cannot be', Jones wrote, in the apologia for Hutchinsonianism with which he prefaced the second edition of his Life of Horne in 1799. Acceptance of such systems had 'produced the deistical substitution of naked morality, or Turkish honesty, for the doctrines of intercession, redemption, and divine grace'²⁸ - a disastrous substitution, for man was entirely impotent to achieve his own salvation. Obedience to the revealed will of God was the one necessary virtue.

Van Mildert's own relation to Hutchinsonianism at the time

of writing his Boyle lectures was complex. He had abandoned - if, indeed, he ever held them - the more spectacularly eccentric Hutchinsonian tenets: his explanation of the Tower of Babel, for example, differed markedly from the classical Hutchinsonian account.³¹ His Appendices gave a few references to the works of Hutchinson, and he made copious use of the works of Jones, Horne and Daubeny; but it was not specifically for Hutchinsonianism that he used them.

The Hutchinsonian influence on Van Mildert's Boyle lectures was of two distinct kinds, corresponding to the main division of the series into two blocks. In the second dozen of lectures, which Van Mildert devoted to a detailed examination of the proper role of Reason in the defence of the Faith, the basic Hutchinsonian emphasis on the inadequacy of the unaided human intellect to discover spiritual truth is frequently apparent, particularly in the fourteenth lecture. Headed 'The Inability of Man to frame a Religion for himself', this was the section which Van Mildert found most difficult to write. Preparing it for publication took him from December 1805 until the following April, with a number of drastic revisions and much anxious consultation with Joshua Watson. On April 2nd he sent the manuscript to Watson for a 'last revision', adding that he had 'endeavoured to clear it as much as possible of exceptionable matter, and have revised it throughout. On looking over it again I am somewhat more at ease about it than I was, when in a sort of panic I sent it to you....'³² The air of unshakable certainty which pervaded all Van Mildert's writings reflected his sense of serving the needs of the Church Militant in

dangerous times; it concealed deep uncertainty about his own personal adequacies.³³

The source of Van Mildert's difficulties with chapter fourteen seems to have been that, while fully convinced of 'the inability of man to discover by the light of Nature the Attributes or even the Existence of God', he was not deaf to the lure of the Argument from Design as propounded by Paley, and saw the danger that attacking 'what is called Natural Religion' might 'furnish Atheism with the shadow of an apology.'³⁴

For guidance through the minefield, Van Mildert relied heavily on Ellis' Knowledge of divine things from Revelation, not from Reason or Nature, a work praised by Horne³⁵ for 'shewing by plain argument, and undoubted evidence of facts, whence all our knowledge of divine things ever was, and ever must be derived.' Horne's wish that 'some proper hand would reduce the argument of that book to a compendium, for the benefit of the younger students in divinity' was met by the inclusion of a version abridged by Ellis himself in The Scholar Armed against the Errors of the Times, a collection of reprinted tracts edited by Jones and Stevens. The full text was out of print and becoming rare; Van Mildert 'wished, that it were reprinted, and put into the hands of theological students, who would find it an admirable preservative against many prevailing errors of the present day,' lamenting that Ellis' original design 'was never completed'.³⁶

The fourteenth chapter, as printed, offered a moderate and carefully reasoned exposition of the Hutchinsonian case. Van

Mildert argued from history, from Scripture ('for the satisfaction of the Believer rather than of the Infidel') and from the nature of the human cognitive process, that only a Divine revelation could give reliable 'knowledge of the true God, and of His Will with respect to us', which was 'the foundation of all Religion'. A priori demonstration of the nature, attributes or existence of God was 'beyond the reach of man'; arguments from Nature, although their power as corroborative testimony to the revealed truth justified comparison with the role of the Baptist in relation to Christ, could not in themselves generate 'any firm and settled conviction'.³⁷

Here is seen in Van Mildert's school, derived from Hutchinson, a continuous tradition of opposition to a natural theology and a religion of evidences based on reason alone, before Coleridge and Newman. Newman certainly must have known of this tradition, which writers on the nineteenth century have often overlooked in stressing the originality of Coleridge and other Romantic writers on this point.³⁸

Van Mildert's chief anxiety about Natural Religion was the same as Hutchinson's: that it encouraged man 'to act as if he were an independent Being, self-created, self-redeemed, self-sanctified.'³⁹ It took no account of the Fall and the consequent impairment of human reasoning abilities; it 'makes no provision for our wants and infirmities, provides no remedy for our corruptions, offers no atonement for our offences, has no redeemer, no Sanctifier, no means of grace, no covenanted terms of acceptance.'⁴⁰ Its adherents would face a grim disillusionment before the Judgement Seat.

Having demonstrated the vital importance of Revelation, Van Mildert accepted, with Hutchinson, that the central question became that of the status of the Bible text. 'Every argument brought to prove the truth of Revealed Religion may be considered as intended ultimately to establish the Divine Inspiration of the Scriptures. For if it were admitted that, notwithstanding the signs and wonders by which the Divine authority of Revelation was attested, the Scriptures which contain the records and the substance of that Revelation may...be regarded as merely human productions; all their doctrines might be deemed liable to error, and nothing would remain to be believed, but a certain number of historical facts, wonderful indeed in their kind, but of little moment to after ages.'⁴¹

Although Van Mildert followed Hutchinson in basing his arguments for the inspiration of Scripture on the veracity of God, he tried to 'avoid superfluous niceties of discussion' by adopting a model which he termed plenary inspiration. This he defined with apparent flexibility: the Holy Spirit, having impressed the knowledge of supernatural truths upon the minds of the 'Sacred Writers', superintended their labours sufficiently to guard against 'important error'. In principle, Scripture might contain 'errors unconnected with the main design of the Revelation'; and, parting from Hutchinson, Van Mildert saw no reason to demand an exact correspondence between the truths of Scripture and the findings of human science. In practice, however, he argued that since 'no certain criterion can be fixed, by which to judge what is really inspired, and

what is not', the only prudent course was to accept the whole canonical library as 'universally binding'.⁴² Van Mildert equated his doctrine with Warburton's 'partial inspiration'.⁴³

Van Mildert defended the plenary inspiration of Scripture with an argument which he found 'plain and convincing'. The books of the Old and New Testaments 'were either written by persons who exhibited positive proofs of their acting under immediate authority from God, or were expressly sanctioned by persons of such a description.' The trustworthiness of God guaranteed that these proofs could not be counterfeited.⁴⁴

By 'positive proofs' Van Mildert meant miracles and prophecies, to each of which he had already devoted a full lecture. He saw these not as demonstrations of supernatural power for power's sake, but as mighty acts illuminating respectively the omnipotence and omniscience of God, which not only attested the Divine mandate of the agents by whom they were performed, but also themselves comprised a part of the revelation of God's redemptive purpose.

Testing the evidence for alleged proofs of Divine authority was, in Van Mildert's scheme, a wholly legitimate use of the human intellect, provided that it did not lead to unorthodox conclusions. Moreover, supernatural occurrences 'being extraordinary facts, an extraordinary degree of evidence in support of them may reasonably be expected.' He therefore devoted a long and careful argument to establishing the historical reality, in purely human terms, of the biblical miracles and prophecies. They were openly and publicly performed or delivered; were attested by written records whose

accuracy was supported by an unbroken historical chain of acceptance and of commemorative practice, although they were from the first 'jealously scrutinised by an inquisitive and unbelieving age'; were compatible with independent contemporary records from non-Jewish and non-Christian sources; and their authors were men who had no motive to write anything but truth. For all these reasons, 'their certainty, as matters of fact, can only be invalidated, by destroying the very foundations of all human testimony.'

Historical investigation might be acceptable, but to question the reality of supernatural events on a priori grounds - the given example was Hume's Essay on Miracles - was to stray into the domain of sinful presumption. 'Their possibility cannot be denied, without denying the very nature of God, as an all-powerful Being: their probability cannot be questioned, without questioning His moral perfections'.⁴⁵

Besides his 'plain and convincing' argument, Van Mildert extracted corroborative testimony to the Divine inspiration of Scripture from the sheer scope of 'the Christian scheme' of redemption, 'a design....the completion of which was not to take place till many ages after its commencement, and which was to be carried on by persons remote from and unconnected with each other, of dissimilar habits and conditions of life, with no worldly motives for prosecuting such an undertaking, and dependent upon all the contingencies of human events for it's ultimate success. Here is something....entirely out of the common course of human invention; and he who can attribute the formation of it to the ingenuity and foresight of man, might,

with almost equal reason, contend for the formation of the Universe by a fortuitous concourse of atoms, and make Chance the object of his worship.'⁴⁶

Hard as Van Mildert laboured to establish the reality of 'the Divine afflatus', he set his face firmly against the possibility of contemporary manifestations. There was no further need for 'extraordinary Inspiration', for 'the great work of Revelation is completed, and the written oracles of God are transmitted to us, containing the fullest declaration of the Divine Will.' The 'age of extraordinary Inspiration' was gone by, 'with that of Miracles and Prophecy'. There remained only 'Enthusiasts and Impostors', whose spiritual forebears had embarrassed the Divine Plan from the beginning: 'men yielding to the reveries of wild imagination, or artfully availing themselves of the credulity of mankind', whose activities 'sap the foundations of our Faith', threatening all hope of security in religious truth.⁴⁷ For Van Mildert, the test for the presence of the Holy Spirit was that its activities should be confined to the proper channels.

Van Mildert's first twelve lectures were devoted to a history of Infidelity in all its forms. Here the influence of Hutchinsonian thought was less overtly apparent, but the whole basic thesis, that the persistence and spread of incorrect religious notions of all shades were due to a massive anti-Christian programme devised and directed by the Devil, was one with which Hutchinson would have been wholly comfortable.

In 1797 and 1798 were published two books, by independent authors, which offered documentary evidence of what many

already suspected: that the French Revolution was the fruit of a monstrous plot to destroy Christianity. The emigré Abbé Barruel compiled his Mémoire pour servir a l'histoire du Jacobinisme around the theory of a 'grand international conspiracy led by the Freemasons, Encyclopedists, and the mysterious Bavarian Illuminati.... Barruel traced the conspiracy from the mediaeval Order of Templars to the Enlightenment, where it fell under the control not only of the Freemasons but of their atheistic, literary, and political allies, Voltaire, Turgot, Condorcet, Diderot, d'Holbach, and d'Alembert. From 1776 onwards, Condorcet, in alliance with the Abbe Sièyes, had constructed the Jacobin revolutionary organisation that finally launched the Revolution.'⁴⁸ Robison, a Scottish mathematician, entitled his work Proofs of a Conspiracy against all the Religions and Governments of Europe, carried on in the secret meetings of Freemasons, Illuminati and Reading Societies. The description of Barruel and Robison by Beilby Porteus as 'two different authors, of different countries and different religions, and writing without the least concert or communication with each other'⁴⁹ was substantially correct, although the two men had in fact met.

Barruel and Robison had caught the mood of the moment. Robison's opus went through five editions in two years. Porteus puffed them in his 1798 charge to the London clergy, Horsley in his 1800 charge to the Rochester clergy; Tomline, influential Bishop of Lincoln, also took up their thesis. Van Mildert, who had given 'attentive consideration' to Mounier's refutation of the Barruel-Robison theory, devoted a careful note to the

controversy. While agreeing that Mounier's attempt to 'vindicate, not only himself, but the whole fraternity of French and German philosophers, from the charge of conspiracy against the Christian religion' succeeded in clearing Mounier himself, 'one of the best intentioned and ablest of the French Revolutionists', Van Mildert remained satisfied of the substantial accuracy of Barruel and Robison. Their works, he declared, 'contain such a mass of well-authenticated evidence respecting the associations on the Continent for the overthrow of Christianity, as can hardly leave a doubt respecting the general facts, whatever apprehension may arise that in the detail of the circumstances some inaccuracies may have occurred.'⁵⁰

So impressed was Van Mildert by the Barruel-Robison theory that he determined to place it in its wider context. On a canvas which grew beyond his original allocation of eight lectures to take up the full first volume of his Boyle Sermons, he traced the anti-Christian conspiracy back to the Beginning and laid it squarely at the door of its originator: the 'Prince of the Fallen Angels', the 'Arch-Deceiver of mankind', the 'Author and Worker of all Spiritual Evil', the 'great Adversary of our Redemption.' The whole history was presented as a sustained exposition of Genesis 3.15, 'And I will put enmity between thee and the Woman, and between thy seed, and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.'

Van Mildert conceived human history as essentially static. Mankind was engaged not in advancing from ignorance into understanding, but in a conflict whose material features never

altered: 'as there has been no period of time in which God ever "left himself without witness," or ever left mankind without some means of knowing his divine will; so has there been none, in which the fatal influence of the tempter's endeavours to seduce men from that faith in the revealed will of God, which is the foundation of all true religion, was not manifestly evident.'¹ On the one side were ranked the partisans of 'the Gospel system' - Jews faithful to the Old Covenant, primitive Christians, Fathers of the Church, the Eastern Churches which, 'however sunk in idolatry and corruption, made a long and vigorous resistance to the unjust usurpations of the Roman Pontiffs'; the Reformers, with their precursors the Waldenses and Albigenses; Christian champions in every generation, some with 'distinguished names', many unsung. On the other side stood the teeming hordes of Satan, whether dupes or willing collaborators: pagans, backsliding Jews, Jews who clung to the Old Covenant and perversely refused to acknowledge the Messiah, heretics, Muslims, Schoolmen, Inquisitors, Papists, Protestant schismatics, Deists, philosophic infidels and heterodox theologians of every description. The Church was preserved through the heroic exertions of the faithful in every age, backed up by the certainty of victory through the power of her Redeemer. Stirring stuff - but, like all military propaganda, it employed a crude and externalised doctrine of evil. Men (and women²) were polarised into two types, Good and Bad. They might enlist under the banner of Redemption or Corruption, but they were not allowed a foot in each camp. Even unsatisfactory 'Sects of professing Christians', whose 'injury to the Gospel'

Van Mildert was willing to presume unintentional, ought to have known better: 'it highly concerns them seriously to consider the mischiefs which have flowed from their erroneous principles'.³³

The accusation of Manicheism levelled against this analysis was one which Van Mildert foresaw, and took pains to guard against. His doctrine, he insisted, was not that of the Manichees, 'that there is an Evil Principle in the Universe coeval and co-equal with God himself', but that of Scripture. The sacred writings 'instruct us concerning this Wicked One, not that he was originally created evil, nor that he was self-existent, but that he was created of an angelical nature, and was cast down from his exalted station and dignity in punishment of his rebellion against the Most High....The fall of this rebellious Spirit from his original state of dignity and happiness, is a decisive proof of his impotence in comparison with the Almighty. It implies also that he was previously in favour with God; and thus shews that he was not originally of an evil nature.'³⁴

On the origin of evil, Van Mildert was not willing to be definite. The Devil's hatred of mankind 'must be supposed to have arisen from his previous hostility to man's Creator and Redeemer...., the ground of which is not discoverable by human reason, nor is it fully explained to us in the sacred Word.' Further enquiry into 'this dark and mysterious subject....will terminate either in impiety and atheism, or in that implicit reliance on God's good pleasure, which arises out of a firm belief of his moral perfections, and a just sense of our

inability to fathom the depths of Omniscience.'⁵⁵

Van Mildert's insistence that God at no time left mankind without a sufficient knowledge of religious truth was central to his whole argument: it enabled him to declare that infidelity was always caused by pride and perversity. Having deduced from details of the Genesis narrative that animal sacrifice, 'the doctrine of atonement by blood', formed part of the 'Covenant of Grace' made with Adam and Eve on their expulsion from Eden, he traced all religious systems employing animal sacrifice to idolatrous corruption of the original Covenant. 'Nothing is more unaccountable, on any principle of Natural Religion, than this institution....Whence, indeed, could the Heathen derive their notion of it's efficacy, but from Revelation?' The oracles of pagan religions were similarly claimed as 'clear and indisputable proof....of the reality of some Divine communications.' Van Mildert scorned the Deist explanation of 'Heathenism....as the harmless invention of poor unenlightened mortals, labouring, with good intentions, but under invincible ignorance, to discover the true God, and to perform to him an acceptable service.'⁵⁶

One effect of this emphasis was to minimise the uniqueness of the Incarnation. In Van Mildert's epic, the coming of Christ was a turning-point only for the Jews: thenceforth, simply to be a Jew was sufficient evidence of sinful self-reliance. For the Gentiles, nothing was really changed. The divine plan of redemption was inaugurated in the Covenant of Grace made with Adam and Eve after the Fall; from that point on, 'it was ordained' that each individual's 'title to pardon and

acceptance should depend upon faith in his Redeemer, and that a want of that faith should no less certainly expose him to irrecoverable misery and destruction',⁵⁷ regardless of the particular time at which that individual happened to have been born. The Crucifixion featured, if anything, more prominently in the diabolical than the Divine plan; the Resurrection functioned chiefly as an especially convincing miracle. Van Mildert's Christ was thin on humanity, a 'heavenly Instructor' whose teaching was 'persuasive and authoritative, beyond the power of human eloquence' and who 'repeatedly accused the Jews of wilful unbelief, in their rejection of his claims.' Love, as a concept or even as a word, scarcely figured in Van Mildert's version of the Divine strategy, and there was certainly no place for embarrassing pronouncements about forgiveness of enemies; although the twenty-fourth and final sermon did conclude with an exhortation to 'beseech God, to "have mercy on all Jews, Turks, Infidels, and Heretics;....and so to fetch them home to his flock, that they may be saved among the remnant of the true Israelites, and be made one fold under one Shepherd...."'⁵⁸

Looking to the Last Things, Van Mildert took a view which by the standards of his own day was moderate and judicious. There were, he explained, 'several important events yet to take place....before the Millennium'. The reign of Antichrist he identified both with the Ottoman Empire in the East and with the Papal See in the West; he thought that their destruction, a necessary prelude to the End, might not be very distant, given the 'present political aspect of affairs'. The ministry of the

Two Witnesses had already begun: 57 Van Mildert offered two possible identifications of the Witnesses, either with Western and Eastern Christendom, or with 'the Protestant Churches witnessing against Papal Rome, and in the East, the Greek Churches bearing testimony against Mahometans and Pagans'. Their 'figurative death and resurrection', whatever that might portend, was probably still to come. Finally, there was the conversion of the Jews. Van Mildert was fairly liberal about the Jews. Although he regularly described them as 'under the influence of that Apostate Spirit to whose suggestions they had ever been prone to yield', 'ever watchful to exercise their hatred towards the disciples of the crucified Messiah', 'inveterate foes of Truth', he also deplored the 'barbarous persecution, which the Jews from time to time experienced under Christian governments,' 'such acts of cruelty and such vindictive retaliation of injuries, as disgraced the profession of the Gospel'. He gave the remnant of the Old Israel a prominent place in his eschatological scheme: 'as it is almost impossible not to perceive the hand of God in the strange vicissitudes that have hitherto befallen that wonderful people; so it is hardly to be doubted that they are thus miraculously preserved for some astonishing and greatly beneficial purpose, yet to be accomplished.' 60

He did not commit himself on the precise nature of the Millenium: whether, as 'the earlier Fathers of the Christian Church and some eminent Expositors of modern times' believed, it was to be 'a Resurrection and Triumph of the Saints' preceding the 'general and final Resurrection', or whether it

was to be 'a renovated state of the Church flourishing gloriously for one thousand years, after the conversion of the Jews and the flowing in of all nations to the Christian Faith'. Of events to be expected after the Millenium he offered only the briefest sketch. Van Mildert had given no particular attention to eschatology, although he noted it as 'a study, in which several able Divines of the present day are deeply engaged.'⁶¹ He felt that the interpretation of prophecy was a risky undertaking: 'much injury may unintentionally be done to the cause of Christianity, by crude and injudicious speculations on so important a subject.' Although in the eleventh lecture he had suggested that 'the....close of the Christian Dispensation upon earth' might well be at hand, he offered no suggestions as to timing.

In all of this scheme, Van Mildert could draw on sources of irreproachable orthodoxy in support of his arguments. All that was new about his survey was its scope: 'it does not appear,' he wrote, 'that Infidelity itself has ever been systematically treated, in order to exhibit it in it's true and proper light'.⁶² He was alive to the risk that 'such a representation of the powerful influence of the Evil Spirit' might 'give encouragement to Unbelievers, to boast of the effect of their endeavours, and to despise the Faith', but argued that 'the very existence of the Gospel at this advanced age of the world, after....such a combination of efforts to destroy it, affords a strong presumptive proof of it's Divine origin.'⁶³ Van Mildert's object in making so sustained an analysis of the Adversary's strategy was twofold. On the one hand he wanted to

establish his 'proof by survival': by demonstrating the attacks which the Gospel had already weathered, he made 'even the perverseness and folly of it's opponents serve as attestations of it's truth.' On the other hand, he aspired to 'convince the Unbeliever in how hopeless a cause he is engaged', and above all to wean well-meaning people from an attachment to contemporary radical currents of thought, by making them aware of the true context.

In writing his Boyle Lectures, Van Mildert may have had in mind the hope of Jones,⁴⁴ 'that if some man were to arise, with abilities for the purpose, well prepared in his learning, and able to guide his words with discretion; and...were to take up the principles called Hutchinsonian, and do them justice; the world would find it much harder to stand against him than they are aware of....One man, as powerful in truth as Voltaire was in error, might produce very unexpected alterations, and in less time than he did. Then might a new aera of learning succeed; as friendly to the Christian cause, as the learning which has been growing up amongst us for the last hundred years has been hostile and destructive.'

The wilder glories of this vision were unrealised; but with the delivery and publication of the Boyle Sermons Van Mildert was established, if not precisely as a household name, at least as a sound and able divine. A second edition was called for in 1807 and appeared, delayed by Van Mildert's determination to expand the Appendices, early in 1808. A third edition was produced in 1820, a fourth in 1831, and the fourth was reprinted for the Memorial Edition of his complete works in

1838. This was celebrity of a gratifying kind: less spectacular than Robison's, but more lasting.

There were other marks of success. Archbishop Moore was now dead, but his successor at Canterbury, Charles Manners-Sutton, graciously accepted the dedication of the Sermons. The work was well received in the hierarchy: Ives quotes congratulatory letters from Porteus and from Dampier of Rochester. Its reputation was sustained for the rest of Van Mildert's life, and the official memorial sermon preached in Durham Cathedral after his death paid particular tribute to this first and, in many ways, most influential of his mature works.⁵⁵

Van Mildert was certainly 'well prepared in his learning'. The footnotes and appendices to his Lectures made detailed use of more than three hundred works in four languages, English, French, Latin and Greek, besides a citation of Parkhurst's Hebrew Lexicon. The range of subjects included linguistic, textual and interpretative studies of the Bible, history sacred and secular, philosophy ancient and modern, past Boyle, Bampton, Warburton and Lady Moyer's Lectures, writings of the Fathers and the Reformers, sermons celebrated and obscure. In view of Van Mildert's strictures against German theologians, it is interesting to find him using without pejorative comment Herbert Marsh's translation of Michaelis' Introduction to the New Testament, if only for a note on the dating of the Codex Bezae; the publication of Marsh's work, in 1801, caused considerable controversy.⁵⁶

Van Mildert had not, he assured his readers, 'shrunk from the painful task of wading through volumes of ribaldry,

profaneness, and impiety, no less disgusting to a well-principled mind, than dangerous to those who are ignorant of the Adversary's devices'. His references to works of this kind were however very few, 'since they are such as every true Christian and real Philanthropist must wish to be, if possible, consigned for ever to oblivion.'⁶⁷

Van Mildert's familiarity with the branchings of divinity was by now so exhaustive as to have given rise to a parlour game: 'his familiar friends would sometimes amuse themselves by bringing any rare volume of theology which they had casually met with, open it in his presence without shewing him the title, read a page or a paragraph, and ask him whether he recognised the author; a question which he seldom failed to answer.'⁶⁸

Unfriendly reviewers might conclude from Van Mildert's readiness to disclose his sources that his work was that of 'a merely industrious compiler'. As Ives pointed out, there was a sense in which that was necessarily true: 'The first, i.e. the historical, part, were it entirely new, or invented, would be no better than a cunningly devised fable - a false accusation against the Evil One, and his disciples; and respecting the latter half, which is the Refutation, it might have been scarcely possible in the course of that, to adduce any solid arguments, which had not in some shape previously been alleged.' Van Mildert was not a person to pursue originality for its own sake: 'there has rarely been known a mind less ambitious to strike out novelties, or more distrustful of them when urged by others upon his notice'.⁶⁹

On the other hand, Van Mildert's approach to his chosen authorities was neither arbitrary nor uncritical. When he felt that a case had not been made, he was willing to say so, even of the pronouncements of 'an eminent biblical scholar' or of a tract in The Scholar Armed.⁷⁰ Although he saw no virtue and some danger in the multiplication of opinions, he was prepared to offer careful summaries in areas where no one view had found general acceptance among the orthodox - such, for example, as the question of the original evangelisation of Britain.⁷¹ His Lectures were not an ungainly assemblage of nuggets hacked from other men's works, but a well-digested whole with a strong internal cohesion. Despite the uncompromising nature of his analysis, he refrained scrupulously from personal invective or shrillness of tone, and his style 'flowed...naturally, from a powerful and comprehensive understanding.'⁷² Van Mildert wore his massive scholarship lightly. His sermons are still surprisingly easy to read.

1. Ives, vol.1, p.20. Cf. W. Van Mildert, An historical view of the rise and progress of Infidelity, with a refutation of it's principles and reasonings; in a series of [Sermons] preached for the Lecture founded by the Hon. Robert Boyle, 2nd edition, London (F.C. and J. Rivington, 1808), vol.1, p.v
2. Extract from Boyle's will (1691), in Sermons, vol.1, pp.vii-viii.
3. C.B. [Wilde], 'Hutchinsonianism, Natural Philosophy and Religious Controversy in 18th Century Britain', in History of Science, vol.xviii (1980), pp.1-24; p.7
4. Williams, Gastrell, Bradford and Blackall. It would be unjust to see these men as lackeys of the new political regime: Gastrell refused to vote for the Bill of Penalties against Atterbury; Blackall opposed Hoadly, and behind him the Government, during the Bangorian controversy.
5. J.J. Dahm, 'Science and Apologetics in the Early Boyle Lectures', in Church History, vol.39 (1970), no.2, pp.172-186; p.175 note 17. Sermons, vol.1, pp.xxi-xxv, gives a nearly complete list of lecturers and their subjects to 1807.
6. W. Van Mildert, Diary for 1816, entry for January 14th. Van Mildert Papers.
7. Sermons, vol.1, p.408
8. Ibid., vol.2, pp.3,7. Cf. the view of Jones of Nayland that 'confirmed infidelity...is a deaf adder, never to be charmed' and that 'many forsake truth, because they hate it': W. Jones (ed.), The [Works of] the Right Reverend George [Horne], D.D., Late Lord Bishop of Norwich; to which are prefixed Memoirs of his Life, Studies, and Writings, 2nd edition, London (F.C. and J. Rivington, 1818), preface to second edition (dated July 30th 1799), vol.1, p.xxx
9. Sermons, vol.2, pp.9-10
10. Ibid., p.431
11. Ibid., p.431. Cf. The Charges of Samuel Horsley, late Lord Bishop of St. Asaph; delivered at his several Visitations of the Dioceses of St. David's, Rochester, and St. Asaph, Dundee (1813), p.44, and C. [Daubeny], A Guide to the Church, in Several Discourses, London (T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1798), p.160: 'that too general indifference for all religious opinions, which under the fallacious term of liberality of sentiment, now prevails'.
12. M.C. Jacob, The Newtonians and the English Revolution 1689-1720, Sussex (The Harvester Press, 1976), p.163. In Bentley's inaugural series of lectures 'the Newtonian natural philosophy received its first and highly simplified explanation

aimed at a nonspecialist audience' (ibid., p.29).

13. Wilde, p.9

14. M.J.S. Rudwick, The Meaning of Fossils, London (Macdonald, 1972), pp.82-4. For the wider influence of Woodward's work, pp. 87,90,91. Jones became interested in fossils through reading Woodward's treatise: Works of Horne, vol.1, p.11.

15. Gleig to Boucher, 1802; quoted in Churton, vol.1, pp.40-1.

16. Wilde, pp.4-6, summarises Hutchinson's cosmology in detail.

17. D. Forbes, A Letter to a Bishop, concerning some Important Discoveries in Philosophy and Theology, in The Whole Works of the Right Honourable Duncan Forbes, Late Lord President of the Court of Session, London & Edinburgh [no date given], vol.2, tract 1; p.12

18. Churton, vol.1, p.40

19. [A Word to the Hutchinsonians]: or Remarks on Three extraordinary Sermons lately preached before the University of Oxford, by The Reverend Dr. Patten, The Reverend Mr. Wetherall, and The Reverend Mr. Horne. By A Member of the University. London (1756), p.16; cf. p.23. The attribution to Kennicott is in the British Library Catalogue of Printed Books.

William Stevens would never attend public prayers on November 5th: his 'sense of the benefits resulting from the arrival of the Dutch deliverer' was not keen. (Churton, vol.1, p.30)

20. G. Horne, Common place book, Cambridge University Library Add. Ms. 8134, p.2

21. Wilde, p.11. Horne became Bishop of Norwich in 1790.

22. Churton, vol.1, pp.40-1, 57-8. See also vol.2, p.243.

23. Wilde, p.2

24. 'Here She beholds the Chaos dark and deep,
Where nameless Somethings in their causes sleep.
How Hints, like Spawn, scarce quick in Embrio lie;
How new-born Nonsense first is taught to cry.
Here one poor Word an hundred clenches makes;
And ductile Dulness new meanders takes:
There motley Images her Fancy strike;
Figures ill-paired, and Similes unlike.
She sees a mob of Metaphors advance,
Pleas'd with the Madness of the mazy dance.
All these and more the cloud-compelling Queen
Beholds thro' Fogs, that magnify the Scene;
And, tinsel'd o'er in Robes of varying Hues,
With Self-Appause her wild Creation views.'

A Word to the Hutchinsonians, p.43

25. S. Gilley, 'Christianity and Enlightenment: An Historical Survey', in History of European Ideas, vol.1 (1981), no.2, pp. 103-121; p.105
26. Works of Horne, preface to second edition, p.xxiii
27. A Word to the Hutchinsonians, p.41
28. D. Hume, Dialogues concerning Natural Religion (1779), Part IX, opening lines. Hume was building the argument up as a prelude to demolition; others, for example Clarke, thought it sound. See Van Mildert's summary in Sermons, vol.2, Appendix, p.12
29. Cf. Daubeny, p.145, on the tendency 'to offer incense to that idol of the natural man, human reason'.
30. Works of Horne, pp.xx-xxi
31. Hutchinson's characteristic interpretation of the Tower of Babel narrative maintained that God confused, not the languages of the builders but their liturgies; Van Mildert followed the orthodox translation. Van Mildert cited Hutchinson as an authority on the Plagues of Egypt and on heathen mythology (Sermons, vol.1, Appendix, pp.10-11).
32. Van Mildert to Joshua Watson, 2nd April 1806, in Churton, vol.1, pp.69-70.
33. The air of public certainty is noted by G.F.A. Best, 'The Mind and Times of William Van Mildert', in Journal of Theological Studies, New Series, Vol.XIV (1963), part 2, pp.355-70; pp.362-3. Best found it highly offensive. Private anxieties surface from time to time in Van Mildert's correspondence, and are suggested by some of his surviving written prayers.
34. Sermons, vol.2, p.65. Ives, vol.1, p.33, notes Van Mildert's use of Paley's Evidences. Paley's Natural Theology appears on a list of recommended reading prepared by Van Mildert in 1818 (Christian Remembrancer, vol.XIII (1831), p.45)
35. G. Horne, A Charge intended to have been delivered to the Clergy of Norwich, at the Primary Visitation of George, Lord Bishop of that Diocese, Norwich (Yarrington & Bacon, 1791), p.19
36. Sermons, vol.2, pp.469-71, and Appendix, pp.8-14; see especially the summary comment on p.471. Churton, vol.1, p.69, notes Van Mildert's esteem for Ellis' work; also that it was similarly esteemed by Charles Lloyd, whose lectures as Regius Professor of Divinity Churton attended at Oxford. In 1830-1 the Christian Remembrancer (vols.12 & 13) published a series of reading lists compiled by famous bishops and divines. Ellis' work appeared on Van Mildert's list [see note 34], and The Scholar Armed on most of the lists.

37. Sermons, vol.2, pp.61-5. Cf. Works of Horne, preface to second edition, p.xviii, for the apologetic value of analogies between 'divine things' and 'the natural creation'. Ives, vol.1, pp.33-4, relates how Van Mildert successfully tried the prescription of Sermons, vol.2, pp.66-7 on a young atheist.
38. See e.g. B.M.G. Reardon, Religious Thought in the Victorian Age: A Survey from Coleridge to Gore, paperback edition, New York (Longman, 1980), pp.64-72; Coleridge elaborated his opposition to Rationalism far beyond the germ embodied in Hutchinsonian thought.
39. Sermons, vol.2, p.37. Cf. Wilde, p.10: "Throughout Hutchinson's writings the notion of man's total dependence upon God...repeatedly occurs' (although Hutchinson was by no means the only eighteenth century theologian to stress this).
40. Sermons, vol.2, pp.72-5
41. Ibid., pp.389-90
42. Ibid., pp.395,403,405
43. Ibid., Appendix, pp.86-7
44. Ibid., p.401
45. Ibid., p.343; sermons XIX, XXI, XXII, passim
46. Ibid., pp.278-9
47. Ibid., pp.419,425-6
48. R.A. [Soloway], Prelates and People: Ecclesiastical Social Thought in England 1783-1852, London (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), p.36
49. B. Porteus, A Charge delivered to the Clergy of the Diocese of London, in the years 1798 and 1799, London (1799), p.8
50. Sermons, vol.1, Appendix, p.77
51. Ibid., vol.1, p.31
52. Ibid., pp.401-2
53. Ibid., p.411
54. Ibid., pp.446-7
55. Ibid., pp.2-3,30
56. Ibid., pp.38,59-62
57. Ibid., p.34

58. Ibid., vol.2, pp.465-6
59. Ibid., vol.1, pp.452-3. Soloway's note that in Van Mildert's scheme 'it was not clear whether the coming of the Two Witnesses to restore truth would be in the Protestant Church in the west, or in the remnant of the Greek Church in the east', and that Van Mildert feared that the 'corrosive influence' of Dissenters 'would interfere with the Witnesses appearing as Protestants' (Soloway, p.41), appears to be based on a misinterpretation of this passage.
60. Sermons, vol.1, pp.451-6. Authorities cited in the Appendix include 'Bishop Newton on the Prophecies', 'Sir Isaac Newton on the Apocalypse', and several Bampton Lectures. Ibid., Appendix, p.80.
61. Ibid., Appendix, p.79. See above, pp.47-8.
62. Ibid., vol.1, p.21. Cf. the comments of Ives, vol.1, p.29.
63. Ibid., pp.439-40
64. Works of Horne, preface to second edition, pp.xxix-xxx
65. Ives, vol.1, pp.23-4. In the Christian Remembrancer booklists [see note 36], Van Mildert's Boyle Sermons appear on the lists contributed by Bishop Jenkinson (undated), Archdeacon Wrangham (1820), Professor Burton (undated) and Bishop Blomfield (1826). A later list of Blomfield's cites the 23rd lecture under 'Inspiration of Scripture' and the whole second volume under 'Natural Religion'. Charles Lloyd's vast list cites the Appendices for 'the Doctrines of the Jews' and the 23rd lecture against the Unitarian objection 'Fallibility of the Writers'.
66. Sermons, vol.2, Appendix, p.50. On the controversy over 'Marsh's Michaelis', see below, pp.189-90.
67. Ibid., vol.1, p.xv. See, for example, his notes on 'Voltaire's Treatise, entitled La Philosophie de l'Histoire par feu M. l'Abbè [sic] Bazin (Sermons, vol.2, Appendix, p.54), on Gibbon (ibid., vol.1, Appendix, pp.12, 71-2; vol.2, Appendix, pp.62-3) and on 'one of those mischievous little manuals of Infidelity...circulated...by the leaders of the Anti-christian conspiracy on the Continent' (ibid., vol.2, Appendix, pp.52-3).
68. Churton, vol.1, p.73
69. Ives, vol.1, pp.28-9
70. See e.g. Sermons, vol.2, Appendix, pp.4, 11
71. Ibid., vol.1, Appendix, pp.29-30
72. Ives, vol.1, p.29

Chapter Five

Tract Warfare: The Birth of the National Society

Archbishop Manners-Sutton; revival of the S.P.C.K.;
the Bible Society controversies; Farningham; the
National Society; Preacher of Lincoln's Inn.

Chapter Five

When the Boyle Lectures were published in 1806, Van Mildert was forty. The generation of High Churchmen to whom he had been accustomed to look for leadership was dying off: Jones of Nayland in 1800, Boucher in 1804, Horsley in 1806, William Stevens early in 1807.

Horsley's end was sad. He was in fine form during the summer session in Parliament, savaging the slave trade with characteristic vigour on June 24th and addressing the Lords for the last time on July 5th, in support of an amendment to the Custom House Fees Bill.¹ On September 12th he 'went to Brighton to spend some time with his old friend and patron Lord Thurlow, whom on his arrival he found dead!'² Two weeks later, Horsley himself became fatally ill. After the battle of Trafalgar he had preached an exultant victory sermon in his cathedral at St. Asaph, but on his deathbed he despaired of the bloody and protracted struggle to break the apparently invincible hold of Napoleon's armies on continental Europe. 'Bonaparte will remain master of Europe,' he wrote to his half-brother, '- at least, of all the Southern part. He will settle a considerable body of Jews in Palestine, which will open the door to him for his conquest of the East, as far as the Euphrates. He will then set himself up for the Messiah, and a furious persecution will take place, in which his friends in Palestine will at first be his principal instruments, but will at last turn their weapons towards his destruction.'³

Horsley died on October 4th, 1806, after four days of

dysentery and one day of pain, leaving his three unmarried sisters a tangle of financial troubles. The Gentleman's Magazine was much moved by the expiry of the Bishop's life insurance premium, two days before the Bishop.⁴

The loss of Horsley was irreparable. No figure of comparable stature was to emerge among High Churchmen until the development of the Oxford Movement; Van Mildert himself, although later to be forced by pressure of events into something of the same role, could never match either the breadth of intellectual sympathy or the oratorical brilliance of his master. Horsleyisms became part of the stock-in-trade of their Lordships, quoted in debate by friend and foe far into the new century, but Horsley himself was gone, depriving the High Church reform movement of its figurehead and statesman. To pilot schemes for the renewal of the Church past Radical hostility on the one side, and deeply suspicious High Tory peers on the other, in an atmosphere which tinted all attempts at reform with danger to the established order, was a task for a master. Horsley might have attempted it; but without his leadership, the main current of High Church reforming activity was forced into extra-parliamentary channels.

The Gentleman's Magazine catalogued the departed prelate's virtues: 'His mind grasped all the learning of the antient and modern world; and his heart was as warm and generous towards all whom he had the ability to serve, as his head was capable of advocating their cause. His charity to the distressed was more than prudent; he often wanted himself what he gave away; but in money matters, no one was more careless than the Bishop,

and no one so easily imposed upon....Though he was irascible, passionate, and easily moved to anger, yet by his most intimate friends, he was allowed to be at his table, and in the hours of relaxation from severe studies, a very pleasant and agreeable companion. He often bent both his mind and body to partake of the juvenile amusements of children, of whom he was particularly fond.' His only son, Heneage, escaped the shadow of his flamboyant father by joining the Episcopal Church of Scotland.

If the mantle of Horsley remained untenanted, that of William Stevens fell naturally on Joshua Watson. Sharing Stevens' preference for self-effacing action, Watson was ideally equipped in terms of wealth, piety, efficiency and affectionate nature to take Stevens' place at the focus of the group. He settled down to an unostentatious life's ministry of fostering a wide range of ecclesiastical and civil contacts, criticising and encouraging the literary efforts of his more academically-minded friends, corresponding with large numbers of friends in various countries, and promoting with all the resources at his disposal the reform and renewal of the Church of England along impeccable High Church lines. More than anyone else he was responsible for holding together the group, sometimes referred to as the Clapton Sect (the High Church answer to the Clapham Sect), but most commonly remembered as the Hackney Phalanx.⁵

The Phalanx has been described as a pressure-group,⁶ but the description is too narrow. Pressure they certainly applied, with increasing effect as their individual and collective influence grew. They were 'a compact group with an agreed

attitude to most of the religious and political measures of the day'. But their heritage from Stevens included a large concern with practical piety and practical charity. When the Phalanx lobbied the civil and ecclesiastical authorities, it was frequently on behalf of, or as an aspect of, or complementary to their own initiatives. They were always careful to enlist the support of the proper powers before taking a hand in public ecclesiastical affairs; they saw their work as that of loyal servants to the Church and to her leaders. Public affairs, however, constituted only a part of the Phalanx' concerns. Their private charities, often undertaken in concert, were extensive, unobtrusive and important to them. No less important were their social activities, regular correspondence, mutual hospitality, and loving concern for each other's families. 'They remained to the end a body of friends, rather than an ecclesiastical or a religious party.'

The strangest recruit to the Phalanx was William Cobbett, 'then better known by his first political name of "Peter Porcupine"', who arrived from America 'at the beginning of thecentury, bringing a testimony from our ambassador that he had stayed the tide of republicanism across the Atlantic'. Cobbett's prosecution in Philadelphia had given him the cachet of a 'martyr to loyalty', and his forcefulness fascinated Joshua Watson and his friends. 'We were then young,' Watson later reflected, 'and his violence was rather a recommendation to us than otherwise: he was so hearty in hating what we hated.' The alliance was shortlived; Watson, repelled by Cobbett's 'unscrupulousness in seeking to repair his needy

fortunes' and by the incongruity of their styles of action, gave him a gentle but firm brush-off. 3

The death of Archbishop Moore in 1805 had far-reaching consequences for the Hackney Phalanx. Moore, a generous man of wide sympathies and a friend of Wilberforce, had been a kind patron to Van Mildert; but his death brought to Canterbury a man so congenial to the Hackney group as almost to be considered a member of it. Charles Manners-Sutton, George Horne's successor in the see of Norwich and Dean of Windsor in commendam, was a grandson of the Duke of Rutland, an amiable man whose great generosity, combined with the expenses of his large family, landed him in financial difficulty during his episcopal reign at Norwich. Churton records that, at the time of his translation, Manners-Sutton was 'under some sinister reports as a Churchman of profuse expenditure....But whatever truth there might have been in these reports at an earlier period, his good husbandry after he had become primate was sufficient to efface any remembrance of them....And it was not, what is sometimes seen, a revulsion from one vicious habit to the opposite; but his expenditure was liberal, his household well provided for and well governed, his domestics orderly and attached to their master, his public days marked by a degree of chaste splendour, while his charitable donations continued to flow abundantly, yet with careful discrimination.' 4

Manners-Sutton owed the see of Canterbury to the personal intervention of George III, with whom he had become a favourite through his ministry at Windsor. Pitt had intended to prefer his own former tutor and confidant, Tomline, Bishop of Lincoln,

a fact of which George III was well aware. 'As soon, therefore, as the king heard of the archbishop's death, he walked from the castle to the deanery at Windsor, called the dean...out from dinner, and congratulated him as archbishop.'¹⁰ The next day, a furious Pitt was forced to accept this as a fait accompli.

Not the least of Manners-Sutton's contributions to the life of the Hackney Phalanx was his choice of domestic chaplains. The first of them, Christopher Wordsworth, was an able, ambitious and energetic man just past thirty who had been private tutor to Manners-Sutton's sons at Cambridge. Van Mildert, in making himself known to his new diocesan, also met Wordsworth; they were friends for the rest of their lives. It was at Van Mildert's house in Ely Place that Wordsworth was introduced to Joshua Watson. Watson took to Wordsworth at once, and the poet's brother rapidly became one of the core members of the Phalanx: by late 1807 his correspondence with Norris demonstrates that he was centrally involved in the group's affairs.¹¹

In the work of reform and renewal, the Hackney Phalanx rarely held the overall initiative. The pattern of their activities was set in 1787, when the Evangelicals' launch of a Society for the Reformation of Manners was countered by Jones' and Stevens' abortive Society for the Reformation of Principles, and by their founding of the British Critic. But if the main creative thrust came from Clapham rather than Clapton, it was nevertheless true that the High Church reformers, drawing on a different constituency from the Evangelicals and one less sympathetic in principle to ideas of reform, were able

considerably to extend the acceptability, the perspective and the resources of the renewal movement within the Church of England, preparing the way for the greater resurgence under Victoria.

The work of the Phalanx proper began with the determination of Norris and Joshua Watson to breathe fresh life into the dry bones of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

The Venerable Society, which celebrated its centenary in 1798, had since 1777 operated from headquarters at No. Five, Bartlett's Buildings. Its responsibilities included the publication and dissemination of religious literature, a degree of oversight of the Charity Schools founded under its auspices in earlier years, and the administration of some missionary work, principally the Tranquebar mission in India (founded by Danes and largely staffed by German Lutherans) but also, for instance, in the Scilly Isles.¹²

The membership of the S.P.C.K. included members of both the Clapham and the Clapton Sects. Stevens had been among the Society's committed supporters, numbering the Secretary, Dr. Gaskin, Rector of Stoke Newington, among his close friends. Evangelical members included Wilberforce, Hannah More, Charles Grant, Zachary Macaulay and John Venn.¹³ By the end of the eighteenth century, however, the Society had lost most of its original impetus. Evangelical dissatisfaction with S.P.C.K. publishing policy, which favoured only material of irreproachable High Church orthodoxy, led in 1799 to the setting up of the Religious Tract Society. The new Society was interdenominational: its first Secretary, Joseph Hughes, was a

Welsh Baptist, minister of a chapel in Battersea. It proceeded to print and sell vast numbers of tracts in a range of different languages.

Even when a book appeared on the S.P.C.K.'s list, however, sufficient copies were not always readily available. Evangelical impatience was brought to a sharp focus by the affair of the Welsh Bibles.

Demand for Bibles was heavy among Welsh-speaking Methodists, and in 1787 the S.P.C.K. was applied to for a printing of Welsh-language Scriptures. The request was received without eagerness. An octavo edition of twenty thousand Welsh Bibles, complete with marginal references, had been printed in 1768; the 'charge of the Impression' had meant that the Society, besides 'sinking all the Fund, which they had in Hand,....incurred a Debt of above Two Thousand Pounds', and there seem to have been problems with recouping this massive outlay.¹⁴ The Society's leadership had not in any case much stomach for encouraging Enthusiasm, and sour memories of past extravagance made their response slow and grudging. Informed that 'Welsh Bibles could not be had, even for money', they began by offering a derisory five hundred Bibles at the unrealistically high price of 5s.6d.¹⁵ By 1791 they were persuaded to promise ten thousand, but stipulated that advance orders must be placed for four thousand; the condition was not met, and the project lapsed.¹⁶

Watson and Norris joined the S.P.C.K. 'a little before the close of the....century', probably, like Van Mildert, in about 1797. When reminiscing about this period in later years, Watson

'used to say that "they were both reformers," so much so, that a worthy dignitary of the London diocese predicted that their schemes would ruin the finances of the Society.'¹⁷ The ten thousand Welsh Bibles appeared in 1799, with Welsh editions of the Prayer Book, the New Testament and the New Version of the Psalms, and were sold to inhabitants of Wales at a special discount price of 'half the prime cost'. The entire print run rapidly disposed of, the Society began its excruciatingly slow preparations for a fresh impression.

By now, however, the Evangelicals had finally lost patience. The new Religious Tract Society soon turned its attention to the question of Bibles, with a perspective coloured by the heavy involvement of Evangelicals and Dissenters in missionary work. It was Joseph Hughes who 'asked the memorable question, "If Bibles were to be printed for Wales, why not for the British Empire and the world?"' The outcome was the foundation of the British and Foreign Bible Society, in March 1804, while the S.P.C.K. Welsh Bible was still in the process of 'republishing'.¹⁸

The Bible Society was founded on a basis that ensured it a hostile reception in High Church circles. Not only were Dissenters of all descriptions welcomed into membership; all ministers of the Gospel, Anglican or not, were accorded equal status, and of the thirty-six members of the executive committee, fifteen were Dissenters and six resident foreigners. Moreover, High Church apologetes would concede no justification for the formation of a new society to compete with the S.P.C.K. The Bible Society's professed 'liberal basis of admitting

"Christians of all denominations"¹⁷ was particularly resented, as implying 'a charge of illiberality' against the Venerable Society's practice of requiring testimonials certifying the attachment of would-be members to 'the Church of England as by Law established'. S.P.C.K. testimonials also declared their subject to be 'well affected to His Majesty King GEORGE,....of a sober and religious Life and Conversation, and of an humble, peaceable, and charitable Disposition'.²⁰ To High Churchmen these testimonials seemed indispensable as a guarantee that the Society could be trusted to make proper use of the money and support of the orthodox.²¹

The inevitable pamphlet war broke out immediately. Beilby Porteus, 'after a reasonable delay', not only approved the B.F.B.S. scheme but offered a recommendation for the Presidency of the new society: Lord Teignmouth, an Anglican, 'a fervent Christian and a good man of business',²² a former Governor-General of India and a close associate of Wilberforce. When it became generally known that Teignmouth had accepted the position, he received an indignant open letter from 'A Country Clergyman'. A counter-pamphlet was published by 'A Sub-Urban Clergyman', to be in its turn attacked by 'A Member of the Society [for Promoting Christian Knowledge]', probably Van Mildert.²³ Although the Bishops declined to take any action in the matter, High Church ire was thoroughly aroused, and a number of champions continued to utter sporadic printed expressions of outrage for more than a decade.

The ecumenical impulse of the Evangelicals involved in launching the Bible Society was met by High Churchmen with

blank incomprehension, to the extent of doubting that members of the Church of England had any significant influence in its affairs. The Member of the S.P.C.K. thought it evident 'from the nature of its constitution and laws' that the Bible Society's 'first movers and framers' were Dissenters; the honest Churchman had nothing to gain from associating with 'those who, he knows, can never be conciliated without a desertion of principle on his part, and who probably only court his alliance for the purpose of more successfully compassing his degradation and destruction'.²⁴

To Evangelicals there might seem to be something peculiarly appropriate in an ecumenical approach to the logistical problem of arranging a plentiful supply of Bibles to all who wished for them. To the Phalanx, such a view was naive in the extreme: 'Sub-Urban thinks that some good may be done both to Churchmen and Dissenters, by such an association; that it will take off asperities on both sides; that they will still retain their respective quantum of faith, hope, and charity, and get rid of many odious qualities which may very well be spared. This is plausible in theory: but is it justified by experience? If merely believing in the Scriptures, and promoting the circulation of them, could produce this effect, surely it might have been produced long ago: since on this point all descriptions of Protestants have long since been agreed. But when a different interpretation of the Scriptures is the alledged cause of the disagreement subsisting between them, and occasions all the asperities, bickerings, schisms, and divisions of which the Church complains, what reason is there

to suppose that the proposed union would be attended with any such consequences; or that those breaches will ever be made up, except on the condition that the Church shall renounce both her doctrine and discipline?'²⁵

The Member of the S.P.C.K. sounded Van Mildert's characteristic note of qualified tolerance : 'far be it from me, to interfere with the labours of any association among the Separatists from our Church, which has for its object nothing really mischievous: still farther, to molest them in the prosecution of so good and laudable a purpose as that of circulating the pure Word of God...'²⁶ He nevertheless felt bound to observe that what the Bible Society circulated might not in practice be the pure Word of God. The Sub-Urban Clergyman had declared that the Society would keep to 'editing and distributing the versions, printed by authority'; his opponent, finding no such restriction in the 'first printed list of laws and regulations', objected that 'if Heretics and Schismatics of every description, are admissible into this Society, and even have a predominant interest in the management of its concerns, who will say that....some corrections in the versions of the Bible, adapted to the heterodox tenets of its members, will not in time creep in?' Still more acute was the problem posed by translation into foreign languages. Care for the 'fidelity and accuracy' of the translation demanded the exclusive employment of 'persons of tried and approved orthodoxy'; how could 'the purity of the Bible be safely lodged in the hands of Sectarists of all denominations, Papists, Socinians, Quakers &c....?'²⁷

A further contributor to tract warfare was Christopher Wordsworth, who in 1810 produced a Letter to the Clergymen of the Diocese of London, renewing the attack on the Bible Society for invasion of S.P.C.K. territory. Norris supervised the publication of this epistle. Wordsworth, fearing that it might 'be too much to endeavour to induce the Society to adopt our letter....(as plainly Van Mildert seemed to think)',²⁸ proposed that a copy or two should be included in every packet of books sent out by the S.P.C.K.

In November 1811, proposals to establish a Bible Society branch at Cambridge University brought Herbert Marsh, Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity, into the fray. Marsh, who besides his work in biblical criticism had already established himself as an anti-Calvinist polemicist, published in 1812 an Address to the University Senate attacking the proposals. Later that year he added An Inquiry into the Consequences of neglecting to give the Prayer Book with the Bible, in which he attacked Chillingworth's principle that 'the Bible, and the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants', stressing the risk that reading the Bible without the guidance of the Prayer Book would lead people to adopt private interpretations in preference to the traditional teachings of the Church. To his chagrin, Marsh thereupon received a published Congratulatory Letter from the Roman Catholic apologete Peter Gandolphy, claiming him as an ally who had conceded 'the vital principle of the Reformation'. Marsh rejected the charge in a Letter to...P. Gandolphy (1813) which included a postscript on the political question of Roman Catholic civil disabilities; in

1814 he published a weightier Comparative View of the Churches of England and Rome, in which he denied holding anything approaching the Roman Catholic doctrine of tradition, laying down instead the dictum that 'as the Bible is the test of a Christian so is the Prayer Book of a Churchman.'²⁷ Marsh's position has been examined in a recent thesis by P.B. Nockles, who notes that Marsh's Inquiry 'ignored the principle provided by the Vincentian Rule and denied even the merely corroborative or testamentary value of catholic consent as an aid in scriptural interpretation' and that his Comparative View 'failed to distinguish between the legitimate and traditional Anglican use and Romanism's supposed misuse of Tradition, maintaining that the "rejection of Tradition, as a Rule of Faith, was the vital principle of the Reformation".'³⁰ Nockles' conclusion, that Marsh was drifting towards an ultra-Protestant position on the question of authority, is weakened by his failure to reckon with the polemical context of the two works.

Norris also entered the lists with A practical exposition of the tendency and proceedings of the British and Foreign Bible Society (1814); T.F. Middleton, who read it in October 1813, thought Norris 'of all the writers on the subject, certainly the most amusing', and therefore likely to be the most effective.³¹

Polemic was only a part of the Phalanx's response to the Bible Society threat. As the Bible Society expanded, so Watson and Norris determined that the S.P.C.K. should expand, both in membership and in revenue. When in about 1809 the Bible Society launched on the founding of its highly successful system of

district committees, the S.P.C.K. was not long in following suit, despite the apprehensive reluctance of Gaskin's old guard. Watson gave Christopher Wordsworth the chief credit for establishing the network of S.P.C.K. diocesan committees, by means of which the Society's income 'was shortly trebled',²² and relied heavily on his assistance in quelling outbreaks of panic among the S.P.C.K. leadership when the committees proved also to be a source of ideas.

A critical point was reached at an S.P.C.K. board meeting in January 1811, when Gaskin and his allies attempted summary disposal 'in a thin meeting' of some proposals from the Colchester District Meeting. This provoked Joshua Watson, who had 'never before been moved to speak in any public discussion,' to put a resolution for 'instructions of a very different cast,' and to give notice of a motion for the appointment of a special committee to handle suggestions from the district committees.²³ With the assistance of Wordsworth, Norris and John Bowles Watson carried his point, and a central committee was set up to service the network of diocesan committees. Not only did the revised structure put the Society's finances on a far more secure footing; it also provided the administrative basis for subsequent Phalanx initiatives.

Government of the diocesan committees was placed firmly in the hands of the bishops. Episcopal government became a shibboleth of the Hackney reform movement because it performed two essential functions. In the first place, it sheltered the reformers from possible accusations of working against the

Established Church. Among many of the Church of England's more rigid defenders, Reform was seen as a transparent synonym for Destruction; how better could the devotion of the Phalanx to the interests of the Church be demonstrated than by placing its work under the direct supervision and control of the Church's properly appointed governors?

In the second place, it guarded the Societies against becoming marginal 'holy clubs', associations of individual enthusiasts enacting their own private preoccupations, or worthy bodies simply raising money for good works. For the Hackney reformers, this special relationship with the bishops stamped the Societies as aspects of the corporate action of the whole Church. The Phalanx regarded the office of bishop as the medium appointed by God to guarantee the Church's fidelity to her apostolic origins.³⁴ The participation of bishops was thus the uniquely appropriate expression for the participation of the whole Body.

This understanding was embarrassed by the deplorable readiness of bishops to join the Bible Society. In 1812 William Otter, a moderate High Churchman who was the first Principal of King's College, London, published A Vindication of Churchmen who become members of the British and Foreign Bible Society, in which he revealed that twenty English and Irish bishops had become members of the Society.³⁵ The death of Beilby Porteus in 1809 robbed the Bible Society of its foremost episcopal supporter, but bishops such as Shute Barrington of Durham and Henry Bathurst of Norwich continued to encourage and promote its work.³⁶

In the pamphlet war, too, the Bible Society had its champions. Marsh's attacks were answered by Nicholas Vansittart, Charles Simeon and Isaac Milner, evangelical Dean of Carlisle and President of Queens' College; Christopher Wordsworth drew a reply from the Bible Society's President, Lord Teignmouth. Despite the Phalanx's best efforts, the Bible Society not only survived but flourished. By 1812, its annual income exceeded £50,000; by 1814, 'there was not a county that did not possess its branch of the Bible Society'.³⁷

Van Mildert did not play a leading part in the later Bible Society controversies; he was no longer living in London. On one of his journeys through Kent, he had taken a liking to the village of Farningham, near Sevenoaks, and had 'expressed a desire...to obtain the vicarage, as an agreeable retreat, within a convenient distance from town.'³⁸ This spacious eighteenth-century habit had not yet succumbed to the growing pressures against pluralism: as late as 1824, the Bishop of London could still write to the Prime Minister excusing a newly-appointed Marylebone incumbent from resigning his northern parish on the grounds that it was 'desirable that an Incumbent of a populous Parish in London should have a place of retirement in the hot weather'.³⁹ When in 1807 the Vicarage of Farningham fell vacant, Van Mildert applied to Manners-Sutton. The Archbishop's reply was gracious: 'I have great pleasure...in complying with your request: your claims upon me, public and private, are better founded than your modesty will suffer you to state.'⁴⁰

On March 30th the Duke of Queensberry, successor and nephew

to the Duke who had been General Douglas' patron, made Van Mildert his chaplain.⁴¹ 'Old Q', one of the most disreputable of the Prince of Wales' cronies, was not a patron of whom Van Mildert would have been proud, and Churton does not appear to have known of the chaplaincy. The honour was bestowed on the strength of the Duke's kinship with Jane Van Mildert, and no records suggest any particular intimacy between Van Mildert and 'Old Q', who as a Duke was allowed six chaplains. However, a nobleman's chaplain was entitled, with the permission of his diocesan, to hold two benefices with cure of souls. Van Mildert was now free to accept Farningham in plurality.

The dispensation, issued on April 7th, required Van Mildert to preach thirteen sermons a year in Bow, and thirteen in Farningham; to exercise two months' hospitality per year in the benefice from which he was most often absent, 'and for that time according to the fruits and profits thereof so much as in you lies....support and relieve the Inhabitants of that Parish especially the poor and needy'; and to provide a capable substitute, paid 'a competent and sufficient Salary', in the benefice from which he was most often absent. In return, he added Farningham's 'reputed yearly value being One hundred and Seventy Pounds or thereabouts' to the revenues of Bow, 'about Four hundred pounds.'⁴²

The additional income should have been most welcome to the Van Milderts. Besides the lasting effects of the non-residency trial, their responsibilities had been enlarged by the acquisition of a foster-family. Mary Douglas, youngest daughter of Jane's brother William, had come to live with her aunt in

1802 on her father's death. She was joined in 1806 by Helen Margaret, daughter of Jane's youngest brother Robert. Caring for their orphaned nieces gave great pleasure to the childless Van Milderts, but did not ease their financial difficulties. Farningham, however, brought not relief but near catastrophe.

The problem was, as usual, one of accommodation. The Farningham parsonage-house was 'in need of repair, and insufficient.' Repairs and rebuilding were put in hand; 'during the progress of the work', Van Mildert 'found himself.... obliged greatly to exceed his first design.'⁴³ In 1810, a bill which he was quite unable to pay faced him with bankruptcy.

He was saved from ruin by Joshua Watson, who conferred with Thomas Sikes and various other friends. They 'privately agreed to take the debt upon themselves, and pay the requisite sum in such a way as to spare his feelings, and leave him in ignorance of the mode in which it was effected'. Among the conspirators was John Bowles, who despatched his contribution to Joshua Watson with the words 'Be so good as to take charge of my contribution to Mother Church in the person of one of her most faithful, able, and zealous ministers.'⁴⁴ Bowles' own reputation had been irreparably blighted in 1809 by the accusation that, as a commissioner for the distribution of Dutch prize-money, he had allowed prize-money to stick to his fingers. Vindicated by a political opponent in a pamphlet, Bowles was unable to shed the scandal, which broke out afresh in 1817; but Van Mildert and Watson were both convinced of his innocence, and gave him personal support.

By the following March, Van Mildert had unearthed the names

of his benefactors, 'somewhat surprized to find the list so numerous', and embarked on the humiliating task of thanking them. With Joshua Watson he could be frank: although he was sincerely and profoundly grateful, 'this feeling is in some respects a very painful one, and occasions a frequent depression of spirits, which I am unable to overcome....It has been my misfortune to be more or less embarrassed ever since I have been a benefited man; and every additional benefice has brought its additional burdens, and made me poorer than before. So that, in spite of all the friendly helps I have met with, I still am, and to all human appearance ever shall be, a necessitous man. But it may be the will of Providence that these trials should be sent to correct that pride which perhaps you will think these sentiments discover. Be it so; and may I be enabled so to apply them!' Although it took him many years, Van Mildert repaid the gift in full.⁴⁵

As soon as the parsonage-house was habitable, the Van Milderts moved to Farningham with their nieces. There could be no question of maintaining two establishments, so the house at Ely Place was given up. A curate had charge of Bow, although the Rector continued to preach there when he could. On visits to London, Van Mildert at this time usually lodged with Joshua Watson at his house in Mincing Lane, an arrangement which both found congenial. On these occasions he might find time to consult, or be consulted by, other friends. 'I hear Van Mildert is in town,' Christopher Wordsworth wrote to Norris in June 1811. 'If he should stay a few days....I should like to have an opportunity of meeting him under your roof. There are many

things which seem to me to need conferring about.'⁴⁶

Out of town, Van Mildert was forced to communicate by letter, and there were obvious practical difficulties. "Where again is Van Mildert?" demanded Wordsworth at Christmas 1810. 'I am at a loss that I hear nothing from him. I wrote to him three weeks ago at least....I greatly regret his absence from Town at the present important time.'⁴⁷ Even 'in his retirement at Farningham',⁴⁸ Van Mildert remained a valued member of the Phalanx literary team. He helped Norris and Watson to prepare the second part of the Churchman's Remembrancer, which appeared between 1807 and 1810 in the form of three treatises. Van Mildert prepared the biographical notice to the third tract, John Norris' A Discourse concerning Conventicles.⁴⁹

At the end of 1811 or beginning of 1812, Norris and Joshua Watson bought back control of the British Critic, which had changed its character since its launch by Jones and Stevens: it had, for example, sided firmly with the 'Sub-Urban Clergyman', the Bible Society's advocate in the first controversy. The editor, Archdeacon Robert Nares, was sacked, and Van Mildert was the first chosen to replace him, 'till shortly afterwards his other engagements were too many and important to leave time for reviewing.'⁵⁰ Archdeacon Nares appears to have taken his removal in good part, and in April 1814 was corresponding affably with Norris about book reviews.⁵¹

A subsequent editor of the British Critic, Thomas Fanshawe Middleton, Rector of Kentish Town, reported to Norris in 1813 the comment that 'the tame character and tone of the B.C. have been, and must be, the inevitable consequence of its being

conducted by a Clergyman, whose name is generally known: he cannot very consistently make himself responsible for all the strong things, which blockheads and knaves deserve to have said of them: the Bookseller should bear the brunt, and have his authors snug "behind the arras".⁵² Despite this criticism, the next editor chosen was another clergyman, Thomas Rennell, Vicar of Kensington and son of the Dean of Winchester.

Van Mildert also remained involved with the affairs of the S.P.C.K.: in September 1811 Christopher Wordsworth, writing to Norris about the Society's fund-raising and policy, added: 'On second thoughts, I shall send this letter first to Mr. Van Mildert, that he too may see my conjecture and argument'.⁵³ In February 1812 Archdeacon Pott resigned as S.P.C.K. treasurer, and in June Van Mildert was chosen to succeed him.⁵⁴ Given Van Mildert's disastrous financial record, this can only have been a delicate piece of Hackney tact, designed to repair his self-confidence and prove that no-one questioned his integrity.

Meanwhile, Van Mildert had inspired a controversy in his new parish. In October 1809 he preached a sermon at Farningham Church on the necessity of attending public worship, in the course of which he 'adverted to the unhappy prevalence of Schism and Fanaticism among us'. The sermon was well received by his congregation, and at their request was printed for private circulation. Early in 1810 a pamphlet entitled Who is the Dissenter?, attacking both sermon and preacher, was 'industriously circulated throughout the Parish'.⁵⁵

Van Mildert's reply, also privately printed and circulated, chose his own ground for the combat, pointing out the

inadequacies of his opponent's style and argument but declining to answer him in detail. The apologia was firmly addressed, not to the unknown assailant but to Van Mildert's own flock. 'Opportunities (God willing) may often arise of explaining to you from the Pulpit what are the real doctrines of our church, on the points which its adversaries call in question, and to show how entirely those doctrines accord with the Holy Scriptures. This mode of "contending for the Faith" I much prefer to that of pamphlet controversy.'

The tract accused Van Mildert of uncharitableness, sophistry, buffoonery and scurrility, of being 'a deceiver, a blind leader of the blind, greedy of filthy lucre, addicted to pleasure, and negligent of pious duties'. The charge which stung was that of pleasure-seeking: 'The very few meetings of public amusement, in which I have appeared among you, were harmless festivities, on certain loyal occasions, and in which I was not witness to any thing that could give reasonable cause of offence.' As to the rest of the accusations, 'to those who would thwart my earnest endeavours to do my duty, I trust I may say, "With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgement: yea, I judge not mine ownself: but He that judgeth me is the Lord."' In quoting St. Paul's rebuke to the Corinthians, Van Mildert chose to omit the words 'For I know nothing by myself: yet am I not hereby justified'; perhaps he thought them inapplicable.

Van Mildert seems to have realised that it was his use of the word 'schism' which goaded his opponent into print, but he showed neither concession nor sensitivity to the other's

evident pain and outrage. In Van Mildert's thought, to call a Dissenter a schismatic was a simple statement of fact; if a man feel pain at being so described, he should return to the Church.⁵⁴

How this controversy closed is not known; but it is unlikely that Van Mildert would have violated his declared intention of ignoring any further attacks.

In a visitation return drawn up shortly after his collation to Farningham, Van Mildert noted the presence in Farningham of two Day Schools run on a commercial basis, the larger one by a 'reputable Schoolmaster', the smaller one by a schoolmistress. He remarked with satisfaction that both teachers were members of the Church of England. There was no Sunday school, and he set about remedying this lack; in October 1811 a Vestry agreed 'That a sufficient number of Forms & Seats be provided for the use of the Sunday School Children, to be placed in the Chancel.' In 1812 a house was rented for the use of the Sunday school. Van Mildert seems to have paid the £10 per annum rent from his own pocket, and to have made the house available to the master of the larger day school in return for his services in also running the Sunday school.⁵⁷

Van Mildert's school-founding activities in Farningham ran in parallel with the first of the major public initiatives by the Hackney Phalanx, the founding in 1811 of the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church.

The education of the poor had been one of Horsley's cherished causes. Dreading the consequences of the increased

circulation of radical literature among the lower orders, he loosed the thunder of his 1800 episcopal charge upon 'schools of Jacobinical religion and Jacobinical politics....in the shape and disguise of charity-schools and Sunday-schools, in which the minds of the children of the very lowest orders are enlightened - that is to say, taught to despise religion and the laws and all subordination.' His response to the threat was not, however, to call for the closure of the schools, but to challenge the Church to embrace the constructive possibilities: 'the proper antidote for the Jacobinical schools, will be schools for the children of the same class under the management of the parochial clergy.'⁵⁸ This defensive stance was characteristic of the Phalanx's educational thinking. It also provided a useful apologetic for steering educational proposals past suspicious High Tories inclined to prefer repression.

Horsley was concerned primarily with Sunday schools; but as the new century opened, the question of elementary weekday education became rapidly more urgent. The existing provision for the teaching of poor children - dame schools, 'schools of industry' for pauper children, and charity schools, many of them founded by the S.P.C.K. - was pitifully inadequate. After the tensions surrounding the foundation of the Bible Society, it was hardly likely that the Evangelicals would choose to work through the S.P.C.K., and as early as 1802, Wilberforce and Bernard were 'busy together about education plan for children of lower orders'.⁵⁹ At that time, however, the Clapham Sect took no direct action, and Hackney anxieties focussed instead on the work of Joseph Lancaster.

Lancaster, like Van Mildert a Southwark man, had joined the Society of Friends in his teens and, after an early impulse towards the mission field, began in a small way to teach poor children to read. The work grew. In 1801 Lancaster opened his first school, in 'a large room in the Borough Road', on the basis that 'All who will may send their children and have them educated freely, and those who do not wish to have education for nothing may pay for it if they please.'⁵⁰ The school proved highly successful and, the number of pupils soon becoming larger than Lancaster could himself teach, he developed a pyramidal system whereby more advanced pupils instructed the less advanced. In this he to some extent paralleled earlier work done by the Anglican clergyman Andrew Bell in the Madras Asylum, which was itself based on traditional Hindu teaching patterns. The exact relationship between Bell's scheme and Lancaster's was the subject of heated controversy, but Bell had undeniably published first.⁵¹ The dispute over originality was only a part of the still more heated controversy over the respective value of the two schemes, which centred on the place to be given to religious instruction.

The 'Member of the Society' took the opportunity of his 1805 Letter to the S.P.C.K. to attack Lancaster in an enormous footnote. 'If Mr. L. be a sincere Quaker, he must hold in contempt, as superstitious and absurd, many things which we regard as of the most sacred obligation. Can, then, any sound member of the Church consent that the opinions of such a teacher should be inculcated on the rising generation? Or, supposing that Mr. L. should adopt no plan of religious

instruction, but leave his pupils, in this respect, to themselves; is it desirable, that the infant poor should be brought up in a sort of indifference towards religion, and an ignorance of its truths?...How the patronage of such an institution, so conducted, is likely to promote the real interests of the community, either religious or political, I am at a loss to understand. But...if the plan itself be really of such importance as to merit public support, it ought to be put immediately into the hands of persons on whose fidelity to our Establishment in Church and State we can safely depend; that it may be made an instrument of "training up children in the way wherein they should go", and not an engine of heresy, schism, or disaffection.'⁶²

A second High Church comment of 1805 was Mrs. Trimmer's Comparative View of the new Plan of Education, promulgated by Mr. Joseph Lancaster, and of the System of Christian Instruction founded by our Forefathers for the initiation of the Young Members of the Established Church in the Principles of the Reformed Religion. The comparison was unfavourable to Lancaster, attacking him for usurping the proper role of the Established Clergy in supervising the education of the nation's children, and for 'applying to the pupils the stimulus of selfish motives, dread of ridicule, and love of praise, the fear of man not the fear of God.'⁶³

Lancaster was not without defenders. The Society of Friends gave him both moral and financial support. The Lancaster System was endorsed and given wide publicity by the group of Radical politicians whose organ was the Edinburgh Review, notably

Whitbread, Brougham and later Bentham. Mrs. Trimmer's opus was gleefully dissected by Sydney Smith in the Edinburgh Review of October 1807. Most significant by far, however, was the cordial reception given to Lancaster by George III in 1805. The King, Queen and Princesses became subscribers to what were renamed the Royal Free Schools in the Borough Road. This was an indication, which apologetes for the rights of the Established Church could hardly ignore, that the question was no longer whether the poor should be educated, but how and by whom.

In 1807 Whitbread brought in a private member's Bill requiring every parish to set up a school, governed by the incumbent, the churchwardens and the parish overseers, in which every child of the parish aged between seven and fourteen would be entitled to two years' free education. The plan was to be voluntary, argued as a matter of principle, although compulsion was hardly practicable. The Bill passed the House of Commons as a matter of form, but was thrown out by the Lords: the Home Secretary, Lord Hawkesbury, declared its religious clauses to be insufficient. The following year, 1808, the hopeless chaos to which Lancaster had reduced his finances gave the cue for the foundation of the Royal Lancasterian Society. This Society, headed by the Quakers Fox and Allen, paid Lancaster's debts of some three thousand pounds, and provided a board of trustees to take over the administration of his schools.

The Hackney response was given in 1809 by Daubeny who, preaching at the annual Meeting of the Children Educated in the Charity Schools, denounced the Lancaster System as aiming to amalgamate 'the great body of the people into one great

deistical compound.' As usual, however, polemic provided only a part of the Hackney armament. Behind the scenes, Joshua Watson and his friends were plotting action.

The Phalanx's strategy centred almost immediately on the work of Andrew Bell. Bell was in many ways a more satisfactory figurehead than Lancaster. Scottish by birth, he was a priest of the Church of England, made a canon of Westminster, who regarded 'unsectarian religious teaching' as a contradiction in terms. Bell was a much better administrator than Lancaster; it was a matter of public record that Bell's experiments and writings came first; the 'Madras system' had already been in use in a select few English schools for some years when Lancaster began his work. For all these reasons, the Phalanx could hardly have made a better choice.

Joshua Watson, Norris and Bowles formed themselves into a committee to draw up detailed plans. Although the S.P.C.K. already had a foothold in education, through its charity schools, they decided that their aims would be best met by the formation of an entirely new society - the years of wrestling with Gaskin had left their mark. The new society needed a name; the adjective 'Royal' had been pre-empted by the Lancasterians; so, in a simple but brilliant counter-coup, it was named the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church, thereby reclaiming the adjective 'National' from its French republican associations. The radical overtones of the word 'National' did indeed cause some anxiety among the more conservative supporters of the enterprise, who 'objected to the name...as if it had been

borrowed from late Gallican precedents: but its meaning was explained by the principle set forth in its first report, "that the national religion should be made the groundwork of national education".¹²⁵

Marsh, who was collaborating closely with the working party, gave this argument its first public airing in the 1811 Charity Schools Sermon, preached at St. Paul's on June 13th, when talk of a 'Church Education Society' was already general, and the Phalanx in a ferment of activity enlisting opinions and promises of support. Marsh himself used his position as Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Cambridge to canvass bishops on the one hand and Cambridge divines on the other; he had the help of the Evangelical Dean Milner, who subscribed fifteen guineas when the Society was set up. John Richardson was active in seeking out adherents, but Park, although expressing himself as willing to 'do anything', thought that a new department of the S.P.C.K. would be preferable to a completely new society, and was unhappy about the name: 'amazingly misunderstood, and gives much offence to excellent people'.¹²⁶

Of all the measures undertaken by the Phalanx, the founding of the National Society was the most controversial, opposing them not only to their more radical rivals, but also to the not inconsiderable number of their natural political allies to whom teaching anything to the lower orders was anathema. 'Many Tories believed, to use Mark Twain's words, that "soap and education are not as sudden as a massacre, but they are far more deadly in the long run", and it was openly said in the House of Commons that education would make the workers

insolent.'¹⁷

On the whole, however, the projected Society met a favourable response. The inaugural meeting was fixed for October 16th 1811, under the chairmanship of Archbishop Manners-Sutton, who had agreed to become President of the Society. Marsh invited the triumvirate of Bowles, Norris and Watson to dine with him on the 15th, to give one last polish to their plans. On the morrow, all went well: Watson was elected treasurer, Norris 'temporary acting secretary', and a further meeting arranged for October 21st, at which the regulations of the Society would be settled. Poor Bowles, still politically untouchable, was kept firmly in the background, although 'none took a more lively interest in the establishment of the National Society, even when, to his severe mortification, it was not thought expedient that his name should appear upon the committee, or accompany any public notice of the proceedings.'¹⁸

The second meeting, provided by Van Mildert with the hospitality of Bow Church, established beyond all doubt that 'this was not a mere private society run by a group of self-appointed zealots, but the Church acting in its corporate capacity.'¹⁹ The Prince Regent's offer of patronage, secured by Bowles a month earlier, was formally communicated and accepted; the Bishops were all made Vice Presidents and ex-officio members of the Committee. The list of Vice Presidents was made up with eminent representatives of the Establishment in State, among them Eldon, his brother Sir William Scott (now Speaker of the House of Commons), Lords Grenville, Kenyon and Redesdale,

and the Earl of Liverpool, who as Lord Hawkesbury had been entrusted with the demolition of Whitbread's Education Bill. For auditors the Society chose Richard Richards, a friend of William Stevens who afterwards became Chief Baron of the Exchequer, and Sir Thomas Plumer the Attorney-General.

The declared policy of the National Society was firstly, to collect subscriptions and build schools, to be run according to the Bell System; secondly, to 'encourage parishes to open their own schools, so that the schools "should be under the immediate inspection and government of those whose local knowledge would be likely to make better provision for each case, and who will naturally take a livelier interest in that which they have instituted and conducted themselves."'70

Due homage was paid to the S.P.C.K. with the requirement that the books used by the National Society's schools should be restricted to those in the Bartlett's Buildings catalogue. Shute Barrington, Bishop of Durham, a man of broad sympathies and great personal generosity, 'strongly opposed' this rule; he was supported by Lord Grenville and Sir William Scott, among others, but the rule was nevertheless carried by a narrow majority. Barrington then moved that it be supplemented by the words 'or were approved by the bishop of the diocese', but the amendment was negatived. The only concession offered to Barrington was 'that any books he used (for he said he did give his schools some not in the catalogue) should be added to their stock.'71

The National Society was immediately and spectacularly successful. 'The nation in 1811 was struggling on to support

the long-exhausting war with France. There was a dawn of hope from Sir Arthur Wellesley's brave and skilful defence of Portugal: but the field of Salamanca had not yet been fought, and Napoleon was arming for his gigantic contest with Russia, his spell of success as yet unbroken. At such a time it was something if a sum of £15,000 was at once contributed, in the course of about a month from the first advertisement of the Society's formation. The two Universities contributed shortly afterwards a sum of £500 each from their public chests, and several of the colleges voted sums of £100 or £50 from their separate bodies. The University of Oxford was canvassed by Bishop Randolph of London, previously Regius Professor of Divinity and Bishop of Oxford, and by his friends Parsons, Master of Balliol, and Eveleigh, Provost of Oriel.

Van Mildert, apart from providing a venue for the second public meeting, does not seem to have played any particularly significant part in the detailed work of setting up the National Society, although he remained a constant supporter of its activities for the rest of his life. He was not in a position to contribute much money, and his time was now heavily engaged by new concerns.

In 1808 he had stood for election to the Preachership of Gray's Inn but, despite the good wishes of Christopher Wordsworth, had been unsuccessful. In 1812 the Preacher of Lincoln's Inn, William Jackson, brother of the Dean of Christ Church, was raised to the see of Oxford and thereupon resigned his Preachership. Van Mildert became a candidate for the vacancy.

The contest began with seven competitors, but by the day of the election, April 18th, the number had been reduced to three: Van Mildert, Archdeacon Nares and Peter Elmsley. A fourth aspirant, one Gardner, resisted considerable pressure to 'give way', conduct which Van Mildert described as 'generally reprobated; - not only as an act of hostility to me, but as disrespectful & offensive to a majority of the Benchers, who may, by his obstinacy, be prevented from returning the man of their choice....the Archbishop of York this morning mentioned it to me in the same way in talking it over with the Bishop of London.'⁷⁴ The wretched Gardner, although apparently sure of at least three votes, caved in the day before the election.

Van Mildert's two remaining rivals were 'men of some mark. Archdeacon Robert Nares was a respectable philologist and antiquary, who had done the public the service of pamphleteering against Tom Paine, and had published, among other sermons, one entitled "Thanksgiving for Plenty, and a Warning against Avarice", which was recommended to the orthodox by Sydney Smith's description of it as "trite imbecility". Peter Elmsley was one of the greatest Hellenists in our history'.⁷⁵

During the intensive lobbying and manoeuvring which preceded the election, Van Mildert was championed by Park, Nares by the Solicitor General. Elmsley, 'the Grenvillite', was a Whig nominee, and part of the odium heaped on the hapless Gardner was due to his threatening to split the anti-Elmsley vote three ways instead of two. Nares apparently bore Van Mildert no malice for taking the editorship of the British

Critic from him, and 'a correspondence the most friendly and honourable to both parties, on the subject of their rivalry, took place; in which it is stated by the Archdeacon, as his chief plea, that he had been assistant preacher to Dr. Jackson at Lincoln's Inn nearly sixteen years.'⁷⁶

The strain of awaiting the outcome bore hard on Van Mildert. "I am in almost feverish solicitude as to the event," he wrote to Jane, '& withal these cruel Easterly winds cut me to pieces, & have brought on such a return of cold & defluxion, that I have to-day steadily resisted all invitations, & am now sitting upstairs in my little Parlour by myself, after dining on Lamb Broth & weak Wine & Water & Raisins, intending to finish with Tea & Water Gruel. For - truth, I have worked hard, & want some respite.' He drew encouragement from the kindness shown him by the eminent among the Benchers of Lincoln's Inn, including the Prime Minister, Spencer Perceval. Park, 'though very sanguine, thinks it right to be prepared for we know not what contingencies, but is persuaded that should I fail, Perceval would show himself my friend in some other way.'⁷⁷

The contingencies failed to materialise, and Van Mildert was duly elected. He was elated, 'this being esteemed an eminent post, and an almost sure step to higher promotion'.⁷⁸ Although the emolument was, he always insisted, comparatively small, he now had chambers at Lincoln's Inn, convenient also for Bow and Hackney. The deputy preachingship, the nomination to which was entirely at his own disposal, he gave to his 'young friend Mr. Strong'.

The principal responsibility of the Preachingship was 'the

whole preaching duty in the morning throughout the year,....the Preacher taking it personally in Term time - the Assistant, out of Term.' The task gave Van Mildert great pleasure, and on occasion he preached supererogatory sermons outside term time. The stimulus offered by so able, cultured and eminent a congregation inspired some of his best work; towards the end of his life, he found time to publish a collection of fifty Sermons preached before the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn on subjects ranging from 'God's moral government of the world' to 'The Gadarene Demoniacs' and 'Christian unity'.

Among the most important were a series of three on 'Cautions respecting theological discussion', in which Van Mildert set out to define the proper boundaries of theological inquiry. He condemned all endeavours to 'seek the reputation of being able to penetrate further than others can into the depths of mystery' as a dangerous waste of time, motivated by vanity and productive only of confusion and heresy; he argued this with particular reference to the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation. Interestingly, he listed among the evil consequences of 'this wantonness of speculation....the introduction of more extensive creeds, or public professions of faith, than otherwise it might have been expedient to adopt.' Although Van Mildert never flinched from the duty of defending the Articles and Creeds of the Anglican Church, there is something rueful in his comment that 'The mere baptismal form might have sufficed as a confession of the doctrine of the Trinity; had men been content simply to recognise in that confession the mysterious union of the three Persons in the

Godhead equal in majesty and honour. The bare acknowledgement that Christ was Son of God and Son of man, might have superseded any further illustrations of the doctrine of the incarnation, if all would have agreed in accepting those terms in their plain and obvious signification.'¹⁰⁰

Also barred was discussion of 'points which, whether or not they may be capable of satisfactory decision, are yet in their kind unprofitable and unimportant.' Van Mildert cautioned against 'the vain desire....to clear up points which it was of little importance to explain', stricturing, among other examples, 'the late Mr. Jones' "Trinitarian Analogy"' and similar attempts by 'other Hutchinsonian writers'. Of Hutchinsonianism itself, he remarked 'however blameless, or even edifying it may be, when kept within certain bounds, it is nevertheless exceedingly liable to mislead. In its very principle also, it savours somewhat of a prurient kind of inquisitiveness, unbefitting the reverence due to the sacred oracles.'¹⁰¹

Doctrines which he picked out as especially unsuited to discussion in detail included those of the Atonement and of the Real Presence: 'most of the Reformed Churches, while they declare the elements of bread and wine to remain unchanged, and deny the body and blood of Christ to be corporally present, acknowledge them nevertheless to be mystically and sacramentally present; that is, they acknowledge, that, by virtue of the spiritual grace which accompanies the elements, they convey to the penitent communicant the full and actual benefits of our Lord's death upon the cross. This, it might be

supposed, would suffice to unite all parties in this great act of faith and worship.' Delving any further into whether the Communion might 'in any admissible sense be called a sacrifice' (a possibility Van Mildert did not wish to deny), or arguing about the appropriate title for this sacrament, would generate only sterile squabbles over differences of doctrine which Van Mildert suspected of being more verbal than substantial.☐☐

'Verbal misapprehension' was the final problem area to which Van Mildert gave attention. His chosen example was the highly controversial issue of baptismal regeneration. 'Some speak of regeneration as if it denoted the absolute perfection of holiness; that consummation of the Christian character, when evil habits and evil propensities have been so entirely subdued, and the love of God and of Christ so deeply rooted in the heart, that thenceforth perseverance to the end can be no longer doubtful.' Since it was indisputably evident that 'multitudes who have been baptized into the Christian faith, never attain, or even seem to approach, to such entire perfection of character', to take this definition led naturally to regarding 'all who contend for the inseparability of baptismal and spiritual regeneration, as superstitiously ascribing to the sacrament of baptism an effect to which it appears to be altogether inadequate.' The concept of regeneration underlying the orthodox Anglican insistence on that inseparability was 'nothing more than that first principle of holiness, that beginning of the spiritual life, of which baptism is not only the sign, but also the pledge.' The dispute was thus a 'verbal' one, in the sense that the nub of

disagreement was the meaning to be attached to a word. It could nevertheless not be regarded as trivial: 'though this appears to be merely a verbal strife, it produces real and irreconcilable opposition, on a point of doctrine intimately connected with the ground of our acceptance under the Christian dispensation.'³³ Determining the true meanings of disputed words was the proper task, not of controversialists but of biblical criticism: 'and to none of the learned world is Christianity more indebted, than to those who successfully cultivate this important study.'³⁴

In a concluding passage which he elaborated in his Bampton lectures,³⁵ Van Mildert prescribed the true function of the theologian: to devote his abilities to the defence and clarification of 'the great leading truths of holy writ' and 'the collective wisdom of the Christian Church, handed down from age to age, and exhibited in those comprehensive confessions of faith which have survived the wreck of time, and withstood the united attacks of adversaries from generation to generation', taking care to adopt a devout and prayerful approach to the task as a 'corrective of the heart, as well as the understanding.'

Van Mildert's style had by now matured considerably, his early taste for exhortation largely abandoned, his continuing taste for parallelism less often degenerating into mere repetition. In the pulpit he had developed a distinctive manner which attracted favourable comment, even if his 'deep, sonorous, and grave' tones were not always very easy to hear. 'Though calling to aid little or no gesture, and often

experiencing much physical infirmity, he always spake as fully convinced of the truth and importance of his doctrine, and as being much in earnest to convince others likewise. His accents, the expression of his countenance, and his whole bearing, became authoritative, argumentative, or persuasive, in agreement with the nature of his subject; at the same time, he generally appeared to be rather refraining, than urging himself, and under the influence of a judicious mind, to be exhibiting less emotion than he really felt.'³⁵

Shortly after the Lincoln's Inn election, Van Mildert was invited to dine by Spencer Perceval. 'Just returned from the Prime Minister, who is a delightful man,' he wrote to Jane. '....The Preacher sat at the bottom of the Table, next to Mr. Perceval, - a seat which he naturally preferred to any other, for the benefit of so choice a companion, whom he found exceedingly pleasant & easy, though quite dignified, & with great vigour & energy of mind, tempered with the most perfect suavity & good breeding.' The letter was an exuberant and affectionate one: 'Whether I shall go down to you on Tuesday, I am not yet quite determined. If I should, I shall be half inclined to stay the whole week, & leave the Sons of the Clergy in the lurch....Love to dear Helen.'³⁷

Van Mildert would have been less than human if he had not realised the possibilities of promotion raised by his acquiring such an 'eminent friend'. Less than a month later, however, Perceval was shot dead in the lobby of the House of Commons.

Perceval had shown himself well-disposed to the Church, obtaining from Parliament in 1809 'a grant of £100,000 to

improve the condition of the poorer clergy'.¹⁰³ He had received in 1811 'a series of letters on the state of the Church....in which it was stated that in the great London churches, St. Marylebone and St. Pancras, there was not room for one-ninth of the parish population', and was considering the question of church accommodation at the time of his assassination.¹⁰⁴ From the Phalanx point of view, however, his Evangelical connections were something of a drawback; only two days before his death, Perceval met the Methodist Thomas Allen and listened sympathetically to his argument that Methodism represented a force for social order deserving of support.¹⁰⁵

William Wilberforce, who had been a close friend of his, noted that Perceval's death was 'received with joy and exultation....in Nottingham, Leicester, and I fear other places', happening as it did '....at a moment when positive distress had stirred up a great disturbance in the country.' A few days after the assassination, Wilberforce found the 'state of the West Riding manufacturing districts....dreadful - next to rebellion, smouldering rebellion - great military force sent down, and now, but too late, vigorous measures taking. The aspect of affairs is very gloomy.'¹⁰⁶ Shortly afterwards, he compared the 'state of the lower orders in the manufacturing districts' to 'the confluent small-pox on a human body; it is breaking out all over, and pains are evidently taken to interest the agriculturists.'¹⁰⁷

The government formed under these unpropitious circumstances was to continue in office for the best part of a decade. At its head was Robert Banks Jenkinson, second Earl of Liverpool.

1. Hansard, first series, vol.VII, pp.808,918
2. The Gentleman's Magazine, vol.LXXVI, part 2, p.989
3. H.H. [Jebb], A Great Bishop of One Hundred Years Ago, being a sketch of the life of Samuel Horsley, LL. D., formerly Bishop of St. David's, Rochester, and St. Asaph and Dean of Westminster, London (Edward Arnold, 1909), pp.224-5
4. The Gentleman's Magazine, vol.LXXVI, part 2, pp.988-9
5. Churton, vol.1, p.97, credits the invention of this name to Dr. William Hales, Rector of Killesandra in Ireland, an ally of the group.
6. For example by M.H. [Port], Six Hundred New Churches, a Study of the Church Building Commission, 1818-1856, and its Church Building Activities, London (S.P.C.K. for the Church Historical Society, 1961), pp.2-3
7. A.B. [Webster], Joshua Watson: The Story of a Layman, 1771-1855, London (S.P.C.K. for the Church Historical Society, 1954), p.18
8. Churton, vol.1, pp.92-3. Cobbett was at this time a 'bellicose anti-Jacobin journalist', to the extent of refusing to illuminate his house in honour of the peace declaration of 1801, and having his windows broken by a London mob in consequence. E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class, London (Penguin Books, 1968), p.83
9. Churton, vol.1, p.256
10. Dictionary of National Biography, vol.XXI, p.189
11. Correspondence between Wordsworth and Norris is preserved in the Bodleian, the British Library and Lambeth Palace Library; the earliest letter is dated December 25th [1807], British Library Ms. Add. 46136, ff.178-9.
12. W.O.B. [Allen and] E. [McClure], Two Hundred Years: the History of The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1698-1898, London (S.P.C.K., 1898), pp.131,258. On the charity schools see E. [Halévy], A History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century, 6 vols., London (Ernest Benn, 1949-52), p.526.
13. Allen and McClure, pp.203-4
15. Van Mildert, at Oxford at this time, was paying £1.15s. per term for his chambers.
16. F. Warre [Cornish], A History of the English Church in the Nineteenth Century, London (Macmillan, 1910), vol.1, p.37. Cf. Halévy, vol.1, p.447.

17. Churton, vol.1, p.95. The dignitary referred to was probably Robert Finch, treasurer of S.P.C.K. from 1775 to 1802 and a prebendary of Westminster.
18. Cornish, vol.1, p.38. A [Letter to the Society] for Promoting Christian Knowledge. Occasioned by two recent publications respecting the British and Foreign Bible Society, by a Member of the Society, London (Rivington, 1805), p.42, speaks of the Welsh Bibles as 'now republishing'. The fresh impression, of 20,000 Bibles with service book and psalms, was not in fact ready until 1809 (Allen and McClure, p.204).
19. Letter to the Society, p.10
20. Testimonial for 'Revd. Wm. Tournay, Warden of Wadham College, Oxford'; printed text, signed by Van Mildert and Charles Barton, dated January 17th 1809. Van Mildert Papers.
21. Letter to the Society, p.24
22. Cornish, vol.1, p.39
23. The copy of Letter to the Society in the Bodleian Library has a handwritten attribution to 'the Revd. W. Van Mildert'; the attribution is given in the Bodleian Catalogue. The style of the pamphlet supports the attribution. The British Library Catalogue of Printed Books lists the work as anonymous.
24. Letter to the Society, pp.6,40
25. Ibid., p.40
26. Ibid., p.5
27. Ibid., pp.23,41-3
28. Wordsworth to Norris [postmark 24th March 1810]. British Library Ms. Add. 46136, f.218
29. The controversy is charted by J. Hunt, Religious Thought in England in the Nineteenth Century, London (Gibbins, 1896), pp.33-5, and in W.L. [Mathieson], English Church Reform 1815-1840, London (Longman, 1923), pp.13-14. Mathieson cites the contemporary opinion that Marsh's intervention in fact served to increase support for the Bible Society, and quotes the comment of Southey, 'I wish Herbert Marsh had let the Bible Society alone'.
30. P.B. [Nockles], Continuity and Change in Anglican High Churchmanship in Britain, 1792-1850, Oxford (D. Phil. thesis, 1982), vol.1, pp.96-7. Marsh was subsequently attacked by the Anglican George Glover for undervaluing the proper use of tradition and the Vincentian Rule.
31. T.F. Middleton to Norris, 4th October 1813. Norris Papers.

32. Churton, vol.1, p.95
33. Joshua Watson to C. Wordsworth, January 1811, in Churton, vol.1, pp.95-6.
34. See Nockles, vol.1, p.167; cf. the automatic assumption of Van Mildert's Boyle Sermons, vol.1, p.485, that 'every National or Provincial Church' would be 'governed by Bishops of Apostolical origin'.
35. Mathieson, p.14
36. In 1819, Christopher Wordsworth reported to Norris with unwarranted optimism that Barrington had 'set his face agst.' a 'religious society' at Darlington on discovering that 'it was distributing, not SPCK tracts but those of the Religious Tract Society'. Wordsworth to Norris, Good Friday 1810. British Library Ms. Add. 46136, f.225.
37. Halévy, vol.1, pp.447-8
38. Ives, vol.1, p.31
39. W. Howley to Lord Liverpool, 2nd July 1824. British Library Ms. Add. 38299, ff.34-5.
40. Manners-Sutton to Van Mildert, March 1807, in Ives, vol.1, p.31.
41. This entailed revoking the chaplaincy of the Revd. William Trant. Record book in Lambeth Palace Library. 'Old Q' is best remembered as the author of the Queensberry Rules. The Times, March 15th 1792, p.2, col.3, in a series of satirical portraits of the Prince of Wales' friends inspired by the Prince's announced intention to defray his debts by selling off his stud, depicted 'Old Q--' as 'a rat-tailed horse, with a wall eye; has been broken down, and used for several years as a hackney; he will be sold cheap.'
42. Fiat FII/1807, 6th April 1807. Lambeth Palace Library.
43. Ives, vol.1, p.32. Churton, vol.1, p.74, suggests an abuse of trust by the contractor. Ives does not support this, and Churton's sources for this period were not uniformly reliable: he states that Archbishop Moore presented Van Mildert to Farningham.
44. Churton, vol.1, pp.75,90
45. Ibid., pp.75-6. 'When the sum was replaced in Joshua Watson's hands, it was, with the consent of the surviving contributors, and with some little accessions, transmitted to Bishop Broughton, to buy up the lease of the house... bequeathed to the see of Sydney.'

46. Wordsworth to Norris, June 4th 1811. British Library Ms. Add. 46136, f.242.
47. Wordsworth to Norris, December 25th 1810. Ibid., f.237.
48. Wordsworth to Norris, August 3rd 1810. Ibid., f.230. The letter continues 'I hope his pen is not idle.'
49. Churton, vol.1, p.73. Nockles, vol.1, p.272, describes this part of the Churchman's Remembrancer as 'an organ especially given over to the aim of republishing scarce and valuable devotional works'.
50. Churton, vol.1, p.96
51. Nares to Norris, April 16th 1814. Norris Papers.
52. Middleton to Norris, 3rd November 1813. Norris Papers.
53. Wordsworth to Norris, September 4th 1811. Norris Papers.
54. Allen and McClure, p.133, state that 'the Rev. H. [sic] Van Mildert' became S.P.C.K. Treasurer on June 9th 1812. Cochrane, p.100, gives the date of Van Mildert's election as June 2nd.
55. W. Van Mildert, To THE INHABITANTS of THE PARISH OF FARNINGHAM in the County of Kent (privately printed, 5th March 1810), reproduced entire in Cochrane, pp.75-81.
56. See above, p.63; cf. Daubeny's Guide to the Church, p.139.
57. S.B. Black, The Children of Farningham and their Schools 1800-1900, Kent (Darenth Valley Publications, 1982), pp.2-4
58. The Charges of Samuel Horsley, late Lord Bishop of St. Asaph; delivered at his several Visitations of the Dioceses of St. David's, Rochester, and St. Asaph, Dundee (1813), p.157. R.A. Soloway, Prelates and People: Ecclesiastical Social Thought in England 1783-1852, London (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), p.360, cites this charge as evidence that by 1800 Horsley had lost his earlier enthusiasm for education.
59. R.I. and S. Wilberforce, The [Life of William Wilberforce], London (John Murray, 1838), vol.3, p.72
60. Inscription over the door of Lancaster's first school. Dictionary of National Biography, vol.XXXII, p.39.
61. S.C. Carpenter, Church and People, 1789-1889, London (S.P.C.K., 1933), pp.70-2, has a useful summary.
62. Letter to the Society, footnote, pp.24-6
63. Cornish, vol.1, p.93

64. C. Daubeny, A Sermon Preached....June 1, 1809, Being the Time of the Yearly Meeting of the Children Educated in the Charity Schools, London (1809), p.17. Quoted in Soloway, p.371.
65. Churton, vol.1, p.103
66. Park to Watson, 8th October 1811, in Churton, vol.1, p.106.
67. Webster, p.34
68. Churton, vol.1, p.91
69. Webster, p.35
70. Quoted by Webster, p.35, from the First Report of the National Society.
71. Life of William Wilberforce, vol.4, p.13
72. Churton, vol.1, p.116
73. Wordsworth to Norris [postmark 11th October 1808], British Library Ms. Add. 46136, f.191.
74. Van Mildert to Jane Van Mildert, 17th April 1812, in Adams, pp.453-5.
75. G.F.A. Best, 'The Mind and Times of William Van Mildert', in Journal of Theological Studies, New Series, vol.XIV, part 2 (October 1963), pp.355-70; p.359
76. Ives, vol.1, pp.34-5
77. See note 74.
78. Ives, vol.1, p.34
79. Van Mildert to C. Wordsworth, October 18th 1814. Lambeth Palace Library Ms. 1822, ff.238-9.
80. W. Van Mildert, Sermons preached before the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn, from the year 1812 to the year 1819, Oxford (1831), vol.1, pp.70, 85-6
81. Ibid., pp.95-8, 112
82. Ibid., pp.102-3
83. Ibid., pp.134-5
84. Ibid., p.124
85. Ibid., p.141. Cf. Daubeny's Guide to the Church, p.162. For the Bampton Lectures, see below, pp.183 ff., particularly pp.187-9.

86. Ives, vol.1, p.36. This is evidently an eye-witness description.

87. Van Mildert to Jane Van Mildert, 'Saturday' - April 25th, May 2nd or May 9th 1812. In Adams, p.455.

88. This was the first of a series of eleven annual parliamentary grants to relieve clerical poverty, administered by the Bounty Board. G.F.A. Best, Temporal Pillars: Queen Anne's Bounty, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, and the Church of England, Cambridge (Cambridge University Press, 1964), pp.205-6.

89. Cornish, vol.1, p.77; Port, p.7.

90. W.R. Ward, Religion and Society in England 1790-1850, New York (Schocken Books, 1973), p.62

91. Diary entry for May 16th 1812. Life of William Wilberforce, vol.4, p.27.

92. Ibid., pp.36-7

Chapter Six

Return to Oxford

Regius Professor of Divinity; Van Mildert's
Bampton Lectures; Thomas Gaisford and Charles
Lloyd; the Ewelme tithes.

Chapter Six

With the formation of Lord Liverpool's administration in 1812, the influence of the Hackney Phalanx reached its zenith. Liverpool had been at Charterhouse with John James Watson, had sat beside him in Hall at University College, Oxford; they retained a high sense of each other's worth. Convinced of both the need for, and the dangers of, Church reform, Liverpool met all the Phalanx's specifications for an ideal Prime Minister.

His exercise of ecclesiastical patronage was particularly praised. Although the venerable practice of nepotism did not entirely disappear - Liverpool's brother John Banks Jenkinson became Bishop of St. David's in 1825 and Dean of Durham in commendam two years later - it came to be understood that no unsuitable man would be preferred, whatever his connections, and that no sound and able man would be passed over simply for lack of influence. Liverpool went 'out of his way, so far as George IV let him', to appoint men of blameless character and irreproachable orthodoxy; his bishops were conscientious (by the standards of the day) in performing their episcopal duties and uncontroversial in their public utterance. By 1828 Wellington could write to a fellow peer with entire plausibility that 'dignities of the Church and benefices of the higher value' in the Crown's patronage were open only to 'those who have distinguished themselves by their professional merits.'

Of all the Hackney Phalanx, Liverpool took most warmly to Henry Handley Norris. It came to be said that not a bishop was

appointed without Norris' advice being sought, an exaggeration which reflected its share of truth. With Norris among the Prime Minister's clerical advisers, and Joshua Watson becoming increasingly well established among the Archbishop of Canterbury's lay advisers, the Phalanx was poised to achieve great things.

Van Mildert, for his part, increased his reputation by his memorial sermon for Spencer Perceval, preached at Lincoln's Inn on May 31st 1812 and published at the Benchers' request. The sermon said all the right things with neatness and economy: examined the possible intentions of Providence in the sudden death of a righteous statesman, praised the virtues of the departed with a warmth short of sycophancy, deplored the wickedness of the act and the 'savage complacency' with which 'some few of the refuse of our land' had received the news, and pressed home the lessons to be learnt - both collective, of 'a salutary alarm of danger, and a jealous solicitude for the national character'; and individual, of the need to live in perpetual readiness for the Divine summons.⁴

Soon after this, the Oxford Heads of Houses invited him to deliver the Bampton Lectures for 1814. He accepted with pleasure, choosing for his theme 'An Enquiry into the General Principles of Scripture-Interpretation'. While he was still planning out his lectures, he received an even more gratifying invitation.

On September 2nd 1813, Van Mildert was at Farningham alone, Jane and 'the Girls' having gone to Cheltenham. Two friends, Strong and Ducane, were with him in the evening. They left at

about seven, and Van Mildert walked out into his garden. There then arrived a private messenger from Lord Liverpool who, such was the stringency of the Van Milderts' domestic economies, 'could find only one servant - a female presiding at the churn. She was willing to seek her master....if the messenger would take her place, and keep the churn in motion.'

The message requested Van Mildert to present himself at noon the next day. 'Of course,' he wrote to Jane, 'an affirmative answer was instantly returned, & by 5 minutes before Twelve appeared the humble Vicar (or, rather, the great Preacher of Lincoln's Inn) at Fife House.'

Liverpool received Van Mildert 'with the utmost ease & courtesy' and offered him the Oxford Regius Professorship of Divinity, vacant by the elevation of William Howley to the see of London. The great Preacher, taken unawares, was inclined to panic. 'I told him instantly, that the matter came upon me so entirely by surprise, that I scarcely knew what to say or think, that I felt most deeply the weight of obligation to him for deeming me competent to fill so arduous & important a station, but that, for the moment, I felt quite overwhelmed with my fears that I might not be able to acquit myself in it, so as to do credit to such Patronage & to the University.' Liverpool was kind to him, assured him that 'the matter did not press for an immediate answer', and sent him off to confer with Howley, who proved to have left Town that morning.

Howley had himself initially been reluctant to take the Regius Professorship, partly because 'the difficulty of finding a Reg. Prof. may sometimes make it difficult for a person in

possession to get out of it.' On this occasion too, at least one candidate had already declined the appointment. If some such consideration was a factor in Van Mildert's hesitancy, it was one which he never mentioned. He feared, he told Jane, that he was 'disused to Academical habits' and might fail to live up to expectation. The prospective workload daunted him: 'I have Bampton Lectures in hand, not half finished. The duties of the Professorship must, I suppose, be entered upon in about six weeks from the present time. I am in no state of preparation for them whatever.' Finally, he thought that acceptance would mean resignation of all his other preferment, and he hated the thought of giving up Lincoln's Inn. He said as much to Lord Liverpool, who 'smiled & said, the Benchers would think it a good compliment to themselves that their Preacher was so soon promoted.'

On the other hand, to be Regius Professor of Divinity at the University of Oxford was 'a dignity of the very first description, in point of reputation and importance. And possibly my acceptance may prevent it getting into worse hands.' Besides, Lord Liverpool 'very explicitly stated the value of the thing....at least, a clear £2000 per annum. This is a temptation, indeed, to poor Van & so it will be to his Wife.'

Having given the matter careful consideration, Van Mildert accepted the position. He 'almost immediately became D.D.', an honour which his new station demanded, and thenceforth was usually referred to as Dr. Van Mildert - the use of 'Professor' as a title was against Oxford tradition.

With the Professorship went a canonry of Christ Church, annexed to it by James I; another was annexed to the Regius Professorship of Hebrew. Van Mildert's royal letters patent for the canonry were made out on October 29th 1813; he made his formal first appearance 'in the Chapter House between the Hours of Eleven and Twelve' on November 3rd,¹⁰ and on November 4th he became for the second time a resident member of the University of Oxford.¹¹

Van Mildert's 'paramount Duty' as Professor was 'that of providing a Theological course for the young Academics'. This meant reading lectures, which could be done 'in such Terms & at such times' as he found most convenient.¹² It seems clear that Van Mildert did lecture: his Diary for 1816, during the four weeks for which he remembered to keep it, recorded the composition of the second, third and fourth Lectures in Divinity 'for the next course', and Ives, who was up at Exeter College from 1811 to 1815, 'listened to him, both in the pulpit of the University, and in his lecture room'. Writing more than twenty years later, Ives would not 'attempt from recollection a distinct account of his divinity lectures, lest he should be guilty of doing them discredit. In proof, however, that his admiration was not the result of a mere undiscerning predilection, he is able to state, that the attraction of them was more than ordinary, and that the hearers were always remarkably numerous and attentive....'¹³

Against this must be set Charles Lloyd's declaration to Peel, in 1827, that Van Mildert 'paid a Deputy to do the whole work of Professor, during the whole time he occupied the

Professorship': but Lloyd was in a rage, believing himself to have been passed over for the see of Oxford, and was in any case given to flamboyant statements.¹⁴ It is likely that Van Mildert sometimes paid a deputy to deliver his lectures, especially during his recurrent bouts of ill-health. It is highly unlikely, in view of his lifelong commitment to the principle of residence, that he would have considered delegating 'the whole work of Professor'.

Besides his lectures, Van Mildert had the duty of 'presiding in the Divinity School at Exercises for Degrees in Divinity & presenting to those Degrees in Convocation'.¹⁵ Examination procedures in Oxford had undergone a measure of reform following the New Examinations Statute of 1800 and the further enactments of 1803, 1807 and 1809. Its effect was to 'establish a final examination which was both honest and exacting, and it provided the possibility of Honors in the two schools of Literae Humaniores and Mathematics and Physics'.¹⁶ Examinations were still conducted orally, but pains were taken to make them genuinely public, and the results were classed. The 1800 statute specified that 'at every examination, on every occasion, the Elements of Religion, and the Doctrinal Articlesmust form a part', a measure interpreted by W.R. Ward as Oxford's defence against the atheism which inspired the French Revolution.¹⁷ M.A. requirements were reviewed in their turn: in 1816 the University passed 'Statutes....by which the ancient Forms of logical Disputations are entirely superseded', and the Christ Church Chapter ordered the discontinuation of 'all the Customary Exercises with the Exception only of the Batchelors

Declamations'.¹⁹

Now that degrees were classed, college authorities paid greater attention than in Van Mildert's undergraduate days to the examination performance of their students. During the decanal reign of Cyril Jackson, Christ Church had built up a reputation for academic excellence. Even under his successor, Liverpool's 'handsome but incapable tutor, Charles Henry Hall',¹⁹ high achievements in the Schools were rewarded with prizes of books and other marks of honour.

Besides his academic duties, the Regius Professor was expected to preach 'before the University'.²⁰ Van Mildert's University sermons were all delivered outside the Law Terms, because he had after all decided not to resign his Lincoln's Inn preachership. The announcement of his Oxford post brought him a number of gratifying letters from individual Benchers, two of which Ives quotes. 'Unless your duties of Regius Professor render your attendance at Lincoln's Inn impossible,' wrote one eminent barrister, 'I...entreat you not to resign, and three of your hearers, now in court, join in my request.'²¹

Willing as Van Mildert was to yield to this pressure, the need to write a weekly sermon (during term time) for his 'learned audience in London' combined with his academic commitments, including 'the cares, and ceremonies, and hospitalities, inseparable from a new and eminent situation', to make heavy demands on his time and energy. 'Nevertheless, he persevered, and by tasking to the uttermost his powers of mind, was able to keep on until the termination of his Bampton lectures, by which...he felt considerably relieved.'²²

Van Mildert's Bampton Lectures were delivered in 1814 and published the following year, after the customary submission to Joshua Watson for approval.²³ In them, he took up and elaborated the second theme of his Boyle Lectures, that of the proper mode of enquiry into Divine truth. Where the Boyle Lectures employed a twofold conception, of Reason and Revelation, the Bampton Lectures explored the threefold relationship of Tradition, Reason and Inspiration.

Van Mildert's elaboration of this relationship drew heavily on the doctrine of the 'golden mean'. To reject any of the three appointed means to the right understanding of God's Word was dangerous; to elevate any of them into an infallible guide was dangerous. At one extreme lurked theological anarchy, with each individual theologian free to promulgate any doctrine he pleased. At the other, 'sacerdotal, intellectual, and spiritual Pride...."taught for doctrines of God the commandments of men".²⁴ Safety lay in preserving the balance between opposite errors.

Van Mildert distinguished the Anglican from the Roman Catholic view of Tradition in terms of the appeal to Scripture. Roman Catholics, he claimed, saw the Church as the infallible arbiter in all matters of faith, this infallibility being vested in the Pope. Anglicans refused to acknowledge, not only the infallibility of the Pope, but the infallibility of the Church in any form. The authority of the Church was derived from Scripture; it could not therefore be said to have any authority over Scripture. Infallibility belonged to God alone, and hence to the Bible as the inspired Word of God. Scripture

was 'the only Rule of Faith: and whatever benefit may be derived from other writings, reporting to us, as apostolical traditions, additional matters, illustrative of our faith and worship; to them is to be assigned no more than a secondary rank, as being subsidiary, not essential to our Creed.'²⁵

In offering this firm restatement of the 'traditional high church doctrine of "fundamentals"',²⁶ Van Mildert aligned himself emphatically with the middle way pursued by Waterland between Latitudinarian and extreme Nonjuring understandings of the place of tradition in the life of the Church. Van Mildert was far from wishing to devalue the Church's role as the vehicle of tradition. He declared the need for 'duly considering, that, though the Word of God is itself a perfect rule of Faith, yet to the far greater portion of mankind it can only become so through some medium of human instruction. That medium the Scripture itself has pointed out to be the Christian ministry.' The individual Christian was not at liberty 'wantonly or perversely' to set aside the Church's real, though limited, authority over him. 'Christian modesty....warns us, not rashly to gainsay doctrines declared by the Church to be deduced from Holy Writ.'²⁷

The Church, in this context, he defined as 'that, which has from age to age borne rule, upon the ground of its pretensions to Apostolical succession.' The Divine purpose in maintaining a visible Church for the instruction and discipline of the faithful was articulated through the historic ministry, created by the Apostles at the Divine bidding. Episcopacy was the mark of the Church's fidelity to her apostolic origins.²⁸

The mind of the universal Church was 'exhibited, either in the decisions of General Councils convened for the purpose, or in the various Creeds and Confessionals framed by different Churches.' It was to be found in its purest form in the creeds, Articles, liturgy and 'public Formularies' of the Church of England; but even these pure forms were subject to the right of appeal to Scripture, and it was as scriptural, rather than as universally received, that they must be defended.

For the 'received persuasion of the Catholic Church', thus determined, Van Mildert was willing to claim a cautious and empirical indefectibility: an impartial examination of the facts would reveal that 'at no period of its history has any fundamental or essential Truth of the Gospel been authoritatively disowned. Particular Churches may have added many superstitious observances and many erroneous tenets, to these essential truths; and in every Church, particular individuals, or congregations of individuals, may have tainted large portions of the Christian community with pestilential heresies. But as far as the Church Catholic can be deemed responsible, the substance of sound doctrine still remains undestroyed....' The temporary triumph of Arianism, which he acknowledged as an embarrassment to his argument, was blamed on 'the unwarrantable interference of secular power'.²⁷

J.H. Newman, in the eighth of his Lectures on the Prophetical Office of the Church (1837), devoted to 'The Indefectibility of the Church Catholic', quoted this passage at length. Some discomfort with the qualified and empirical cast of Van Mildert's argument may be reflected in Newman's protest

at his treatment of 'the main principle under discussion....more as a fact than as a doctrine'.³⁰ Newman also quoted Van Mildert's examination of the early Church before the East-West schism in support of his own argument that the Church Catholic suffered its major loss of infallibility with the loss of its unity.

Again, the chief difference between Newman's position and Van Mildert's was one of emphasis. Van Mildert's 'belief that "until the great schism between the Eastern and Western Churches, and the full establishment of the Papal usurpation," the Fathers kept before them the duty of contending for the faith and guarding it against heretical innovations'³¹ was very carefully qualified: the primitive Fathers, despite the respect due to them as hearers and successors of the Apostles, were 'not to be regarded as Divinely-inspired; since otherwise their writings would necessarily have formed a part of the Sacred Canon'. Orthodoxy did not 'claim for them any infallibility, any commission to make further revelations of the Divine will, or any absolute authority as Scripture-interpreters.' In an earlier passage Van Mildert had explicitly denied the infallibility of General Councils; his whole exploration of the authority of the Early Church was governed by the summary 'The appeal still lies....from all religious instructors, to that Word itself, which was no less their Rule of Faith than it is ours.'³² Newman would not, perhaps, have dissented from any of these cautions; but he did not feel impelled to state them with the same vigour. Despite the intensity of his attacks on Popery, Newman in The Prophetical Office of the Church was

already showing the beginnings of discomfort with the place assigned to Catholic Tradition by 'the school of Waterland'.

The theme that absolute reliability belongs only to Scripture also formed the basis of Van Mildert's consideration of the proper roles of Inspiration and Reason in the work of Scripture-interpretation. Claims to private revelations of the Holy Spirit were no more congenial to Van Mildert than to Bishop Butler. The 'age of special and extraordinary illuminations' was long over. 'Such pretensions therefore are now to be regarded not only with suspicion, but with dread, from their tendency to weaken that which is already stamped with the seal of Divine authority.' To be sure, the normal 'co-operation of the Holy Spirit' was not to be presumptuously refused; but this implied no more than a devout and humble willingness to acknowledge that all progress in the understanding of Divine truth is made by gift of grace.

In Oxford Van Mildert's examination of Reason, while grounded in the same basic convictions as his Boyle Lectures, showed a marked change of atmosphere. The Bampton Lectures stressed the positive value of 'the light of human reason, bearing some faint analogy to the light of inspiration,' and reprobated in the strongest terms any irrationalist or 'enthusiastic' approach to the study of Scripture. Although he still issued cautions against the assertion of 'such a supremacy of human Reason, as would place it even above Divine control', for Van Mildert the searching of Scripture was the highest and proper use of the rational faculty, and he elaborated its possibilities in loving detail. 'The Scriptures

comprehend a vast extent of knowledge, human as well as divine; and, in the illustration of them, scarcely any acquisitions of human learning are useless or unimportant. The adept in ancient languages, in philology, rhetoric, logic, ethics, metaphysics, geography, chronology, history ancient and modern, will have a conspicuous advantage in the study of the Sacred Writings....the value of solid acquirements of this kind, soberly and discreetly applied, is fully proved by the signal benefits which the Christian Faith has actually derived from the various improvements and discoveries of modern times in literature and science, tending to corroborate many important truths in the Sacred Records....'34

Van Mildert was even prepared to allow sufficiently well established truths of 'science' to serve as a means of detecting false interpretations of Scripture, a criterion for which he claimed the support of the French scholar J.A. Turretin.35 This gave a novel twist to the Hutchinsonian stance that any contradiction between the truths of empirical science (in its early-nineteenth-century acceptation) and those of Revealed Religion must be merely apparent. The use of humanly-discovered facts as arbiters of Scriptural interpretation was, however, 'not the work of a rash or unskilful hand', and it would 'well become the man of science, rather to mistrust his own judgement...than hastily to infer that reason and revelation are irreconcilably at variance.'36

Internal contradictions of the biblical writings were similarly the result of misconceptions and must be harmonised. Besides the dispelling of illusory difficulties, Van Mildert's

agenda for exegetes included establishing 'the genuineness of the text and its Divine authority'; analysis of the content in terms of purpose, universality, context both within secular history and within the overall plan of salvation, and centrality to the essential Gospel message; and framing 'Systems of Divinity' according to the Analogy of Faith: 'First, the Verbal Analogy of Scripture, or the collation of parallel texts illustrative of its characteristic diction and phraseology:- Secondly, the Historical Analogy, or collation of parallel events and circumstances for the elucidation of facts:- Thirdly, the Doctrinal Analogy, or collation of parallel instructions relative to matters of Faith and Practice.'

Van Mildert's Bampton Lectures made no reference to the questions beginning to be asked, in Germany and elsewhere, about the process of composition of the Gospel narratives. It is, however, noticeable that he did not repeat the diatribe of his Boyle Sermons against German theologians. This almost certainly indicates a genuine shift in his opinions.

Modern German biblical criticism arrived in Cambridge with the publication of Herbert Marsh's annotated translation of Michaelis' Introduction to the New Testament (1793), accompanied by Marsh's own A Dissertation on the origin and composition of the three first Canonical Gospels (1801). The hypothesis contained in these works, of a lost protevangelium underlying the Synoptics, 'produced one of those panics to which the orthodox world is....subject'. Marsh was attacked by John Randolph, Daniel Veysie and a 'host of combatants', and

defended himself with vigour. The controversy, however, did not develop along the usual lines of battle. Marsh was no heterodox libertarian but a sound Tory high-churchman, who had come to appreciate Michaelis' work through his own studies at Göttingen. His other works included a History of the Politicks of Great Britain and France (1800) which earned him an annuity of £500 from a grateful Pitt - a fact which may help to explain why Bishop Tomline of Lincoln was an early enthusiast for the Michaelis.³⁹ Tomline was highly respected, both as a theologian and as Pitt's chief ecclesiastical adviser; his endorsement served to counterbalance the bitter attack made by Bishop Randolph. The work's prestige grew quietly, given a boost when Marsh became Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity in 1807, a further boost when Liverpool raised him to the See of Llandaff in 1816. By 1830, its appearance on orthodox reading lists raised no eyebrows. Even moderate Evangelicals were to some extent appeased: Bishop Shute Barrington included it on his list for professional study by clergymen.⁴⁰

Van Mildert, holding that 'the Scriptures....have a peculiar and extraordinary character impressed upon them, which takes them out of the class of ordinary writings',⁴¹ was not a likely convert to source criticism. His own model of the composition of the New Testament was one of 'Sacred Penmen' working under the direct supervision of the Holy Spirit, their authority coming not from written sources but from God. He nevertheless had great respect for Marsh's exertions both in the founding of the National Society and in the tract war against the Bible Society: Marsh's 1812 expose of the perils of

circulating Bibles unaccompanied by the Prayer Book had much the same flavour as Van Mildert's own sideswipes at the Bible Society in his first and last Bampton Lectures.⁴² On Popery, too, Marsh was irreproachable. Van Mildert regarded Marsh's Comparative View of the Churches of England and Rome (1814) as comprising 'within a short compass so much extensive research, forcible reasoning, and perspicuous illustration of the subject, as almost to supersede the necessity of further investigation.'⁴³

Respect for the author reconciled Van Mildert to the work. Although he did not use it in his Bampton Lectures, Michaelis' Introduction to the New Testament figured on a booklist given by Van Mildert to his students in 1818, under the subheading 'Canon of Scripture'.⁴⁴

If not prepared to condemn out of hand those who apply the tools of ordinary literary criticism to the Sacred Text, Van Mildert had no such inhibitions where other branches of rationalism were concerned. Any attempt at demythologising met with round denunciation. Figurative, spiritual and mystical interpretations of difficult passages were not only necessary but laudable when they had actual scriptural warrant, for example in the Pauline writings. Their use might legitimately be extended beyond this, where 'some urgent reason' could be demonstrated. When, for instance, the literal meaning of a passage was 'such as would derogate from the Divine perfections; as when bodily organs or human passions are attributed to the Almighty', the faithful critic was bound to look for a 'spiritual, or mystical interpretation'. Figurative

renderings could not, however, be justified when the literal sense 'involves no absurdity or falsehood, nor is contradictory to the rest of Scripture.' Van Mildert indignantly rejected 'attempts....to substitute allegorical explanations of the Creation and Fall of man....for the simple historical statements....Does not....the whole system of our Redemption presuppose the reality of the Fall as an historical fact?'⁴⁵

Miracles must not be explained away, because they were for Van Mildert the evidence par excellence by which the Divine accreditation of Scripture could be proved. That there had been an Age of Miracles, and that it was now over, were central to his apologetic, enabling him to declare on the one hand that inspiration of individuals had demonstrably happened, and on the other that all contemporary claims to inspiration were false.

As with his Boyle Lectures, Van Mildert displayed the theological pedigree of his Bampton Lectures in a massive Appendix, half as long as the main text. He acknowledged his debt to well over a hundred different works of divinity: Fathers, Reformers, Caroline Divines, Continental exegetes and sympathetic contemporaries. His principal sources were Horsley, Waterland, Leslie and St. Augustine.⁴⁶

The Bampton Lectures consolidated Van Mildert's position among the greatest theologians of his day. He, more than any other early nineteenth century writer, brought the tradition of the Caroline Divines alive for his contemporaries. His style, more erudite than Sikes of Guilsborough, more eirenical than Marsh, less angular than Daubeny, commended itself widely.

Although Van Mildert's stand on contemporary issues such as Baptismal Regeneration, the Real Presence, the Bible Society and the true nature of Christian Unity was uncompromising, the measured benevolence of his tone gave him a reputation for judicious moderation. He was never shrill or gladiatorial. 'Whenever he ascends the pulpit,' wrote an anonymous 'Onesimus' in 1814, 'it is evidently for the religious instruction of his hearers, and not to challenge their applause, or admiration.... Nothing that savours of intemperance, nothing crude, nothing of flourish or of figure, is suffered to impair the substantial fabric of his compositions....His style is not homely, but studiously plain. He will doubtless fill the high office of Regius Professor of Divinity with credit to himself, and advantage to the students of Oxford; and may not unreasonably look to adorn that mitre, with which his professional exertions must eventually be recompensed.'⁴⁷

Besides his lectures, Van Mildert's sense of professorial responsibility extended to less formal areas. Ives, who 'was frequently a guest at the table of his relative', described the great man's 'habit of adapting his conversation at once to please, and inform, and impart wisdom to the young; his readiness to say something interesting on all occasions; and his watchfulness to encourage the timid and reserved, by kindly taking up, and repeating in his own felicitous way, their imperfect sentences and ideas.'⁴⁸ Another of his extended responsibilities was that of 'a delegate of the Clarendon Press', and he corresponded with Joshua Watson on 'subjects which engaged his attention' in this capacity.⁴⁹

As a Canon of Christ Church, Van Mildert took his share of the business of the Chapter, which was concerned chiefly with college discipline and administration. Meetings were held on average once a week, and Van Mildert's attendance record of around one meeting in three compared favourably with those of some of his fellow-canons. Three proxies were sometimes needed to achieve the quorum of five, and it was not unknown for a 'meeting' to be held by one canon with four proxies. Van Mildert usually contrived to be present when the Chapter was considering a donation to one of Joshua Watson's societies, and to be absent from meetings for punitive purposes, such as that convened on November 18th 1816 to deal with the wretched 'Cleaver Student of this House' in whose rooms 'the Censors had Detected a Woman of the Town'.⁵⁰

By virtue of his Canonry, Van Mildert now exercised valuable patronage. Not only did he participate in the allocation of Chapter livings, but every other year he had the right of presentation to a Christ Church studentship. His first, in December 1815, was probably given to G.J. Majendie, son of the Bishop of Bangor;⁵¹ his second, two years later, went to his nephew Philip Douglas, son of the Master of Bene't College, Cambridge. In 1818 Bishop Howley of London produced a candidate for Van Mildert's third presentation; but the Professor, courteously regretting his 'inability to be of use to Your Lordship on this occasion', kept faith with his 'friend Mr. Dyke in Kent, who, with a family of Fifteen Children, looks forward to this provision for his second Son with some solicitude.'⁵²

The dual status of Christ Church, Cathedral of the diocese of Oxford as well as college of the University, gave its Chapter position in the ecclesiastical world: Van Mildert was Church dignitary as well as don. In 1815 he was one of the commissaries appointed to act for the dying Bishop Jackson, his predecessor as Preacher of Lincoln's Inn. The others were the Vicar General of the diocese, Archdeacon Pett of Oxford, and the Regius Professor of Hebrew.⁵³

Entertaining and being entertained formed a further important part of Van Mildert's duties. During the first four weeks of 1816 he attended five dinner parties and gave five himself. Oxford society was still well-lubricated: during his seven years at Christ Church Van Mildert, abstemious by habit and unextravagant by necessity, bought thirty dozen bottles of Port Wine, three dozen of Teneriffe Madeira, three dozen of white wine and four dozen of sherry from the college, at a total cost of £112.3s.6d.⁵⁴

Van Mildert's work with the S.P.C.K. had already brought him into contact with various Oxford notables, among them John Parsons, reforming Master of Balliol, who in 1813 became Bishop of Peterborough, and William Tournay, Warden of Wadham. Van Mildert sponsored Tournay's application for S.P.C.K. membership, and, during his time as S.P.C.K. Treasurer, enquired on the Warden's behalf into the affair of the missionary and the dried fish.⁵⁵

Among the new friendships made by Van Mildert's return to Oxford, two were particularly close. Thomas Gaisford and Charles Lloyd were both Students of Christ Church, both

considerably Van Mildert's junior, and both men of outstanding ability.

Gaisford, Regius Professor of Greek, was one of the foremost Hellenists of his day: his edition of Herodotus won the ultimate accolade, 'cordial respect from German scholars'. According to Tuckwell he never lectured, although 'the higher Oxford scholarship gained worldwide lustre from his productions.'⁵⁴ Cyril Jackson discovered Gaisford as an obscure freshman, established him in a Christ Church studentship, and in 1812 secured the Regius Professorship for him from Lord Liverpool. Gaisford was devoted to his studies, resisting all Dean Jackson's persuasions to make a career in the Church. 'I have long wished & laboured to coax him into becoming a Divine,' Jackson wrote to Howley in 1813, '- & have often tried to shew him that with his abilities Greek was only a means to an end - But I think he is too deeply bitten & smitten.' Gaisford was fortunate enough to be able to ignore the financial aspects of advancement, having a sufficient private income to augment his academic earnings.⁵⁷

Gaisford was 'a rough and surly man', famous for his laconic utterance, with little use for social niceties.⁵⁸ But if his public image was that of an uncouth scholar-hermit, to his friends he was capable of great warmth. Dean Jackson held 'the highest opinion of the goodness of Gaisford's heart'. The letter which Gaisford wrote to Howley on learning of the latter's elevation to the see of London was both affectionate and considerate: he wished to discuss Howley's thoughts on 'the appointment of a new Professor....but being well aware of the

press of business wh. must now be upon your hands, I cannot urge the point with you.' Howley thought of making Gaisford his domestic chaplain, but accepted Jackson's verdict that Gaisford could not be domesticated.

The friendship which grew up between the two Regius Professors, based on mutual respect as well as liking for each other's company, was strengthened by a different kind of bond when Gaisford proposed marriage to the Van Milderts' elder foster daughter Helen Douglas, now aged twenty-four, and was accepted. The Professor of Greek cut an unlikely figure as a lover, and a satirical verse to that effect circulated in the University; but by January 1815 the engagement was official.⁵⁰ They were married the following July at St. Cross Church, Holywell. Marriage meant the loss of Gaisford's Studentship; but in May 1815 he was presented to the Chapter living of 'Westwell in the County and Diocese of Oxford', an arrangement which, coming while he was still single, allowed him to enjoy a year of grace in his Studentship. The marriage seems to have been a happy one, producing a brood of six children in whom the Van Milderts took a warm interest.

When the younger Robert Peel entered Christ Church as an undergraduate in October 1805, it was Gaisford who was assigned to him as tutor. Peel was able enough, taking a double first in 1808, the year after the foundation of the School of Mathematics and Physics. However, by 1805 Peel's ambitions were firmly set on a career in politics,⁵¹ while Gaisford's devotion was given to academia. The initial arrangement soon broke down, and the role of Tomline to Peel's Pitt passed to Charles Lloyd

- a move which was to have serious consequences, both for Lloyd himself and for Van Mildert.

Lloyd was, unusually for the Oxford of his day, a gifted mathematician as well as a scholar in classics and divinity, beginning his academic career as a Lecturer in Mathematics. He was another favourite of Jackson's: 'Next to G....I think that Lloyd has twenty times more sound materials in him than any of those whom I left behind me at Ch. Ch. Besides his being an excellent Classical Scholar, his Mathematicks have given him a hardness of head, & a solidity of thinking wch. few possess. He is one of those who always know whether his opinions are well founded or not, & when he knows them to be so, nothing will ever move him from them....His heart is capable of strong & affectionate attachment - & he wd. undergo anything for those to whom he is attached.'

'Honest Lloyd, blunt and bluff,' as he was described by the verse on Gaisford's courtship, was a teacher of eccentric genius. Churton, who had been a pupil of his, spoke of him as remembered 'for talents and acquirements of all kinds, for his varied knowledge, and the ease and skill with which he communicated his knowledge; and second to none in the conscientious vigilance with which he watched over the moral and religious training of his pupils. It was a penetrating sagacity guided by affection, which was irresistible.'

Newman's no less affectionate description was reminiscence rather than hagiography: 'He was free and easy in his ways and a bluff talker, with a rough, lively, good-natured manner, and a pretended pomposity, relieving itself by sudden bursts of

laughter, and an indulgence of what is now called chaffing at the expense of his auditors; and, as he moved up and down his room, large in person beyond his years, asking them questions, gathering their answers, and taking snuff as he went along, he would sometimes stop before Mr. Newman, on his speaking in his turn, fix his eyes upon him as if to look him through, with a satirical expression of countenance, and then make a feint to box his ears or kick his shins before he went on with his march to and fro.'⁶⁴

Lloyd's relationships with his pupils were warm; Peel became and remained 'one of Mr. Lloyd's most intimate and attached friends'.⁶⁵ It was natural that each should use his influence on the other's behalf. Lloyd kept faith with Peel as his former pupil made steady progress within Lord Liverpool's government, and remained on terms of closest confidence with him.

Van Mildert was greatly attracted by Lloyd, nineteen years his junior, and a warm friendship grew between them. 'His principles are excellent,' Van Mildert wrote to Norris, 'his judgment sound, his taste correct, his learning various and extensive, his manner engaging.'⁶⁶ Through Van Mildert, Lloyd became drawn into the circle of those on whom the Phalanx could call for advice, particularly about literary projects. He was introduced to Norris and Joshua Watson, and elected to membership of Nobody's Club. Lloyd was responsible for investing Norris with the title of Patriarch: "'for," said he, "your care for all the Churches is more than an archbishop's"'.⁶⁷

If Van Mildert's promotion brought him new friends, his decision to keep the preachingship of Lincoln's Inn nearly cost him an old one. Christopher Wordsworth, writing in October 1813 to congratulate the new Professor, made delicate enquiries. Van Mildert's reply was firm: 'having already received most pressing solicitations from my Law friends not to relinquish the Preachingship, if I can possibly make it compatible with my University engagements, I am very desirous of retaining it, & shall certainly not think of resigning it till I have made a fair experiment.'⁶³

This was not what Wordsworth had hoped to hear. His term as Archbishop's Chaplain had come to an end: he was replaced in February 1813 by 'Mr. G. D'Oyly of Bene't College: I believe, an able and very respectable man',⁶⁷ who rapidly became absorbed into the activities of the Phalanx. Wordsworth, chafing at his loss of influence, wanted to be the next Preacher of Lincoln's Inn. He had earlier thought that he might make rather a good Regius Professor of Divinity himself, and had wanted Van Mildert to canvass the Bishop of Ely on his behalf.⁷⁰ He was, moreover, he informed Norris early in 1814, 'wretchedly poor',⁷¹ despite his preferment to the deanery and rectory of Bocking, in Essex, and the rectory of Monks-Eleigh in Suffolk. In October 1814 he tried again to pressure Van Mildert, mentioning having heard a rumour that the Professor intended to give up the Preachingship, and hinting at the displeasure of mutual friends that Van Mildert should have kept it so long. He even went so far as to solicit the deputy preachingship.

Van Mildert's reply was gracious but again firm. While 'nothing would go farther to reconcile me to giving up the situation, than the prospect of of [sic] being succeeded in it by one who is personally so dear to me, & whom I know to be so eminently qualified for it's duties', he had no intention of doing so. As to the deputy preachingship, 'I should hardly think, if it were vacant, of paying you so poor a Compliment as to make you the offer of it. But it neither is vacant, nor likely to be so. My young friend Mr. Strong has, at present, no other occupation, & would be very reluctant to quit it under any circumstances.'

Whatever friction may have occurred, the friendship survived. Wordsworth never became Preacher of Lincoln's Inn, but in 1817 he was made Chaplain to the House of Commons when his pupil Charles Manners-Sutton became Speaker.

Although Van Mildert could defend his retention of the Preachingship with a clear conscience, since the emolument was 'of comparatively small importance', Wordsworth's enquiries made him uneasy. 'I feel....the apprehension of being possibly considered as grasping at pluralities or too tenacious of what I already have. As soon as I have overcome the difficulties of a first year's overwhelming expenditure in taking possession of my new preferment, I shall gladly shew, by my resignation of other benefices, that I am not actuated by motives of gain in retaining them.'

An anti-establishment apologete might now with justice point to Van Mildert as a practitioner of the abuse of pluralism. He held a professorship, a preachingship, a canonry,

two rectories and a vicarage. Van Mildert's defence of 'need not greed' was, however, more than a simple evasion. The clerical poverty trap in which he now found himself was implicit in the contemporary system of ecclesiastical finance, and helped to make pluralism so widespread and intractable a problem.

On institution to any ecclesiastical preferment,⁷³ the new incumbent became liable to first-fruits, a payment proportional to the revenues of the benefice or dignity, made to Queen Anne's Bounty for the augmentation of poor benefices. On quitting any preferment, the departing incumbent became liable for 'dilapidations', a payment to his successor of the sum of money necessary to bring the residence-house, whether parsonage, deanery or episcopal palace, into a state of good repair. As Van Mildert's experiences at Bradden and Farningham suggest, this payment could be exceedingly difficult to collect, especially when the previous incumbent had died.

In order to avoid pluralism, a clergyman would need to incur both these expenses simultaneously, and at a time when other heavy demands were being made on his resources: fees for taking possession of his new preferment, customary gratuities and expected entertaining on a scale befitting his new status, removal costs and unexpected extras.⁷⁴

Although Van Mildert's income was now substantially increased - the proceeds of his canonry alone averaged £1,488.7s.9d. per annum - its payment was erratic. In one quarter he might receive seven hundred pounds, in the next seventy. The only regular sum on which he could rely was his

fee for lecturing in theology, £9 per quarter (raised in 1818 to £10).

The rectory of Ewelme, a village conveniently near Oxford, was also appropriated to the Professorship. This gave Van Mildert a pleasant country retreat and a home for his family, who could hardly be expected to live in his Christ Church rooms; but as a source of income it was a mixed blessing. On first taking possession, Van Mildert had to pay Howley two hundred pounds for a piece of land adjoining the Rectory, which it was customary for each new Professor to purchase from his predecessor. Over the collection of the tithe income, a protracted wrangle developed.

Acting on the advice of Robert Morrell, who besides being Public Notary was also Registrar to the Dean and Chapter of Christ Church, Van Mildert offered to let the Ewelme tithes to the local farmers for £900 per annum. The farmers, who had leased them from Howley for £400, hedged. Negotiations were opened on November 12th 1813; on November 27th the farmers offered £800 but refused to settle; on December 3rd an agreement was drawn up but the farmers boycotted the meeting at which it should have been signed; on December 20th they offered £700; on January 17th they offered £750 but Morrell asked for £850; on February 8th, the farmers again offered £750, and Morrell tried 'treating with them, but we could not agree'. On February 22nd, Van Mildert 'determined it would be better not to take any further Steps in the Matter at present'. By April 21st, when the farmers applied to reopen negotiations, Van Mildert had a lawyer's bill of £30.1s.6d., including twelve

shillings 'Paid for Entertainment of the Farmers at the Lamb', and nothing to show for it but six months of frustration.⁷⁵

Van Mildert's difficulties with the Ewelme tithes were part of a widespread phenomenon. In 1816 'a clerical pamphleteer referred to "the injurious and vexatious litigations between clergymen and their parishioners at all times arising from the collection of tithes", and declared that "the antipathies between them are now in a tenfold degree aggravated."' 1817 saw the presentation to Parliament of a mass of anti-tithe petitions. It was estimated that 120 tithe cases had been decided by the Courts in the previous seven years, and that as many more were still outstanding.⁷⁶

There is no reason to be cynical about Van Mildert's expressed desire to resign his original preferment as soon as his finances were in order. He nevertheless found it necessary to keep Farningham until 1815.⁷⁷ It was not until August 1820 that a further major change in his fortunes enabled Van Mildert to dispense with the revenues of St. Mary-le-Bow.

1. G.F.A. Best, [Temporal Pillars]: Queen Anne's Bounty, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, and the Church of England, Cambridge (Cambridge University Press, 1964), p.264. See also p.261.
2. The Duke of Wellington (ed.), Despatches, correspondence, and memoranda of Field Marshal Arthur, Duke of Wellington, K.G., 1819-32 (in continuation of former series), 8 vols., London (John Murray, 1867-80), vol.4, p.300
3. According to a popular myth, Liverpool offered each vacant see to Norris with the request that if he would not take it himself, he would propose an alternative candidate.
4. W. Van Mildert, Sermons preached before the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn, from the year 1812 to the year 1819, Oxford (1831), vol.2, pp.501-523
5. Churton, vol.1, p.138
6. Van Mildert to Jane Van Mildert, September 3rd 1813, in Adams, pp.456-8.
7. C. Jackson to W. Howley, 20th October 1809. Lambeth Palace Library Ms. 2186, ff.1-3.
Jackson finally persuaded Howley to take the Chair with the argument that 'with yr. connections the Professorship wd certainly put you forward for a small Bishoprick, such as the first you get must probably be - for it is always an advantage to a Minister to be able to dispose of the small Bishoprick without having to find a Commendam for it.' Perceval was particularly anxious that Howley should accept the offer because Howley was already a canon of Christ Church, and 'it was an object to Government at present to place a person in that Chair who had something to vacate.' Jackson to Howley, 24th October 1809. Lambeth Palace Library Ms. 2186, ff.4-5.
8. 'It had already been refused by Dr. Ireland.' Adams, p.458.
9. Ives, vol.1, p.39. For the Oxford practice with regard to 'Professor', see H. Carpenter (ed.), Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien, London (Allen & Unwin, 1981), no.178, p.230.
10. Christ Church Chapter Book 1799- 45A, entry for November 3rd 1813.
11. Christ Church Batells Book x.c.309. The first entry relating to Van Mildert is dated November 4th 1813.
12. Van Mildert to C. Wordsworth, October 26th 1813. Lambeth Palace Library Ms. 1822, ff.236-7.
13. W. Van Mildert, Diary for 1816, passim. Van Mildert Papers. Ives, vol.1, p.49. Van Mildert to Henry Douglas, 20th March 1819, in Adams, pp.460-1, also refers to the composition of

divinity lectures.

14. C. Lloyd to R. Peel, 30th January 1827. British Library Ms. Add. 40343, ff.17-8.

15. See note 12; also Diary for 1816, entries for 24th and 26th January.

16. A.D. Culler, The Imperial Intellect - a study of Newman's educational ideal, New Haven (Yale University Press, 1955), p.8. The School of Mathematics and Physics was founded in 1807.

17. W.R. Ward, [Victorian Oxford], London (Cass, 1965), p.13

18. Christ Church Chapter Book 1799- 45A, entry for February 12th 1816.

19. Victorian Oxford, p.12

20. Diary for 1816, entry for Sunday January 21st, when Van Mildert preached a University sermon.

21. Ives, vol.1, pp.38-9

22. Ibid., p.40

23. Churton, vol.1, p.138

24. W. Van Mildert, [An Inquiry] into the general principles of Scripture-Interpretation, Oxford (1815). Page references are to the third (1831) edition. p.111

25. Ibid., p.174

26. P.B. [Nockles], Continuity and Change in Anglican High Churchmanship in Britain, 1792-1850, 2 vols., Oxford (D. Phil. thesis, 1982), vol.1, pp.112-3

27. An Inquiry, pp.91-2

28. Ibid., pp.221-3, 226. Cf. Daubeny's Guide to the Church, pp.28, 31, 34-5: 'where we find the order of bishops, priests and deacons regularly appointed, there we find the church of Christ; and without these....it is not called a church.'

29. An Inquiry, pp.224-8

30. J.H. Newman, Lectures on the Prophetical Office of the Church, viewed relatively to Romanism and Popular Protestantism, London (J.G. and F. Rivington, 1837), pp.249-50

31. Ibid., quoting An Inquiry, p.97

32. An Inquiry, pp.63, 94, 100, 120

33. Nockles, p.107; see also pp.116-9.
34. An Inquiry, pp.103-5. Cf. the assertion of G. Faber, [Oxford Apostles]: A Character Study of the Oxford Movement, London (Faber, 1933) [page references are to the 1974 paperback edition], p.343, that the Movement's 'exalted conception of the Church...made demands upon the intellect of a much more subtle and difficult kind than the demands made by the current Low Church philosophy of salvation', and that a strong strand of High Church theology 'certainly made full use of reason'.
35. An Inquiry, Appendix, pp.298-9. The work cited is Turretin's de Sacra Scriptura Interpretatione (1776).
36. An Inquiry, p.105
37. Ibid., p.151
38. J. Hunt, Religious Thought in England in the Nineteenth Century, London (Gibbings, 1896), pp.30-2
39. The Christian Remembrancer, vol.XII (1830), pp.240-1, gives a booklist extracted from vol.1 of Tomline's 'Christian Theology', which features 'Marsh's Michaelis'.
40. Though not, admittedly, by ordinands. The Christian Remembrancer, vol.XII (1830), p.181.
41. An Inquiry, pp.17-8; he ended on a similar note, p.246.
42. Ibid., p.14
43. Ibid., Appendix, p.281
44. The Christian Remembrancer, vol.XIII (1831), pp.45-6. Michaelis also appeared on lists compiled by Bishop Jenkinson, Archdeacon Wrangham and the Revd. H. Thompson; a list by Blomfield included 'Bp. Marsh's Lectures, for an Historical Account of the Sacred Text'.
45. An Inquiry, pp.192-203
46. Ibid., Appendix, passim. The principal Continental scholars used were Pfeiffer, De Moor, Rambachius and Stapfer.
47. 'Onesimus', The Pulpit (1814), quoted by Ives, vol.1, pp.37-8.
48. Ives, vol.1, pp.48-9
49. Churton, vol.1, p.208
50. Christ Church Chapter Book 1799- 45A, entry for November 18th 1816.

51. In the Van Mildert Papers is an undated letter from G.J. Majendie to Van Mildert, in Latin, spattered with superlatives. It solicits a studentship, referring to Van Mildert's friendship with the writer's father. The Christ Church Chapter Book records Majendie's election to a studentship on December 23rd 1815.

52. Van Mildert to Howley, October 27th 1818. Lambeth Palace Library Ms. 2184, f.201.

53. Copy of commission, Van Mildert Papers.

54. 'The Revd. Dr. Van Mildert's pr. acct.', Christ Church archives, passim. Dinner party statistics are taken from Van Mildert's Diary for 1816, Van Mildert Papers.

55. David Evans, a former pupil of Tournay's, wrote him a piteous letter in March 1813, stating that life in the Scilly Isles, where he had 'lived in a State of Banishment going in 17 years' as S.P.C.K. missionary, had become intolerable through poverty, advancing years and the evil machinations of his enemies. His originally adequate salary had been eroded by inflation, his patron had died without securing his further preferment, and his fellow missionary Mr. Selby was plotting against him.

Tournay passed the letter to Van Mildert, who made enquiries, and concluded that Evans had no objective grounds of complaint against the Society, but expressed 'doubt whether his continuance there, after all that has passed, can be thought desirable.' Henry Bathurst, the kindly Whiggish Bishop of Norwich, offered Evans a mainland curacy, but this was rejected as too lowly a post. Evans thought Bathurst at sixty-nine too old for a satisfactory patron - ironically, since Bathurst lived to be ninety-three.

No further offers were forthcoming, but Evans refused to give up, accompanying his increasingly unbalanced letters with bundles of salt fish intended to soften Oxford hearts. 'If you have any Friend in London who would wish to have some Fish,' he wrote hopefully to Tournay in March 1815, 'I will send any Quantity next Season....'

The correspondence is in the Van Mildert Papers.

56. W. [Tuckwell], Reminiscences of Oxford, London (Cassell, 1900), pp.130-1

57. C. Jackson to W. Howley, 13th August 1813. Lambeth Palace Library Ms. 2186, f.48. 'He [Gaisford] has 800 pr ann. landed property at present, & will have 1200£ pr. ann. more at his Mother's death.'

58. Tuckwell retails a number of Gaisfordisms. 'In 1811 [sic] Lord Liverpool, with a highly complimentary letter, offered him the Professorship of Greek: he replied - "My Lord, I have received your letter and accede to its contents. Yours, etc." The gaucherie came to Cyril Jackson's ears; he sent for

Gaisford, dictated a proper acknowledgement, and made him send it to the Prime Minister with a handsomely bound copy of his Hephaestion.' (p.130)

59. Gaisford to Howley, 25th August 1813. Lambeth Palace Library Ms. 2184, f.153.

60. Bills from Van Mildert's lawyer in a collection headed 'Documents of 1816', Van Mildert Papers, first mention the marriage settlement on 10th January 1815.

Tuckwell, p.133, reprints the satirical verse in full, attributing its authorship by repute to Henry Cotton, later Archdeacon of Cashel. Adams, pp.503-4, also reprints the verse but credits it to John Hughes (the elder) of Oriel. Cochrane, who also reprints the verse, adds nothing to Adams.

J.W. Burgon, Lives of Twelve Good Men, 2 vols., London (1889), vol.1, p.389, describes them as 'the well-known verses on Dean Gaisford's marriage'.

61. Peel spent the winter of 1804-5 'at the Peels' town house in Grosvenor Street, attending lectures on Natural Science at the Royal Institution but more often to be found under the gallery of the House of Commons listening to debates.' N. Gash, Mr. Secretary Peel - the life of Sir Robert Peel to 1830, London (Longmans, 1961), p.47.

62. C. Jackson to W. Howley, 18th August 1813. Lambeth Palace Library Ms. 2186, ff.50-1.

63. Churton, vol.1, p.272

64. Quoted in Oxford Apostles p.123

65. Van Mildert to Norris, March 29th 1819, in Churton, vol.1, p.273.

66. Ibid. Lloyd and Van Mildert had not met before: Lloyd to Peel, January 1827, British Library Ms. Add. 40343, ff.2-4.

67. Churton, vol.1, p.279

68. Van Mildert to C. Wordsworth, October 26th 1813. Lambeth Palace Library Ms. 1822, f.236.

69. C. Wordsworth to Norris, February 5th 1813. Norris Papers.

70. C. Wordsworth to Norris, undated. British Library Ms. Add. 46136, ff.200-1. The date suggested is 1809, but no supporting argument is offered, and 1813 is at least as likely on general considerations.

71. C. Wordsworth to Norris [postmark 24th February 1814], Norris Papers.

72. Van Mildert to C. Wordsworth, October 18th 1814. Lambeth

Palace Library Ms. 1822, ff.238-9.

73. There were a few exceptions: Temporal Pillars, p.21.

74. Ibid., pp.18-20

75. Morrell's bills to Van Mildert, in collection headed 'Documents of 1816', Van Mildert Papers.

76. W.L. Mathieson, English Church Reform 1815-1840, London (Longman's, Green & co., 1923), pp.19-22. See also Temporal Pillars, pp. 65-6, 187-9.

77. Farningham Parish Records P145/1/12: '1807 Revd. W. Van Mildert succeeded as Vicar, 1807; rebuilt the Vicarage House at great expense, partly by Mortgage on the living; was appointed Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford, & consequently resigned this benefice in November 1815....' P145/25/52 refers to a Vestry Meeting held on January 4th 1815 'in Revd. Dr. Van Mildert's Incumbency'. (Information very kindly provided by S.B. Black from her researches for The Children of Farningham and their Schools 1800-1900, Darenth Valley Publications, 1982) The date of late 1813 given by the Dictionary of National Biography for Van Mildert's resignation of Farningham is wrong.

Chapter Seven

Widening Vision

Co-operation with Evangelicals; a bishop for India;
reshaping the S.P.G.; the Church Building Society.

Chapter Seven

The decade which opened with the founding of the National Society marked the most intensive period of Hackney Phalanx activity. After his return to Oxford in 1813, Van Mildert was less often able to participate in the planning of new ventures, and had less time at his disposal for contributions to the literary activities of the Phalanx. As a compensation, however, he was well placed to canvass Oxford support for Hackney initiatives, and he remained a valued member of the core group, closely involved in the diverse activities launched during this period.

The Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge remained a constant backdrop, its headquarters at Bartlett's Buildings providing the Phalanx with an administrative focus and meeting place. The expanding work of the National Society provided a second focus; it also led the Phalanx for a time into closer co-operation with the Evangelicals.

William Wilberforce was particularly attracted by the National Society, giving generously to its funds and attending a number of its public meetings. After attending a meeting of the Central National School in July 1814, Wilberforce noted in his diary '....children admirably taught, and general spirit delightful and animating - the difference between them and the Lancastrians very striking - exemplifying the distinction between church of England and Dissenterism - the intelligence, and fixed but not apparently nervous or feverish attention pleased me much.'¹ Although in 1815 when, after the final break

with Lancaster, the Royal Lancasterian Institution had become the British and Foreign Schools Society Wilberforce at last let himself be persuaded to accept a vice-presidency, he continued his public and financial support for the rival institution. His preference was generally shared: by 1833 the National Society had 690 schools, the British and Foreign Schools Society 190.²

It was probably this measure of collaboration in the field of education which encouraged Wilberforce to enlist the support of the Phalanx in another cherished cause. The evangelisation of India was a politically contentious issue: although notable work had been done by the great Baptist missionary William Carey and by the Evangelical chaplains to the East India Company, Thomason, Claudius Buchanan and Henry Martyn, the colonial administration was actively hostile to missionary activity. It was argued that British interests required Hindu sensitivities to be respected, and the sepoy mutiny of 1806 at Vellore was widely blamed on fears of forcible conversion (Carey and his fellow missionaries were equally definite in blaming the revolt on 'the hatlike turban then ordered'³).

Evangelical commitment to the India missions, and in particular to the Bengal missions based in Danish Serampore and later Calcutta, had a long history. Sir John Shore, who later as Lord Teignmouth became the first President of the Bible Society, took up the post of Governor-General of India two weeks before Carey arrived in Calcutta to begin his ministry, and showed what sympathy he could to the pioneering work. In the same year, 1793, Wilberforce made strenuous efforts to have Parliament incorporate in the East India Company's Charter

"pious clauses"...which would have opened India to the Christian missionary and schoolmaster'. Foiled in this object, Wilberforce 'nevertheless succeeded by his persuasive eloquence and the weight of his character in having them entered as Resolutions of the House of Commons.'⁴ When the Company's Charter again came before Parliament for renewal in 1813, Wilberforce was determined not to let a second opportunity slip.

Early in March 1812, Wilberforce had some conversation with Archdeacon J.H. Pott of London, a longstanding member of the Phalanx who had just finished a term as S.P.C.K. Treasurer, on the subject of possible S.P.C.K. support for the Indian missionary cause. Pott's first attempt at persuading the Committee to make representations to Parliament was blocked by John Randolph, Bishop of London, a hardliner whose 1811 primary visitation charge denounced the Evangelicals in violent terms as traitors more dangerous to the Church than avowed Dissenters.⁵ On this occasion, however, Randolph's reaction was not typical of active S.P.C.K. members; 'the spiritual wants of India' had the power to move High Church as well as Low Church imaginations. On May 5th 1812 a 'very full' meeting was held at Bartlett's Buildings under the presidency of Archbishop Manners-Sutton to discuss 'East India Christianising'. Wilberforce was present, 'by special summons'. The meeting appointed a special committee to draw up a report and resolutions for presentation to Spencer Perceval and Lord Buckinghamshire - 'meaning in Church of England way', Wilberforce noted in his diary.⁶

The resolutions of this committee were based on a scheme of ecclesiastical establishment drawn up in Serampore by Claudius Buchanan from a suggestion by Bishop Porteus, supplied by Wilberforce via Pott. Had it been presented to Spencer Perceval as was originally intended, it might have served its purpose well. Less than a week after the Bartlett's Buildings meeting, however, Perceval was dead, and the India establishment became the responsibility of Lord Liverpool's government.

In July 1813 Parliament authorised the admission of missionaries to India and created a small establishment of one bishop and three archdeacons. This was a notable victory for the Evangelicals, who had organised the presentation of some nine hundred petitions to Parliament, and a personal triumph for Wilberforce. But the change of government made it virtually certain that the bishop would be a High Churchman, which in the North Indian context could hardly but be unfortunate.

In January 1814 Archbishop Manners-Sutton offered the appointment of Bishop of Calcutta confidentially to Christopher Wordsworth, with authority over 'three Provinces in India' and an annual stipend of £5,000. Wordsworth declined. Other offers may have been made, but by the end of January the impossible challenge had been accepted by Thomas Fanshawe Middleton, Archdeacon of Huntingdon.

Middleton, one of the ablest and most energetic members of the Phalanx, was to make some achievements during the eight years before his new ministry killed him. The letter he wrote to Norris on January 30th, however, illustrates both the

courage and integrity of his decision and the inevitability of his failure to relate to the North Indian mission situation: 'I shall carry with me sentiments of affection & veneration for the Church of my native country, and happy shall I be under every difficulty & trial, to which the Almighty may reserve me, if I can only thro his blessing, establish some degree of reverence for its ordinance, and impart to a careless & licentious people some portion of its Spirit.'⁹

Wilberforce accepted the inevitable gracefully, inviting the new Bishop of Calcutta to dine with himself, Teignmouth and Charles Grant; Lord Gambier and Henry Thornton of the Church Missionary Society also waited upon Middleton 'in deputation'.¹⁰ Wilberforce was willing to be favourably impressed. 'Long and highly interesting talk with Bishop Middleton. He seems very earnest and pondering to do good - hopes for churches in different parts of India - favourable to schools and a public library - a college with discipline. His powers greater than we conceived.'¹¹

Middleton seems at first to have thought of co-operating with the well established and widely respected Calcutta branch of the British and Foreign Bible Society, a prospect which his Phalanx colleagues viewed with alarm. 'If he associates himself with the Bible Society,' Wordsworth wrote to Norris in early February, 'what will he do thereby for Education - what for Truth - what for the Liturgy - what for Missions - all of which are severally and distinctly of hardly less importance (perhaps I might justly say, in the present circumstances of that country are of more) than the Bible - and of all which he is

now about to be the constituted Patron & Guardian?' Wordsworth's preference was for confrontation: he recommended the establishing of 'a grand Oriental Auxiliary Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge - built as nearly as might be on the model of ours, in the method of education adopting the Madras System....In the meantime, all respectable Persons, lay-men or Clergymen (Archdeacons &c.) going out to India should be interested as much, but as quietly as possible, in favour of our Society.'¹²

It seems that Middleton refused to be hustled, for as late as May 13th, a few days before the official farewell at Bartlett's Buildings, Joshua Watson felt that 'the open and decided patronage of the Bishop' for the S.P.C.K. was still in some doubt, and suggested to Wordsworth that a timely grant of money, or rather credit, for Middleton to do some prestigious work of charity in his diocese might help to settle the issue.'¹³

Middleton was consecrated on May 8th in the chapel of Lambeth Palace: the creation of a Church establishment for India was regarded with such 'jealousy and alarm...that it was thought advisable to perform the Consecration Service in private and to suppress the sermon preached on the occasion'.¹⁴ He left for his immense new diocese at the end of June, furnished by the S.P.C.K. with £1,000, 'the most splendid inkstand, that ever doubled the Cape', and parting instructions from Manners-Sutton 'to put down enthusiasm and to preach the Gospel.'¹⁵ In Calcutta he kept faith with his Hackney colleagues, thereby acquiring a reputation for bigotry and

hostility to Dissenters. He found, he wrote to Norris, that 'almost every body' belonged to the local Bible Society, but staunchly declined the invitation to join it: 'this could not be a popular step, but it was necessary.'¹⁶ Instead, he took up Wordsworth's idea and founded an S.P.C.K. diocesan committee.

Staying with the Van Milderts at Oxford shortly before his departure, Middleton made 'a promise of writing to you, if Providence should conduct me safely to the banks of the Ganges'. He redeemed this pledge the following February with a lively account of his arrival in his new see. So low-key was his reception that not only did he enter Calcutta without ceremony of any kind, but no house was available for him to move into, and his first two months were spent as the guest of a Council member.¹⁷

The main achievements of Middleton's brief episcopal reign - he died in 1822 at the age of 53 - were educational. During his first six months in North India he 'made great reforms in the Free School'.¹⁸ His reforms seem to have met the approval of the colonial government, since he was officially invited to take on the Visitorship of the Orphan School.

The cherished plan for a college which Middleton had discussed with Wilberforce resulted in the founding of Bishop's College, Calcutta. Middleton, convinced of the need for an indigenous clergy, intended the College to provide Christian instruction for 'native and other Christian youth', to undertake translation of 'the scriptures, the liturgy and moral and religious tracts', and to serve as a missionary base. His fourth objective showed the breadth of which the Hackney

educational vision at its best was capable: Middleton also intended Bishop's College 'for teaching the elements of useful knowledge and the English language to Mussulmans and Hindus, having no object in such attainments beyond secular advantage'.¹⁹

Middleton's plan had both the flaws and the strengths of all that the Phalanx undertook. Convinced of the simple equation between God's will for humankind and High Church Anglicanism, he placed limitations on the Christian side of the work that were simply unrealistic in the ecumenical tradition of the Indian Church, which has since given so signal a lead to the quest for Christian reunion. The Bishop's College proposals cut straight across the massive work of scriptural translation on which Carey had been engaged since 1793,²⁰ excluded the entire Baptist and C.M.S. missionary heritage, and were interpreted by many as a straightforward attempt to impose high Anglican discipline on a relatively free situation. But there was also an element of genuinely disinterested love of learning both Christian and secular, which afforded the basis for work of lasting value. Middleton shared the conviction of too many of his compatriots that 'useful knowledge' was something transmitted by European Christians to Mussulmans and Hindus without reciprocation; but his insistence that the educational needs of the unconverted also had a claim on the energies and resources of a Christian college looked beyond the confines of an introspective sectarianism.

The public success of the co-operation between the Saints and the Phalanx over the East India Company's Charter led

Christopher Wordsworth to investigate the possibility of a merger between the Church Missionary Society and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, at this time little more than 'a board for holding various trust funds', with a total annual income of just over £8,100.²¹ Wordsworth attempted to persuade 'the first promoters' of the C.M.S. to consent to 'such modifications of their system as he considered to be essential to the full exercise of the episcopal rule of government',²² and Reginald Heber, a C.M.S. member who became the second Bishop of Calcutta after Middleton's death, went so far as to draw up a detailed scheme for the union of the Societies.²³

There were some grounds for hoping that union might be possible. Unlike many of the Evangelical-supported societies, the C.M.S. did not include Dissenters: indeed, the reason for its existence was Evangelical reluctance to join the London Missionary Society, on the grounds that mission ought not to be conducted interdenominationally. Founded in 1799, the C.M.S. owed much to the decree of Venn that missions must be based on the 'Church-principle' - but not, he added, on the 'High-Church principle'.²⁴ Wordsworth's negotiations succeeded only in demonstrating that the 'High-Church principle', exemplified in this case by insistence on an ex-officio governing role for the bishops in the affairs of Church societies, was still a stumbling-block for Evangelicals, and the plans came to nothing.

The new Hackney missionary fervour was not so easily quenched. Wordsworth, Joshua Watson and their colleagues set

about converting the S.P.G. into a full-fledged missionary society.

Watson was well placed for this new initiative. In 1814 he had followed the precedent set by William Stevens in 1801, and retired from business to devote himself full time to his church work. Since 1810 he had been a partner in a large firm of wine merchants with premises in Mark Lane, a district connected with the finance of the corn trade. Watson's father had done well from wartime government contracts, and the Mark Lane firm better still; but in 1814 the war was over, and Watson might reasonably judge that the transition to peacetime conditions would need more of his time and energy than he was willing to spare. Whatever Watson's immediate reason for taking early retirement, 1814 was a good year in which to withdraw from the financial world. Eighty-nine banks collapsed during the years 1814-7.²⁵

The first task to fall into Watson's freed hands was that of managing the Westminster Association for German Relief, set up in March 1814 as an alternative to the Evangelical-supported and 'unofficial' City Association for the same object. The Westminster Association, bringing together a 'most numerous and brilliant assemblage' under the chairmanship of the Duke of York, was also supported by Wilberforce and his colleagues, with whose assistance Parliament was persuaded to make a grant of £100,000 to the work of the Association. Watson acted as secretary of the executive sub-committee, and conducted it with such efficiency that in May 1816, its work done, the Association was able to dissolve itself.²⁶

Soon after Watson's retirement²⁷ Van Mildert, pleading pressure of work, resigned the treasurership of the S.P.C.K. According to the official history, a new arrangement was then made whereby Archdeacon Cambridge of Middlesex and Joshua Watson became joint treasurers for 'benefactions, annual subscriptions, and for remittances for packets', with the creation of a separate treasurership to the 'Protestant Mission in the East Indies'.²⁸ Churton does not mention this arrangement, saying only that Joshua Watson was elected S.P.C.K. Treasurer by a crowded meeting at which Archbishop Manners-Sutton spoke warmly of Watson's 'talents and unwearied zeal for whatever was most dear and valuable', and that Archdeacon Cambridge described Watson's election as 'by the universal request of archbishops, bishops, priests and deacons'.²⁹

The Phalanx set about organising a reallocation of duties between the S.P.C.K. and the S.P.G., directed towards rationalising the missionary work of the two societies. In 1817 Watson drew up a substantial memorandum on the future of mission in the Indian subcontinent and sent it to the Archbishop for transmission to the Prime Minister. Watson's covering letter to Manners-Sutton made it clear that the intention was to provide a loyal Anglican alternative in direct competition with the existing missionary societies: 'By thus putting forward the Society for Propagating the Gospel, your Grace cannot fail to direct into a proper channel much of that well-intended bounty which is now, I fear, running worse than to waste....'³⁰ The implicit criticism was directed at the

Dissenting missionary societies more sharply than at the C.M.S.; some measure of co-operation continued between the Saints and the Phalanx, despite the failure to reach agreement over the union plans. In 1818 the C.M.S. made a grant of £5,000 towards the building of Bishop's College, with a further grant of £5,000 from the Bible Society towards the work of translating the Scriptures into Asiatic languages, thus matching exactly the grants from S.P.C.K. and S.P.G. In 1819 Rev. Josiah Pratt, the secretary of the C.M.S., compiled and published a volume of material for use by the clergy in arguing the case for contributions to Bishop's College, going so far as to conceal his authorship 'for fear it might hinder the circulation of the book'.³¹

The grand rationalisation plan brought out the poet in Watson (with a poet's licence concerning the antiquity of the National Society): 'And then, my Lord, the Church of England, strong in her three chartered and ancient Societies, each with undivided energy pursuing its own single and simple object, and having a common centre of union in your Grace's presidency, might, in her Education Society, her Bible and Religious Tract Society, and her Missionary Society, boldly offer to her members all that the most zealous of her communion need desire in the great concern of religious and moral instruction at home and abroad.'³² The ability to discern, in the mundane juggling of responsibilities between committees, the sweep of great pinions indicates the quality of Watson's genius, combined as it was with formidable administrative skills.

It is easy to criticise Watson's vision as narrowly High

Church-centred, parasitic on the creative energies of the Evangelical and ecumenical pioneers, unable to recognise a Christian of the calibre of Carey as an equal servant of the same Master as himself. It is necessary, however, to remember that the end of the Napoleonic Wars had not brought an end to public unrest. The agitations and disturbances surrounding the passage of the Corn Law in 1815, the Luddite troubles, the rick-burnings and riotings in the spring and summer of 1816 when a sudden rise in the price of corn brought the grievances of agricultural labourers to the boil, the Spa Fields Riots of December 1816 leading directly to Lord Sidmouth's repressive measures of 1817, all served to refurbish memories of the French Terror.³³

In 1812 Southey, reviewing a biography of distinguished participants in the French Revolution for the Quarterly Review, made some explicit connections: 'the example of France must be our security at home: it has been lost upon our Heberts and Marats, and Chaumettes, who go on inflaming the passions of the ignorant and ferocious part of the community, as if they themselves were not sure to be the victims in their turn, of the revolution which they are labouring to produce.'³⁴ 'At this moment,' he wrote to a friend in May 1812, 'nothing but the Army preserves us from the most dreadful of all calamities, an insurrection of the poor against the rich, and how long the Army may be depended on is a question which I scarcely dare to ask myself.'³⁵ Although the rebellion of Southey's foreboding never materialised, the fear of rebellion was real, lasting, widespread and given sufficient plausibility by the course of

events. In this atmosphere any attempt to whip up the emotions of the working-class, whether by political radicals or by 'tub-preachers', seemed fraught with danger. Dissenting street evangelists were widely credited with populist political opinions, in some cases justifiably; the denunciation of Watson's 1817 memorial against 'those exertions of irregular zeal in making proselytes which compromise at once the character of our Religion and the quiet of the State' expressed a wide strand of Establishment opinion.☞

It is to the credit of Joshua Watson and his associates that, holding these views, they nevertheless went far beyond merely negative criticism. Having decided that the initiatives taken by the C.M.S., the Bible Society and the Lancasterians were incompatible with their own understanding of Anglican social responsibility, they both thought through the question of how they would like the work to be done and found the means to put their proposals into practice. In so doing, they separated the principle of the work decisively from the taint of Enthusiasm, placing the responsibility for its continuance on the whole Church of England, irrespective of political allegiance either secular or ecclesiastical. Besides widening the spectrum of Anglican involvement in the specific interests of the Societies, the Hackney Phalanx placed social and missionary issues on the agenda of every bishop - and thus inevitably of every aspiring would-be bishop. While, naturally, some bishops took these concerns more seriously than others, the longer term effect was a sharpening of awareness that greatly enlarged the possibilities for future action.

Although Van Mildert was not a prime mover in any of this work, he kept closely in touch with it. The Christ Church chapter made substantial benefactions to the National Society and to the 'German Sufferers'.⁷ Van Mildert also watched over the publishing activities of the Phalanx, offering good advice on the distribution of the S.P.C.K. Family Bible.⁸

In 1816, a minor crisis arose at the S.P.C.K. when the Bible Society applied to buy some Arabic bibles. Van Mildert, consulted by Norris, conferred with Bishop Parsons of Peterborough and offered the opinion that 'the safest course, to avoid the most embarrassing points in the question, would be to state that the practice of our Society was not to sell books to other Societies in their collective capacity: but that if any Individual member of our Society, & theirs, (as the Bp. of Durham himself, or any other member) thought fit to apply for any number of those Bibles upon the terms of the Society, there would be no difficulty in complying with the request; & his Lordship might circulate these Bibles through the medium of the Bible Society, or any other Channel, as he deemed most expedient....' Use of this bureaucratic nicety rather than any more overt form of obstruction would, Van Mildert hoped, 'prevent a clamour being raised against us on the score of rivalry, illiberality &c.'⁹

The next enterprise of the Phalanx was to involve Van Mildert closely. In the early years of the nineteenth century, both the friends and the enemies of the Established Church had given increasingly close attention to the effect of the rapid expansion of cities on the parish structure in the districts of

most growth. In June 1809, Archbishop Manners-Sutton informed the House of Lords that 'the fact was, that our population had, particularly in some large towns, far exceeded the machinery by which the beneficial effects of our church establishment could be universally communicated.'⁴⁰ The anonymous State of the Established Church, in a series of letters to Spencer Perceval, which appeared in 1809 with a much extended second edition in 1810, drew attention to the shortage of church space, giving two particularly scandalous examples of London parishes with accommodation only for a tiny fraction of the population. The Quarterly Review, excoriating the writer as an attacker of the Anglican clergy, agreed with him entirely about the shortage of churches: 'Unquestionably, if we wish the people to remain attached to the church establishment, we must give them the means of attending the church service.'⁴¹

The problem was a long-standing one. As early as 1710 an act of Parliament had provided for the building of fifty new churches in London, although only eleven were actually erected. In 1800 Wilberforce introduced a Bill to encourage private persons to build churches; but his chosen inducement of placing the advowson in the hands of the subscribers was opposed by the Bishops 'on the ground that it would multiply unlicensed chapels of an Evangelical flavour', and no alternative proposal more congenial to episcopal sensitivities was forthcoming.⁴²

The complexities of the church-building question arose from the fact of its involving four of the most intractable aspects of Establishment in theory and in practice: Patronage, a facet of the right of property so especially dear to High Tory

hearts; the rights of the incumbent; the dual nature of the parish as an entity both in civil and in canon law; and the increasingly vexed issue of church rates and church finance.

In the early years of the nineteenth century, it was simpler to build Dissenting chapels than Anglican churches, an anomaly which roused much impotent ire among defenders of the Established Church. A Dissenting chapel was clearly the property of no-one but those who had paid for its site and its building; was equally clearly the financial responsibility only of those who chose to make it so; was independent of the parochial structure; and was, in law at least, quite outside the authority of the incumbent in whose parish it happened to be situated, however the individual incumbent might view the relationship. To divide a parish, build a new parish church and establish a new cure of souls required the support of the patron, incumbent and, where the tithes were impropriated, the tithe-owner; it required a special Act of Parliament; it raised difficult questions as to how the new parish should be endowed and who should hold the advowson. Even under circumstances as close as possible to the ideal, this was a time-consuming and enormously expensive business. It might also involve unpleasantness of another kind: anti-clerical radical politicians were inclined to treat the discussion of Church business as an opportunity to draw public attention to such matters as non-residency, pluralism and the fabulous wealth of the Established Church.

Where there was no question of dividing the original parish, problems still arose. To build a chapel-of-ease or

parochial chapel also required the consent of the incumbent. The congregation of the new chapel might have to go to the mother-church for christenings, weddings and funerals, in order to avoid depriving the incumbent of fee-income; the incumbent might take the lion's share of Easter offerings from the chapel; the new congregation might find itself responsible for the upkeep of the chapel without ceasing to be responsible for upkeep of the mother-church, and would inevitably be responsible for paying the minister. Where both incumbent and chapel minister were wealthy men, on friendly terms with each other and committed to the principle of church extension, the arrangement could work very well, with little tendency to exclude the poor from the new chapel - but few parishes were as lucky as Hackney, where John James Watson and Henry Handley Norris were able to meet these conditions in full.

Charles Greville recorded a case in 1815 which illustrated the awkward positions into which the Anglican authorities could be manoeuvred on this issue. An architect built a chapel in the West End of London without, apparently, securing the consent of the Rector in advance. When the Rector refused to permit its licensing as a chapel-of-ease, the architect complained to Lord Holland, who requested Archbishop Manners-Sutton to intervene. 'After some delay, the Archbishop told Holland that he had better advise his friend to take out a licence and make it a Catholic or Dissenting chapel, as he thought best.'⁴³ It is doubtful whether this inability to serve Lord Holland by browbeating a parish priest will have caused the Archbishop much grief. Indeed, insofar as it gave the parish clergy a

weapon with which to resist the machinations of architects, the situation may be said to have had its useful side. As awareness grew of the scale of the problem, however, the need for change was more and more universally admitted.

In 1810 Lord Sidmouth 'moved for returns by dioceses of the number and capacity of churches, the number of dissenting places of worship, and the population, in parishes of one thousand or over'. The results created shock in many quarters. The Quarterly Review reprinted some of the worst examples: the diocese of Lichfield, with church room for 122,756 out of a population of 420,231; the archdiocese of York, with 149,277 places for 591,972 people; London, with only enough church room for 162,962 of a population conservatively estimated at 661,394. 'Even where chapels have been opened, they have almost invariably been appropriated to those who can afford to rent a pew....The bulk of the common people are disregarded.' The Quarterly urged action to remedy this state of affairs: 'Till this is done, we abandon that most numerous class, who have no other means of religious instruction, to the practices of every ignorant and ranting enthusiast, or to the condition of a heathen to whom the gospel is not preached.'⁴⁴

A further spur to the Phalanx arose out of the work of the National Society. The point of educating the poor in the principles of the Established Church was to make them loyal members of that church: 'it matters comparatively little how much, or even how well, we teach our children in the week-day, if we do not carry them to church on the Sunday,' wrote Joshua Watson.⁴⁵ It was more than embarrassing for the promoters of

the National Society if 'their' children could not find a church to go to. In 1813 the banker and Phalanx ally William Cotton wrote to John Bowdler suggesting the foundation of a Church Building Society.⁴⁶

Members of the Phalanx had been involved in church building prior to this. Daubeny was an enthusiastic supporter, 'perhaps the first Churchman who had made a public step to provide free accommodation in a new Church for the poorer classes.'⁴⁷ The Hackney chapel-of-ease was built in 1806. Middleton was heavily involved in an attempt to build a new church in his parish of St. Pancras shortly before his elevation to the see of Calcutta, taking the route of a special act of Parliament. 'I am labouring incessantly, certainly (writing included) not less than nine or ten hours in the day, in the business of the new Church,' Middleton wrote to Norris late in 1812; 'and I am sorry to observe that nearly the whole of the burthen rests upon my shoulders....If the Legislature shall determine, in deference to bad Politics & false Theology, that this Parish, already enormous & rapidly increasing, shall remain without Religion or Order, I shall at least have the consolation of having thought differently....'⁴⁸ But individual action was wholly inadequate to the size of the need.

The Phalanx's first collective move was a letter to Howley, new Bishop of London. The letter, signed by Bowdler, Park, William Davis and a friend of Cotton's, Charles Hampden Turner, drew Howley's attention to the shortage of church room in his diocese and requested his sanction for 'calling a private meeting, chiefly clergy, nobles, and other excellent laymen,

well-affected to such a measure, to digest some plan, and for carrying it into immediate execution, for the erection of churches and chapels, in districts where they are most wanted'. The plan was to invite the nation to provide enough free church places (as opposed to rented pews) to accommodate all those wishing accommodation, as a national thank-offering for the end of the Napoleonic Wars.⁴⁷

Howley showed no eagerness to lend his name to this scheme. Churton attributes his reluctance to 'a kind of reserve, which is sometimes found in highly accomplished scholars, and which ever attended him in public speaking'.⁴⁸ Howley was an execrable public speaker, and no doubt knew it: Wilberforce described a public meeting held in 1816 to consider the needs of Distressed Manufacturers at which the rowdy part of the audience demonstrated its 'brutality' by 'bursting into laughter when the Bishop of London, being unused to public speaking, made a pause'.⁴⁹ Howley was also intelligent and well-informed enough to realise just what a web of conflicting interests he was being invited to help unravel. He adopted a prudently low profile, as did Lord Liverpool on receiving a memorial from Watson and Bowdler, signed by 120 leading High Church and Evangelical laymen, at the beginning of 1816.

If the authorities were disinclined to be hurried, it was not through failure to appreciate the urgency of the problem. In the autumn of 1815, Lord Sidmouth corresponded with Christopher Wordsworth on how the public might best be made sensible of this urgency. Although they were agreed that an essay was indicated, finding the right author was not easy.

Sidmouth suggested Coleridge or William Wordsworth, the poet's brother preferred Southey; nothing seems to have resulted from the discussion. In November 1815, Sidmouth informed Kenyon in confidence that Liverpool firmly intended to 'submit a proposition to parliament, in the ensuing session, for an augmentation, to be progressively made, of the number of places of worship under the established church'.⁵²

In June 1816 a motion was put to the House of Commons 'for free churches to be erected in London as the promised national monument to the victories of Trafalgar and Waterloo'. This was not the line Government thoughts were taking, and after a less than enthusiastic response from Vansittart, Chancellor of the Exchequer, the motion was rejected.

By now, the signatories to the 1816 memorial were growing impatient. Despite the protests of those who, like Christopher Wordsworth, felt that 'if government would not act, the friends of the Church should rest silent, because many cries and nothing done beget despair in even the best-disposed',⁵³ a meeting was held at the City of London Tavern in May 1817. A committee was appointed to consider the next step. It recommended the formation of a 'Society for promoting public worship by obtaining additional Church Room for the middle and lower classes', with the rule that 'no money be advanced without the consent of the Ordinary, Patron and Incumbent'.⁵⁴

Next, a deputation headed by Sir Thomas Dyke Acland was sent to Lord Liverpool to test the feeling of government about the proposed new Society, and to ensure that its founding would not result in the setting-aside of 'any more comprehensive

plans which the Government might have in contemplation'. The deputation then waited on Manners-Sutton, who was gracious and welcoming. Howley, whom Liverpool suggested should also be consulted, 'was away from home, but wrote to William Davis, who was acting-secretary, giving his approval.'

Eight months of intensive activity followed. A committee was formed on July 4th 1817 to prepare a constitution for the new Society; it met frequently, and also drafted an address for circulation to prospective subscribers. In October it was necessary to answer Lord Chancellor Eldon, who questioned the legality of the Society on the grounds that it could infringe the rights of patrons and incumbents. In November the committee was reinforced by the attendance of a formidable ally, Richard Yates, chaplain of Chelsea Hospital, whose 1815 pamphlet The Church in Danger did perhaps more than any other contemporary presentation to incline parliamentary opinion to the need for church building measures.

On 6th February 1818 a public meeting held in the Freemasons' Hall officially launched the Church Building Society. The Archbishop of Canterbury took the chair, the Duke of Northumberland moved the resolutions, and the Duke of York consented to be a patron. Among the ninety people present, 'more than half of them laymen', were William Wilberforce, Robert Peel and a bevy of bishops. Wilberforce was 'chosen Vice President with a multitude of high-churchmen, and great men - said a few words.'

The meeting appointed a committee of thirty-six members to run the new Society. These included Yates, Archdeacons Pott and

Cambridge, Sir John Nicholl, Joshua Watson and Christopher Wordsworth, who had in 1816 become Rector of the 'swole, & swelling Parish' of Lambeth. Also appointed to the committee was Van Mildert, who had by this time come to terms with the pressure of his Oxford work and was ready to become more directly involved in his friends' activities again. On February 24th, a well-attended meeting of the Christ Church chapter, at which Van Mildert was present, authorised their Treasurer 'to pay the Sum of One thousand Pounds as the Donation of the Dean and Canons to the Society for promoting the Enlargement and Building of Churches and Chapels'. The gift was made by the chapter as individuals, 'not taken from any Common Fund.'

Writing to inform Joshua Watson of this substantial donation, Van Mildert drew attention to one of the most serious defects of the Society's scheme, which was to give rise to innumerable problems: 'there seemed to be wanting some security for the endowment as well as for the erection of new churches.'

The Government's own plans were put into action at much the same time as those of the Phalanx. At the Opening of Parliament in 1818, the Regent's Speech gave notice of the Government's intention to make provision for the building of new churches. The Commons returned to the topic in March, with the presenting by Vansittart of a 'Money Bill' to make available one million pounds of public money for the building of new churches, to be administered by a specially created Church Building Commission.

Unlike the arrangements for the Church Building Society, the Bill was not drawn up in particularly close consultation

with the Archbishop and his advisers, although Lord Liverpool did send Manners-Sutton twenty-five copies of the text for circulation to his episcopal colleagues at the beginning of March. Not all of the Bill's clauses were to the liking of the Phalanx. In particular, strong objections were felt to a clause 'granting to persons building a Chapel by private Subscription, without the aid of Parochial Assessments or of the Parliamentary Grant, the nomination of Life Trustees, in whom the Patronage of the Chapel shall be vested for the first Three Turns.' At the end of March, Lord Harrowby wrote to warn Liverpool that the Archbishop was unhappy about 'some of the concessions' he had made, a circumstance which Harrowby attributed to pressure from 'some of his most strait-laced brethren'. What gave particular edge to the bishops' sense of grievance was the fact that the Bill, as a piece of financial legislation, could not be amended in the House of Lords, but must be either accepted or rejected in total as passed by the Commons.

During April Van Mildert was drawn into the agitation, and set about lobbying Peel, who in June 1817 had become M.P. for Oxford University. He made two unsuccessful attempts to communicate with the Secretary of State for Ireland in person, calling first at Stanhope Street then at the Irish Office, but was finally reduced to making his plea by letter.

Having expressed his 'doubt....whether the Proceeds expected to accrue from Pew-Rents in the newly-erected Churches or Chapels, are likely to be sufficient for the remuneration of the Clergy to officiate in them, for the inferior officers of

the Church, & for keeping the Building in repair; all which (if I mistake not) are to be provided for out of that Fund....', Van Mildert proceeded to attack the obnoxious patronage clause. He did not, he claimed, object in principle to the vesting of the patronage of a new church in 'any single Individual building a Church or Chapel entirely at his own Expence... providing only that his nomination should be subject to the approval of the Diocesan Bishop. But that such a privilege should be divided among a body of Subscribers even of so moderate a Sum as Fifty Pounds each, seems....much more than can be reasonably expected, or safely conceded. I very much fear that it will operate as a great encouragement to a certain party in the Church, who are known to be exceedingly desirous of getting into their hands the patronage of large & populous Districts, & who have a considerable Fund appropriated to that object. Among the opulent of that description, nothing will be easier than to raise Subscriptions of Fifty Pounds each for the promotion of this object; & the Bill, by giving them the Patronage for three Incumbencies....will enable them most effectually to accomplish their views; views, which, I conscientiously think, cannot be realised without great hazard to our Church Establishment. I am well aware, however, that this is too tender a point to be mooted in the H. of Commons.'

To a person with Van Mildert's confidence in the rightness of High Church principles, the Evangelical fund for the purchase of advowsons could not but appear in a sinister light, whatever might be his personal opinion of men such as

Wilberforce and Harrowby, and his insinuations are mild by comparison with the crudities of much contemporary polemic.

The argument that only those rich enough to finance the building of a complete new church unaided should expect to enjoy the right of presentation (subject to episcopal approval) was an orthodox piece of quasi-feudal paternalism, rooted in the premise that government is the proper responsibility of those whom Providence has placed in positions of wealth and power. Van Mildert objected to the patronage clause because it was democratic in tendency, and democracy was still at that time a dirty word with connotations of mob rule and echoes of the Reign of Terror. Lurking behind the clause Van Mildert discerned 'the principle of popular Election to the Cure of Souls', and the prospect distressed him. 'Wherever this system already prevails, it is found to be productive of great evils, & ought therefore, as much as possible, to be discouraged.' The turbulence of contemporary politics, and the disorderly scenes which were a regular feature of those few parishes whose incumbencies were elective, did much to colour this view.²³³

High Church anxieties were appeased when the Commons removed the offending clause: 'the excrescence,' Van Mildert told Watson, 'was separated from the main body of the tree',²³⁴ and the million pound grant was finally agreed on 15th May.

The process of appointing Church Building Commissioners began at once, but it was not until June 24th, when the process was well advanced, that Manners-Sutton informed Liverpool that all the bishops ought to be Commissioners. Liverpool was not pleased, and sent a sharp reply: the Archbishop had already

approved the composition of the Commission, which had been repeatedly discussed, and it was too late to make changes. He also pointed out that adding 'the whole bench of Bishops' to 'all the other Ecclesiastics included in the Commission, would give such a decided and large preponderance in point of numbers to the Clerical part of the Commission as I should think by no means expedient.'⁶⁵

The Commission, which met for the first time at Lambeth on 31st July 1818, included the Archbishops of Canterbury and York and the Bishops of London, Winchester, Chester, Lichfield/Coventry and Lincoln. Among the other members were the Archdeacons of London, Middlesex, Essex, Nottingham, Richmond (Yorkshire) and Derby, Dean Ireland of Westminster, Lords Kenyon, Sidmouth and Harrowby, Vansittart, Sir William Scott and Sir John Nicholl. The Hackney Phalanx was strongly represented. Besides Archdeacons Pott and Cambridge, the Commission included Charles Manners-Sutton the younger, Speaker of the House of Commons; Christopher Wordsworth; Richard Mant, another young priest drawn into the Phalanx through becoming Archbishop Manners-Sutton's chaplain; and Joshua Watson.⁶⁶

The level of commitment to the work varied considerably from one Church Building Commissioner to another. Brownlow North, the aged and nepotistic Bishop of Winchester, accepted appointment to the Commission but warned his new colleagues that he was 'almost wholly blind, and as to business quite so. My deafness is considerably increased and my inability to write continues.'⁶⁷ North, who died in 1820, made little or no contribution to the business of the Commission. A different

approach was shown by Lord Harrowby, who rarely attended meetings but continued an enthusiastic advocate of the Commission's work in parliamentary and other circles.

The Church Building Commission, which continued in being until its absorption into the Ecclesiastical Commission at the beginning of 1857, was an example of quiet but solid achievement. It was responsible for the building of 612 churches, handling a total of more than three million pounds, while the Church Building Society concentrated on the complementary work of church repair and extension. But if it provided, as G.F.A. Best has said, 'a classical illustration of the workings of the church-state relationship in the early nineteenth century',²⁸ it also marked the end of an era. Although a further grant of £500,000 was secured for the Commission in 1824, the debate was a stormy one. Increasingly, the pattern of the church-state relationship was to follow the path prefigured by Lord Holland during the Lords debate on the 1818 Church Building Bill, when he suggested that 'the suspension of a few deans and canons'²⁹ would be a more appropriate means of financing the building of new churches.

1. R.I. and S. Wilberforce, The [Life of William Wilberforce], London (John Murray, 1838), vol.4, p.197
2. S.C. Carpenter, Church and People, 1789-1889, London (S.P.C.K., 1933), p.70
3. G. Smith, The [Life of] William [Carey]: Shoemaker and Missionary, London (Everyman edition), p.117
4. Ibid., p.250
5. Quoted in J. Hunt, Religious Thought in England in the Nineteenth Century, London (Gibbings, 1896), pp.11-12.
6. Life of William Wilberforce, vol.4, pp.22-3
7. Life of Carey, p.145. Buchanan's scheme provided for an Archbishop of Calcutta, Bishops of Madras, Bombay and Ceylon, four Archdeacons, fifty European Chaplains, a hundred 'country Chaplains, to be natives or Europeans ordained in India', two hundred schoolmasters and four Colleges, at an annual cost of £144,000. W.O.B. [Allen and] E. [McClure], Two Hundred Years: the History of The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1698-1898, London (S.P.C.K., 1898), p.283.
8. Manners-Sutton to C. Wordsworth, January 18th 1814. Lambeth Palace Library Ms. 1822, f.115.
9. T.F. Middleton to H.H. Norris, 30th January 1814. Norris Papers.
10. Joshua Watson to C. Wordsworth, 13th May 1814. Lambeth Palace Library Ms. 1822, f.247.
11. Life of William Wilberforce, vol.4, p.200
12. C. Wordsworth to H.H. Norris, February 3rd 1814. Norris Papers.
13. See note 10.
14. C.F. [Pascoe], Two Hundred Years of the S.P.G.: An Historical Account of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, 1701-1900, London (S.P.G., 1901), p.472
15. T.F. Middleton to H.H. Norris, 'Saturday, midnight' [presumably May 17th 1814, the date of the official farewell]. Norris Papers. Webster, p.123.
16. Middleton to Norris, 3rd June 1815. Norris Papers.
17. Middleton to Van Mildert, 14th February 1815. Durham University Library Add. Ms. 274.207V21M5. Middleton wrote regularly to Van Mildert at least until 1819.

18. Middleton to Norris, 3rd June 1815. Norris Papers. The Free School was a well-endowed institution, teaching some three hundred children according to its own version of the Bell System. The 'Orphan School' educated some seven hundred children of mixed parentage.

19. 'It is from the labours of ordained converts that we expect the most favourable results'. Middleton, valedictory charge to the Revd. C.A. Jacobi, a German Lutheran missionary sent out by the S.P.C.K. in 1813; quoted in Webster, p.126. Jacobi 'died, much lamented, in 1814': Allen and McClure, p.283.

20. Life of Carey, pp.177-8, footnote, lists the versions produced by Carey.

21. Webster, pp.115-6

22. Churton, vol.1, pp.171-2

23. Webster, p.118, note 1

24. E. Stock, The History of the Church Missionary Society, 3 vols., London (C.M.S., 1899), vol.1, p.65. Venn's original intention was for the C.M.S. to fill the gaps left by the work of the S.P.C.K. and S.P.G., rather than to compete with them. (ibid., p.71)

25. E. [Halévy], A History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century, 6 vols., London (Ernest Benn, 1949-52), vol.1, pp.339, 360

26. Churton, vol.1, pp.151-61; Webster, chapter IV.

27. Churton, vol.1, p.168, gives the date of Watson's election to the Treasurership as June 3rd 1814. Allen and McClure, p.133, gives the year of Van Mildert's resignation as 1815; so does Cochrane, p.110. Possibly the election did not take immediate effect.

28. Allen and McClure, p.133

29. Webster, p.116; Churton, vol.1, p.168.

30. Joshua Watson to Archbishop Manners-Sutton, December 1817, in Churton, vol.1, p.176.

31. Churton, vol.1, p.181; Allen and McClure, p.285; Pascoe, p.xi.

32. Churton, vol.1, p.177

33. J. [Stevenson], Popular Disturbances in England 1700-1870, New York (Longman, 1979), pp.91, 101-2, 155-62, 190-7

34. The Quarterly Review, vol.VII no.XIV (June 1812), p.438

35. Southey to John Murray, May 19th 1812. Quoted in Halevy, vol.1, p.333.
36. Churton, vol.1, p.177. Life of Carey, p.251, gives an account of the origination of the phrase 'tub-preacher'. E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class, London (Penguin Books, 1968), pp.427-32, arguing against any simple understanding of the relationship between religious and political excitement, makes clear the genuine involvement of some Methodists in political radicalism. Other denominations, for instance the Baptists, had similar involvements.
37. Christ Church Chapter Book 45A 1799- Entry for June 21st 1815. 'The Revd. Dr. Van Mildert's pr[ivate] acc[oun]t', xxxvii.b.55 Entry for Lady Day 1814.
38. Churton, vol.1, p.137. Watson's original intention had been for Van Mildert and Middleton to prepare a scholarly commentary and for Richard Mant to compile a commentary for 'cottage-readers'. The plan was frustrated by Manners-Sutton, who committed the whole task 'to his own two chaplains, Mr. Mant and Mr. George D'Oyley'. Ibid., pp.126-7.
39. Van Mildert to Norris, November 12th [1816]. Norris Papers.
40. Hansard, vol.xiv, p.857 (2nd June 1809). Quoted in G.F.A. Best, [Temporal Pillars]: Queen Anne's Bounty, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, and the Church of England, Cambridge (1964), pp.148-9.
41. Quarterly Review, vol.V, no.X (May 1811), p.365
42. Webster, pp.59-61. The Act was 9 Anne cap.22. Webster gives the number of churches built as eleven; Halévy, vol.1, p.399, as ten.
43. The Greville Memoirs, vol.1, p.146. Quoted in Webster, p.59.
44. Temporal Pillars, p.149, citing Hansard, vol.XVII, pp.770-1 (19th June 1810). 'Substance of the Speech of the Earl of Harrowby, on moving for the Recommitment of a Bill for the better Support and Maintenance of Stipendiary Curates', in Quarterly Review, vol.X, no. XIX (October 1813), pp.41-57; pp.54, 56.
45. Joshua Watson to Henry Ryder, in Churton, vol.1, p.217.
46. According to Cotton's obituary in the Gentleman's Magazine, 1867, vol.I, p.111. Quoted in M.H. [Port], 600 New Churches, a Study of the Church Building Commission, 1818-1856, and its Church Building Activities, London (1961), p.9.
47. Churton, vol.1, p.199

48. Middleton to Norris, 11th December 1812. Norris Papers.
49. Quoted in Port, pp.7-8.
50. Churton, vol.1, p.182
51. Life of William Wilberforce, vol.4, p.297. For Howley's shortcomings as a public performer, see O. Chadwick, The Victorian Church, 2 vols., London (Black, 1966), vol.1, pp.12, 159, 162, 453 [page references are to 3rd edition].
52. G. Pellew, Life and Correspondence of Lord Sidmouth, 3 vols. (1847), vol.III, pp.138-40. Discussed by Port, p.11, and Temporal Pillars, p.149.
53. Port, p.12
54. Webster, p.62; Port, p.12.
55. Webster, p.62
56. The full title of Yates' pamphlet was The Church in Danger; a Statement of the Cause, and of the Probable Means of Averting that Danger, Attempted; in a Letter to Lord Liverpool. On Yates and his writings see Temporal Pillars, pp.147-51. Webster, p.63, states that Yates attended the weekly committee meetings for the first time on 7th November 1817, but does not make it clear whether this was an isolated event or the beginning of the collaboration continued by Yates' appointment to the Church Building Society committee.
57. Life of William Wilberforce, vol.4, p.368; Webster, p.62; Port, pp.13-4.
58. Christ Church Chapter Book 45A 1799- Entry for 24th February 1818. Van Mildert's share of the donation, £100, was paid by two equal instalments in the Midsummer and Christmas quarters, 1818. Canon Dowdeswell was not present at the chapter meeting, but paid his £100. The Dean gave £200. The description of Lambeth was by Archbishop Manners-Sutton to Christopher Wordsworth, February 23rd 1816. Lambeth Palace Library Ms. 1822, f.118.
59. Churton, vol.1, pp.199-200
60. Van Mildert to Peel, April 30th 1818. British Library Ms. Add. 40276, ff.251-2.
61. Harrowby to Liverpool, 22nd March 1818. British Library Ms. Add. 38271, f.35. Quoted in Temporal Pillars, p.269.
62. See note 60.
63. Churton, vol.2, pp.154-5, gives Joshua Watson's view of the election of an incumbent at Clerkenwell. On secular elections

see Stevenson, pp.27-8, 164-5, 184.

64. Van Mildert to Watson, undated, in Churton, vol.1, p.208.

65. Archbishop Manners-Sutton to Liverpool, 24th June 1818; Liverpool to Manners-Sutton, same date. British Library Ms. Add. 38272, ff.180-2. Quoted in Temporal Pillars, p.269.

66. For the complete list of Commissioners, see Port.

67. Church Commissioners' file 21744, pt.1. Quoted by Port in his discussion, pp.15-20, of the original Church Building Commissioners and their part in the work of the Commission.

68. Temporal Pillars, p.268. This is not an unqualified compliment.

69. Webster, p.64