

## **Chapter Thirty-six**

### **The Beginnings of Modernity in Europe and America**

Although the decisive shift from Christendom to modern civilization is rightly located in the French Revolution and the Napoleonic conquests, something important was also contributed by the English colonies in North America and by their successful revolt from Britain. This may be somewhat surprising, because in the eighteenth century most of the colonists - as Patricia Bonomi has argued - continued to be very religious.<sup>1</sup> The Pilgrims who had settled in Massachusetts were much more devout than the general population in either England or continental Europe. Colonial piety persisted for a very long time and was frequently noted by newcomers from Britain and Europe. We have seen (at the end of Chapter 34) how the Great Awakening stirred many of the colonists in the 1730s and 1740s. Bonomi prefaced her book with the observation that church steeples dominated the skyline of every colonial city and town, and that for everyone who lived there the passing of the hours was announced by church bells. She went on to generalize that “in eighteenth-century America - in city, village, and countryside - the idiom of religion penetrated all discourse, underlay all thought, marked all observances, gave meaning to every public and private crisis.”<sup>2</sup>

#### **Established churches and religious tolerance in the English colonies in America**

Devout though it was, colonial America was also - for a variety of reasons - an experiment in religious freedom. The ideal of religious freedom grew slowly, before bursting into bloom in 1776. The Pilgrims had left England in order to escape from the coercion to worship God according to Anglican rules. Other early colonies - of Puritan Congregationalists in New England, of Baptists in Rhode Island, of Quakers in Pennsylvania - were also peopled by fugitives seeking religious freedom.

At the outset, however, most of the colonies were not especially noted for religious tolerance. Of the thirteen colonies that eventually became the United States of America, nine had established churches.<sup>3</sup> In three of these colonies - Massachusetts, Connecticut and New Hampshire - the established churches were Congregational (Puritan). In the town meetings held regularly in the Massachusetts Bay colony only Puritans had a voice. Other religious denominations were illegal in the three New England colonies until 1690, when the English parliament required them to extend to Anglicans and to all other Protestants the freedom to worship specified in the Toleration Act of 1689. Long after that liberalization, public tax monies in the three New England colonies continued to be channeled to the local Congregational parishes. When King Charles I had issued, early in 1629, to the Reverend Mr. John White and his associates a royal charter for the Massachusetts Bay colony, the king had not established an official church for the colony, apparently supposing that the group requesting the charter was interested in the colony only as a business venture. All along, however, White had intended that the colony would be a home for Puritans who wished to practice a Christianity “purified” of all

Catholic traces, which Anglicanism under King Charles and Archbishop Laud was obviously not. From the outset, New England was de facto Puritan.

In six colonies - the two Carolinas, Georgia, Maryland, New York, and Virginia - the English kings officially established the Church of England. Public revenues were here used to pay the salaries of Anglican clerics and the expenses of erecting and maintaining church buildings. Unlike the Congregationalists, the Anglicans had to import their clergy from England: because no Anglican bishop had been dispatched to North America, Anglican clergymen were necessarily educated and ordained in England.

In the seventeenth century the laws of Maryland, Carolina and New Jersey provided some protection for all Protestant denominations, including the Quakers. For New Jersey especially the appointed proprietors offered religious freedom as a means of enticing English families to enlist as settlers. In two colonies - Rhode Island and Pennsylvania - religious freedom was an end-in-itself rather than a practical expedient.<sup>4</sup> From the beginning the government of Rhode Island kept itself out of religion. It was with this intention that in 1636 Roger Williams - a Baptist - left the Massachusetts Bay colony and its Puritanism in order to found a new town, called Providence. Although Rhode Island was settled by Baptists, it had no established church. Williams said that “forced worship stinks in God’s nostrils,” and insisted that a “flourishing civil state may stand and best be maintained... with a full liberty in religious concernments.”<sup>5</sup>

Religious freedom for all monotheists, if not for everyone, was also traditional in Pennsylvania. On December 7 of 1682 the colonial assembly at Chester passed the “Great Law,” a code of laws that provided for freedom of worship for the settlers in Pennsylvania, many of whom lived along the Delaware river. Specifically, the assembly put into law “that no person ... who shall confess and acknowledge one Almighty God to be the Creator, Upholder and Ruler of the World ... shall in any case be molested or prejudiced for his, or her Conscientious persuasion or practice.” Not surprisingly, Pennsylvania became a haven for small and persecuted denominations. Important among these were Mennonites and Amish - both groups being Anabaptists, mostly from German speaking lands - and Moravians. Amish settlers began arriving in the 1730s. Many of the settlements along the Delaware river and Delaware bay were also religiously heterogeneous: settled originally by Swedish Lutherans, the counties next absorbed Dutch Reformed settlers, and then English colonists of various denominations.<sup>6</sup>

After William and Mary drove Charles II from the English throne, and perceived Catholics as intractable enemies, the royal pair - and after them Queen Anne - pressured the Pennsylvania assembly to exclude Catholic, Jewish and atheist colonists from political life. In 1705, despite stout opposition from William Penn, the assembly passed an exclusionary law. The exclusion was dropped in 1776, when Pennsylvanians were eager for any and all opposition to the king of Great Britain.<sup>7</sup>

At the time of the American Revolution the only colony in which Catholics were present in large numbers was Maryland. Shortly before his death in 1632, George Calvert, whom King Charles I named the First Lord Baltimore, received from Charles permission to found in America a colony that would provide a place where Catholics could practice their religion in peace. The

colony would be called Maryland, in honor of Henriette Marie de France, the Catholic daughter of Henri IV and now Charles' queen. When George Calvert died, his son Cecil (Cecilius) became the proprietor of the chartered colony. In 1634 a few hundred colonists arrived from England, led by Leonard Calvert, a younger brother of Cecil. The Calverts were Catholics, and so were most of the colonists who came with Leonard, but Protestants were also allowed to join the new colony. A severe religious law, oddly labeled the Maryland Toleration Act, was written by Governor Cecil Calvert and passed by the colonial assembly in 1649. It was meant to promote the peaceful coexistence of Catholics and mainstream Protestants and toward that end granted freedom of worship to all trinitarian Christians. At the same time, however, the law imposed corporal punishment - from a whipping to execution - on any person who denied the trinity or Jesus' divinity. That aspect of the law was intended to keep Socinians, deists and "Arians" from publicly promoting their "heresies." Although it was not aimed against Judaeans it did make the few Jewish families in Maryland susceptible to harassment. In any case, no one was executed for blasphemy in Maryland. In the second half of the seventeenth century the colony saw much controversy and violence, echoing what was happening in England, and after 1688 Protestant rebels overthrew Calvert rule because the Calverts were suspected of supporting James II against William and Mary. In 1702 the Maryland assembly, intent on showing its loyalty to Queen Anne, made the Church of England the colony's established church. At several points Catholics were briefly forbidden to practice their religion publicly. Yet Catholics remained numerous in Maryland.

The New England colonies included few Catholics. Irish immigration to Massachusetts had begun by the 1720s, but the numbers were small and Catholic immigrants were subject to a variety of limitations. In the city of New York hardly more than five per cent of the population was Catholic at the time of the American revolution (most of these Catholics, again, were immigrants from Ireland), and no Catholic bishop was installed in the city until 1808.

Jewish immigrants came to the English colonies in North America already in the seventeenth century, but in very small numbers. A Jewish community of several hundred lived in Charleston, a busy harbor city and the capital of Carolina. The Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina, crafted mostly by Shaftesbury and Locke and adopted by the colony's Lords Proprietor in 1669, made the Church of England the established church of Carolina, but also specified that the colony's government would protect "Jews, heathens, and dissenters." At the time of the revolution, Judaeans of all thirteen colonies perhaps numbered no more than about two thousand, or one tenth of one per cent of the colonial population. That percentage would not significantly increase until the 1840s, when the rise of nationalism in Europe - and especially in Prussia and the many small German-speaking states outside the Habsburgs' Austrian empire - began to make life more difficult for Judaeans there.

## **From Anglicanism to Episcopalianism**

Home to a few thousand Judaeans, tens of thousands of Catholics, and more than a million Protestants who in England would have been called "dissenters," the American colonies had an ambiguous relationship with the Church of England. Although the kings of England and then of Great Britain issued royal charters for the colonies, they did not always establish

Anglicanism as the religion of a colony, largely because it was in the king's interest to encourage dissenters to emigrate to America. In Virginia the Anglican church was established at the outset. A law in 1624 stipulated that all white Virginians were to worship in the Anglican church, but the law was seldom enforced. All colonists in Virginia, however, were required to pay taxes in support of the Church of England. In Carolina and Maryland, as we have seen, the Church of England was established in 1669 and 1702 respectively. In New York the Church of England was established in 1693, during the anti-Catholicism loosed in the Glorious Revolution in England. Finally, in 1758 Anglicanism was established in Georgia, although in a relatively mild form that permitted public worship for all Christians other than Catholics.<sup>8</sup> In none of these colonies did the establishment of Anglicanism mean much more than the continual dispatch of Anglican clerics from Britain to America and the regular payment of public monies to support the Anglican churches and clergymen. Even in Virginia only a small minority - probably no more than ten per cent of the white population - belonged to the Anglican church by the early 1770s.

Slightly more than half of the "Founding Fathers" of the United States of America were Anglicans. Yet in all of the colonies the Church of England was the one religious denomination that objected to the American Revolution. As a condition of their ordination, all Anglican clergy had taken oaths of loyalty to King George III, who was both the ruler of Great Britain and the head of the Church of England. The Book of Common Prayer included prayers for the king, prayers that he would prevail against all of his enemies. Most of the Anglican clergy, especially in the northern colonies, remained ostensibly loyal to Britain in the early years of the revolution. The laity, in contrast, decisively favored the patriots. The result was that - despite some tepid antidisestablishmentarianism - the Church of England was disestablished in all six colonies in which it had been publicly supported. In the aftermath of the revolution American Anglicans disavowed the names, "Anglicans" and "Church of England," and became Episcopalians instead. In 1789 delegates from what recently had been the Church of England in the colonies met in Philadelphia and formed "the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States of America."

### **Freethinking, deism, secularism and Enlightenment in the American colonies**

Although most of the population in the English colonies in America was devoutly Christian, the Patriot leaders were less so. As in England, in America skepticism about Christianity was labeled "freethinking," and among the more prominent citizens freethinking was not uncommon until the middle of the 1790s, when it was stigmatized by the atrocities of the French Revolution.<sup>9</sup> In the opening sentence of his *Reason, the Only Oracle of Man* (Bennington, Vermont: 1784), Ethan Allen frankly declared that he was not a Christian but a deist:

In the circle of my acquaintance, (which has not been small,) I have generally been denominated a Deist, the reality of which I never disputed, being conscious I am no Christian, except mere infant baptism make me one.

The book offended many Christians and Anthony Haswell, who printed it, destroyed the copies left in his Bennington shop. The average Vermonter, clearly, was not a deist. Yet many of the

men who took the lead in the Revolution either were not trinitarian Christians or were not Christians at all. Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Gouverneur Morris, “Tom” Paine, and less prominent figures were known to have abandoned Christianity. John Adams regarded himself as a Christian and was a member of the Brattle Street Church in Boston, but along with the church’s ministers and other parishioners (including Samuel Adams and John Hancock), John and Abigail Adams drifted from Congregationalism to Unitarianism. George Washington was formally an Anglican-Episcopalian (he was baptized into the Anglican church and was buried from an Episcopalian church) but his church attendance was irregular, he seldom partook of the eucharist, and even more rarely expressed any specifically Christian faith.

Indifference to the doctrines of traditional Christianity was mirrored by increasing affiliation to Freemasonry. The American lodge, like the British, was essentially a secular community: what religion it offered was deist rather than Christian, and although the lodge did not welcome self-declared atheists it did not turn freethinkers away. A remarkable number of Patriot leaders belonged to a lodge. Washington, Franklin, Paul Revere and John Hancock were Freemasons, as were at least a third and perhaps half of the thirty-nine signers of the U.S. Constitution. In the Continental Army of 1775-1783 approximately half of the generals were Freemasons.

The spread of the Enlightenment among the privileged in America expressed itself in the formation of other private or secret societies, such as the Phi Beta Kappa fraternity in 1776. Whether the Order of the Illuminati also spread in America is not clear. Certainly after the French Revolution escalated - during the Reign of Terror - into violence against the clergy, various preachers in New England raised the alarm that the Illuminati had infiltrated the U.S.A. and were a great danger to Christian society.

### **Separation of church and state in the American Revolution**

By the second half of the eighteenth century the excitement of the Great Awakening had begun to fade in the colonies. Fear of Hell and anticipation of Heaven were giving way to more immediate concerns, chief among which was dissatisfaction with British rule. In this changed atmosphere the colonists who played leading roles seldom declared or discussed their religious faith, and many of them were relatively accepting of differences from trinitarian Christianity. Although Patricia Bonomi concludes that for the colonists religion remained very important in the eighteenth century, she concedes that it was less so in Puritan New England than it had been in the preceding century, and that all the colonies had seen some “rounding off” of denominational differences. In any case, by the 1770s religion was not so much on the colonists’ minds as it had been before the rise of the independence movement. During the 1770s and 1780s the self-styled “patriots” of the thirteen colonies were held together by a common detestation of British rule and the common threat of British power. Most of the Patriots were Protestants - Anglicans especially, followed by Presbyterians and Congregationalists - but they had no trouble allying themselves with Patriots of quite different faiths. Quakers, upon whom mainstream Protestants had looked askance in the seventeenth century, were now welcomed aboard. So were Catholics, preeminent among whom were Charles Carroll of Carrollton, Maryland, and his cousins Daniel and John.<sup>10</sup> And then there were deists and freethinkers, such

as Benjamin Franklin, Tom Paine, Ethan Allen, and Thomas Jefferson. A Patriot's opponents were the Loyalists, who as often as not were members of his own religious denomination.

The American colonists had long seen the Church of England as a partner of the king and the parliament in London, and increasingly as an instrument of British "tyranny." When forming a federal government, therefore, most of the Patriot leaders insisted upon a separation of church and state. In the monarchies of Europe bishops often played a very important role in government. In Great Britain the Anglican bishops were the "Lords Spiritual" in the parliament's House of Lords. In France, so long as the *ancien régime* lasted the "First Estate" of the Estates General was composed entirely of Catholic bishops. In the English colonies in America, in contrast, there were no bishops, and most colonists had no regrets about that. Anglican bishops, after all, were loyal to the king of Great Britain and Catholic bishops were loyal to the pope, and in the second half of the eighteenth century the colonists disliked both the king and the pope.<sup>11</sup> In the absence of bishops, the most visible religious figures in the colonies were evangelical or "New Light" preachers. Joseph Bellamy, Gideon Hawley, and Samuel Hopkins were well known, although none of them had the reputation that Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield had enjoyed earlier in the century. Whether famous or obscure, the preachers were not political figures.

In 1775 the Rev. John Zubly - of Savannah, Georgia - was the only clergyman in the Second Continental Congress. He had been elected to Georgia's delegation to Philadelphia primarily because for ten years he had been a pamphleteer - the only one in Georgia - whose publications had dealt with the relationship of the British parliament to the American colonies. In his pamphlets Zubly argued that the British parliament must loosen its grip on the colonies, giving them more autonomy. Zubly was a Presbyterian, but - as a native of Switzerland - had been much influenced by German Pietism. He was also passionately anti-Anglican and resented the recent establishment of the Church of England in Georgia. Despite the contribution his pamphlets had made to bring Georgia to join the northern colonies in resisting British rule, Zubly himself was not in favor of complete independence from Britain. After July 4, 1776, he became a Loyalist and therefore a *persona non grata* among the Patriots.

Although early on he had complimented Zubly as "a warm & zealous Spirit" John Adams hoped that no other clergyman would join the congress. In 1776, however, a second clergyman - John Witherspoon - came to the congress as a member of New Jersey's delegation. Unlike Zubly, Witherspoon was fully in favor of independence from Britain, and was the only clergyman among the signers of the Declaration of Independence. Witherspoon was not a parish pastor but the president of the College of New Jersey (now Princeton University). After coming to America from Scotland in 1768 in order to assume the presidency of the college, he had made a series of changes that greatly strengthened the college's academic program. As a result of his reputation as the college's president he was elected as one of New Jersey's representatives to the Continental Congress, a role he continued to play from 1776 to 1782.

Separation of church and state was a principle that helped to unify the colonies - with their varying religious establishments and affiliations - in their struggle with Britain. The principle was important enough that as the colonies became states many of them enacted laws

prohibiting clergymen from holding a state office. Laws to that effect were not presented as anti-religious, and in fact were often phrased as necessary to protect the clergy from the secular or sordid business of politics. From 1777 to 1846 the following was law in New York (New York was the only one of the northeastern states to have such a law):

Whereas the ministers of the gospel are, by their profession, dedicated to the service of God and the cure of souls, and ought not to be diverted from the great duties of their function; therefore, no minister of the gospel, or priest of any denomination whatsoever shall, at any time hereafter, under any pretence or description whatsoever, be eligible to, or capable of holding, any civil office or place within this State.

While respectful and even honorific toward the clergy (“You have more important things to do than hold political office!”), such laws firmly separated church and state. In the 1820s thirteen states - most of them mid-Atlantic or southern - banned clergymen from serving in their legislatures. Maryland and Tennessee were the last to drop the ban, in 1978, after the Supreme Court ruled that it violated a cleric’s civil rights.

### **Freedom of religion in the Constitution of the U.S.A.**

Freedom of religion in the U.S.A. began with several of the constituent states.<sup>12</sup> In late spring of 1776 thirty-six delegates met at Williamsburg to create a constitution for the new Commonwealth of Virginia. Disestablishment of the Anglican church, with its ties to King George, was much on the delegates’ mind, and was loudly advocated by the commonwealth’s Baptists, Lutherans and Presbyterians. James Madison proposed that the assembly disestablish the Anglican church and make a strong guarantee of religious freedom, stating that all men have a natural right to believe and worship, or not to believe, as they wish. Madison’s proposal, which would have given protection even to atheists, was defeated by Patrick Henry and other conservative Anglicans. A milder statement, promising “the free exercise of religion,” was finally incorporated in the Declaration of Rights, which the delegates passed on June 12, 1776, but the Church of England remained as the commonwealth’s established church until 1784.

The first state to disestablish the Church of England was Maryland, where delegates meeting at Annapolis adopted a state constitution on November 11 of 1776. The Maryland constitution provided (article 33) that “all persons, professing the Christian religion, are equally entitled to protection in their religious liberty.” No person - unless under color of religion he endangers the public safety - shall be troubled on account of his religious beliefs, “nor ought any person to be compelled to frequent or maintain, or contribute, unless on contract, to maintain any particular place of worship, or any particular ministry.” Although the Church of England thus lost its official status and support in Maryland, it was to retain possession of all its churches, chapels and land.

A month later North Carolina followed Maryland in disestablishing the Anglican church, but while Maryland provided religious freedom for both Catholics and Protestants, the delegates in North Carolina restricted their tolerance to Protestants. Delegates meeting at Halifax passed, on December 18 of 1776, a constitution that stopped well short of guaranteeing religious

freedom, because it stipulated (article 32) “that no person who shall deny the being of God, or the truth of the Protestant religion, or the divine authority of either the Old or New Testaments, or who shall hold religious principles incompatible with the freedom and safety of the State, shall be capable of holding any office, or place of trust or profit, in the civil department, within this State.” The North Carolina constitution did provide, however, (article 34) “that there shall be no establishment of any one religious church of denomination in this State.” In New York the Church of England was disestablished in 1777 and in South Carolina in 1778.

A more comprehensive guarantee of religious freedom was produced in Virginia by Thomas Jefferson. In 1779, at the height of the Revolutionary War, Jefferson wrote a bill precisely defining religious freedom in the commonwealth. The delegates to the Virginia General Assembly declined to pass the bill in 1779 but did so seven years later, thanks in large part to continuing efforts made by James Madison. The enacted bill became the Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom (1786). In the preamble to the statute Jefferson observed the wide variety of religious beliefs and practices in civilized society, and detailed the indignities of forcing men to contribute money for the propagation of beliefs that they do not hold, and of excluding them from public office and other positions because of beliefs that they do hold. Then came the resolution:

Be it therefore enacted by the General Assembly, That no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatsoever, nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested, or burdened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or belief; but that all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain, their opinions in matters of religion, and that the same shall in nowise diminish, enlarge, or affect their civil capacities.

As written, the Constitution of the U.S.A. - like the Articles of Confederation that had preceded it - established no religion, but neither did it prohibit such an establishment. This omission was protested by many who had supported the revolution against Great Britain and who resented the favored position that the Church of England had enjoyed in several colonies. More broadly, the constitution written by James Madison said nothing about several liberties that had been very important to the revolutionaries in 1776 but were less so to Madison and his colleagues in 1787, as they tried to create a federal government more effective and durable than the one set up in the Articles of Confederation. When Madison’s constitution was circulated and read it drew considerable opposition in those states that already had constitutions guaranteeing freedom of religion, of the press, and of the right to bear arms. In Virginia, the omission of a “bill of rights” was denounced especially by George Mason, who had written the Virginia Declaration, but complaints and warnings were also voiced by Jefferson and Edmund Randolph.

Madison himself acknowledged that omission of a bill of rights could prove to be fatal to the states’ ratification of the constitution that he had written and that the constitutional convention in Philadelphia had approved. But he urged that - instead of calling another constitutional convention - the thirteen states ratify the constitution as written, and that after ratification a bill of rights be added to the constitution as amendments. So it happened that almost immediately after Congress convened in 1789 Madison announced that he would put

before it a list of amendments. The first ten amendments were passed by Congress late in 1789 and were then submitted to the states for ratification. The very first of these amendments, in addition to other important freedoms, guaranteed that the new federal government would neither promote nor repress any religion:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

The amendment purposefully said nothing about the individual states' establishment of a religion. This reassured three of the New England states, which continued their public support of the Congregationalists despite the growing presence there of Presbyterians, Quakers, Baptists, Methodists, Catholics and others. In Connecticut state support of Congregationalist ministers did not end until 1818, and in Massachusetts not until 1834. Although unenforceable because they have been ruled unconstitutional, laws in seven of the southern states (including Tennessee) in the U.S.A. still disqualify an atheist from holding public office. And, as noted in Chapter 33, anti-blasphemy laws still stand in six of the fifty states.

The federal government of the U.S.A. was extraordinary in neither establishing nor prohibiting any religion. This was in sharp contrast to Europe and Britain, where all governments supported one religion and in some cases forbade all others. So Catholicism had long been established in "Latin" Europe, Orthodox Christianity in eastern Europe and Russia, Lutheranism in many German states and in Scandinavia, Anglicanism in England, and the Reformed church in the Netherlands and most of the Swiss cantons. Most unusual was the promise that in the U.S.A. - which was heavily Protestant - Catholic citizens would have the same rights and protection enjoyed by the Protestant majority. This liberal policy was of course based on the observation that Catholic immigrants could be counted on to be firm supporters of American independence from Britain. This was especially the case if the immigrants came from Ireland.

The separation of church and state in the federal government of the U.S.A. was proudly proclaimed, not only by statesmen but even by clergymen. "The American experiment in religious liberty," according to John Witte, "initially inspired exuberant rhetoric throughout the young republic and beyond." Nowhere in the world, it was claimed, could all Christian denominations find such tolerance and security. Even before the Constitution was drafted Ezra Stiles, the Congregationalist theologian and president of Yale College, was very pleased to predict that in the United States of America religious communities - Catholic and Jewish as well as the bewildering array of Protestant churches - would all "cohabit in harmony."<sup>13</sup> The American experiment in religious liberty - no establishment of religion, and no prohibition of its exercise - was soon to be overshadowed by the assault on Christianity in the French Revolution.

## **Prelude to the French Revolution**

The relative diversity and freedom of religion in the English colonies in America, and

then in the fledgling U.S.A., stood in sharpest contrast to the rigidity and uniformity of religion in France during the *ancien régime*. The bloody “wars of religion” that plagued France for much of the sixteenth century came to an end in 1598, when King Henri IV issued his Edict of Nantes. In the edict Henri decreed that the kingdom’s established religion would continue to be Catholicism, but he also guaranteed protection to France’s large Huguenot (Protestant) minority. This moderate policy of Henri IV was gradually eroded during the seventeenth century, as subsequent Bourbon kings reduced the rights and privileges of the Huguenots. Finally, in 1685 Louis XIV revoked the Edict of Nantes, and so removed all legal protections for Protestants. Thereafter, Catholicism was almost as much the law of the land in France as it was in Spain and Portugal. Unlike Spain and Portugal, however, for more than a century and a half France had been home to a large number of Protestants, and this memory and affection could not be suppressed.

During the eighteenth-century Enlightenment the rancor toward the Catholic church, originally felt by several million Protestant subjects of Louis XIV, spread through much of the rest of the French population. In rural areas most people remained relatively content with the church, but many urbanites became not only anti-clerical but increasingly anti-Christian. The paradox of French culture and law in the 1780s was extreme. It was in French that in 1719 “Alcofribas Nasier” had written his *Traité des trois imposteurs: Moïse, Jésus, Mahomet*, and it was in Paris that the atheist Baron d’Holbach kept his famous salon. The great popularity of Voltaire’s writings reflect how disdainful his readers were toward both the church and the Bible. The idea of progress sprouted in France, as did the very concept of “the Enlightenment,” and it was here that Diderot created his magnificent *Encyclopédie*. Among intellectuals, deism was even more widespread in France than it was in Britain and in the U.S.A.

At the same time, the Enlightenment values of freedom were directly counter to the royal absolutism perfected by Louis XIV and continued through the amazingly long reign (1715-1774) of his great-grandson, Louis XV. Many of the inhabitants of Paris and other French cities, looking across the channel to Britain’s parliamentary government and freedom of the press, grew disgusted with the political, religious and intellectual constraints imposed upon them. Writers were especially indignant at the tight political and ecclesiastical control, although they had to find printers in Switzerland or the Netherlands in order to publish their attacks.

The religious conformity that Louis XIV enforced in 1685 was perhaps the greatest contributor to the discontent that boiled over a century later. So concluded Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, who for the last twenty years has been one of France’s most eminent historians:

[B]y revoking the edict of Nantes the *ancien régime* state, egged on by the church (and vice versa), was injecting itself with the deadly germs of accumulating hatreds: Huguenot hatred first, then wider anticlerical hatred, and finally (at a surprisingly early date) ‘anti-despotic’ hatred against a religious and governmental system which could in retrospect be accused of all the sins of intolerance and made into a scapegoat for all ills.<sup>14</sup>

By the late 1780s the religious freedom of the newly formed United States of America added to the resentment that many in France felt toward the Catholic church.

The contradiction between the official Catholic religion and the deism, skepticism and atheism of many Parisians made the Catholic establishment increasingly dependent upon the king. The church supported the monarchy, just as the monarchy supported the church. The doctrine of the “divine right” (*ius divinum*) of kings was refined late in the reign of Louis XIV, toward the end of the seventeenth century. Although the roots of the doctrine go back to the medieval period, it did not become important until royal authority was threatened, as it was in England in the 1640s. The doctrine was abandoned in England in the Glorious Revolution of 1688. John Locke, the “Father of Liberalism,” argued in detail that monarchy, like any other government, derives its legitimacy from the consent of the governed. At almost the same time the doctrine of the divine right of kings was being energetically set forward in France by Bishop Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, for Louis XIV. Bossuet preached this often as a bishop (of Meaux, some 20 miles east of Paris) and as court theologian and orator for Louis, and he wrote it in *Politique tirée des propres paroles de l'Écriture sainte*. (“Political philosophy drawn directly from Holy Scripture”). There he concluded, after reviewing various Biblical passages, that the person of the king is sacred, and that to rebel against the king is sacrilege: a crime against God as well as against the kingdom. Royal absolutism was thus intertwined in France with the pervasive presence of the Catholic church. As a result, when the monarchy collapsed late in the eighteenth century, so did the church. The shared fate of the ruler and the established church in the French Revolution would be repeated in 1917, when the Russian Revolution overtook the Russian Orthodox Church along with the Romanovs.

## **The beginning of the French Revolution**

The French Revolution began in July of 1789, went through several phases, and can be said to have lasted until late in 1799, when Napoleon effectively seized dictatorial power. Initially the revolution was not aimed at the Catholic church in particular or at religion in general, but as the revolutionaries progressed from one grievance to another they came to regard the church and Christianity as furniture of the *ancien régime* and as incompatible with the new French nation that they were creating. The revolutionaries therefore proceeded to attack both the church and Christianity with a ferocity unprecedented in Christendom.

When in 1774 the nineteen-year old Louis XVI inherited the French throne from his grandfather, the kingdom was already in financial trouble, its expenditures outrunning its taxes. By spring of 1789 the kingdom was close to bankruptcy, in part because it had supported the American Revolutionary War (which had ended with the Treaty of Paris in 1783). Taxes on the French commoners were heavy, while the clergy and nobility paid no land taxes. In need of money, Louis XVI convened the Estates-General in May of 1789, the first such meeting in almost two hundred years. More than a thousand delegates gathered at Versailles: one fourth higher clergy (the first estate), one fourth nobility (the second estate), and half commoners. The commoners of this “third estate” tended to be *les bourgeois*: that is, men either wealthy or middle-class rather than poor, and usually having at least a modest education.

Excited by the recent formation of the United States of America, and by the American states' adoption of a written constitution, the commoners hoped to create a similar constitution and to make France a constitutional monarchy. The second estate especially opposed so radical

a reform. On June 20 all but one of the 577 commoners, finding themselves shut out from the assembly hall, gathered on the king's tennis court and there took an oath to remain united until they had devised a constitution for the monarchy. Toward that end they declared themselves the National Constituent Assembly. This National Constituent Assembly soon became the government (Louis' powers became increasingly weaker) and remained more or less in charge until September 30 of 1791, when it disbanded in order to make way for the Legislative Assembly that it had created. Seeing that the National Constituent Assembly was intent on writing a constitution, Louis urged the clerics and nobles to join in its deliberations, even though under the assembly's rules the vote of a bishop or a noble counted no more than a vote of a commoner delegate.

## **Paris and the beginning of violence**

Change was in the air at Versailles, but was greatly accelerated when it came to Paris. With a population close to half a million, Paris was one of Europe's largest cities and by far the largest in France. Much of the population listened with increasing excitement to reports coming from Versailles: in Poland-Lithuania, in the Netherlands, in Britain, and most recently in the United States of America monarchy had been either eliminated or drastically curtailed, and at long last such a *révolution* was taking place in France! Especially eager to see a revolution were tens of thousands of *sans-culottes*.<sup>15</sup> These were manual laborers, small shopkeepers, and others who did not consider themselves members of the bourgeoisie. The military forces in Paris were mostly foreign mercenaries: German and Swiss regiments that owed their loyalty to the king. On July 12 the Parisians were shocked to learn that King Louis had dismissed his finance minister, Jacques Necker, who had shown considerable sympathy for "the third estate" and whom the *sans-culottes* of Paris therefore looked upon as a champion. Necker's dismissal infuriated the populace, which responded by seizing two arsenals (the Hôtel des Invalides and the Bastille), together holding some 30,000 muskets and gunpowder. During the assault on the Bastille (July 14) almost a hundred of the attackers were killed. In the aftermath, the leaders of the uprising formed a Paris commune, or city government, and as its mayor elected Jean Sylvain Bailly, a distinguished writer and man of science who at the time was playing a leading role in the National Constituent Assembly.

## **The revolutionaries' break with the Catholic church**

Although the National Constituent Assembly could rationally debate and come to a consensus on several political and secular matters, to do so on religious questions was far more difficult. Bishops, abbots and priests saw the Catholic church in a light hardly recognizable to deists and atheists, some of whom were leading spirits in the assembly. The first measure in opposition to the Catholic church came on August 26 of 1789, when the assembly formulated its *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen* ("Declaration of the Rights of [the] Man and [the] Citizen"). Included in this brief declaration of general principles was the right of every man freely to exercise his chosen religion. Because Protestant worship was still prohibited, and Jewish worship tightly controlled,<sup>16</sup> this clause worried those Catholic clerics who until then had been sympathetic to the assembly.

A sharper break between the assembly and the Catholic church came in December of 1789, by which time the king and queen - like the assembly - had been brought from Versailles to Paris. Alarmed that the state was close to bankruptcy, the assembly voted to nationalize the vast ecclesiastical estates - to make them the property of the French nation ("nation" was then a relatively new and attractive concept) - and then to sell them along with various royal properties.<sup>17</sup> That same month the assembly also put into law the freedom of religion that had in principle been enunciated in the Rights of Man declaration. Protestants were now full citizens (and eligible to hold public office), the many exiled Huguenots were invited back into France, and the kingdom's restrictions on Judaeans were removed. Finally, on December 19 the assembly began debate on ending monasticism in the kingdom. The assembly's Ecclesiastical Committee proposed the abolition of future vows, the maintenance of only a few monasteries and nunneries for those who wished to continue monastic life, and the provision of money to help the monks and nuns who chose to enter secular life. The proposal envisaged the slow attrition of the monastic orders, and their eventual disappearance. The bishop of Clermont, who was nominally the chairman of the committee, was very much against the proposal and claimed that the committee had formulated it without his consent or even his presence. All other delegates on the committee favored the proposal, and the next day - December 20 - the assembly passed it by a wide margin.<sup>18</sup>

By this time, the continuation of Catholicism as the state religion was coming into question. On February 7, 1790, the bishop of Nancy moved that the assembly declare that Catholicism would remain the religion of the state. With some delicacy that motion was rejected, at which most of the bishops and abbots walked out of the assembly, as did scores of the lower clergy.<sup>19</sup> On February 13 the assembly strengthened as it finalized its December adoption of the Ecclesiastical Committee's recommendation: it voted to abolish, that is, all of the monastic orders, and to allow none in the future. For years many people in France had opposed or ridiculed monasteries and convents. Even many sincere Catholics regarded monks and some of the friars as lazy and licentious. Nuns were seen less as parasites than as victims, forced into convents at a young age and against their will. They too, however, seemed to contribute little or nothing of value to society and critics had ever more loudly urged that the women be returned to their natural role as wives and mothers.<sup>20</sup> To these longstanding complaints was added, as French nationalism materialized in 1789, the perception that monks and nuns were marginal to the French nation. The resentment of monasticism came fully into view in the National Constituent Assembly, and was compounded - as the state ran out of money - by the common knowledge that the monasteries and convents owned much valuable land.

### **Rousseau, *égalité*, and the nation: the abolition of nobility in France**

The nobility - the "second estate" in the *ancien régime* - accounted for something less than one per cent of the French population. The nobles were a hereditary class, controlling the local *parlements*, filling all the higher political and ecclesiastical positions, and enjoying many privileges. Although they were admired and emulated by some of the bourgeoisie, the nobles were greatly resented by the *sans-culottes* of Paris.

An important critique of the noble class had been made by the philosopher Jean-Jacques

Rousseau (1712-1778). Although he spoke and wrote in French, Rousseau was not a subject of the French kings, being a citizen of Geneva. He died eleven years before the French Revolution began, to which his writings had contributed much. In appreciation for his inspiration the revolutionaries in 1794 interred his bones in the Panthéon in Paris. Especially important for the revolution was Rousseau's analysis of economic, social and political inequality.<sup>21</sup> As Rousseau saw it, the root cause of *inégalité* - inequality - was the regrettable notion that land and other property could be privatized. That notion, and the subsequent accumulation of private property, allowed the propertied class to exploit those without property, and also condemned those who were physically superior to be controlled by their mental superiors. In his *Du contrat social* (1762) Rousseau espoused a republican state with a monolithic "general will of the people" as the republic's final authority. In such a state, he supposed, inequality would be minimized although not eliminated.

In the French Revolution "the nation" was in the first instance not an ethnic community or a linguistic community (those criteria would come later) but the common people in contrast to the nobility.<sup>22</sup> Many of the French revolutionaries in 1789 intended to set up a republic and a society in which *égalité* would finally replace the inequality that Rousseau had analyzed, and in which "the general will of the people" would somehow be done. A first step toward that end was taken very early in the revolution. On August 4 of 1789 the National Constituent Assembly required the nobles to pay the same land tax that commoners had always paid. At the same time, certain obligations of peasants to the local lord were abolished.

The Rights of Man declaration had as the very first of its seventeen articles a declaration of the *égalité* of all men: "Men are born and remain free and equal in rights. Social distinctions may be founded only upon the general good." For the first few months after that declaration noble status remained intact. On June 19 of 1790, however, the National Constituent Assembly abolished all noble titles in France. Henceforth, no person was to have the title of prince or princess, duke or duchess, marquis, baron, or any other noble rank, and no one was to display a coat of arms. The nobles also lost the exclusive privileges they had thus far enjoyed.

In response to these measures some nobles emigrated from France to the Austrian Netherlands (today Belgium) and other countries, where they could live off the revenues of their estates and still flaunt their noble status. Almost all of them hoped soon to return when normalcy returned. The revolutionary state, desperately in need of money, confiscated the lands and properties of these *émigrés*. The *émigrés* not surprisingly became fierce advocates of a counter-revolution.

### **Nationalization of the Catholic church in France**

On July 12 of 1790, with the revolution still in its moderate phase, the assembly issued its Civil Constitution of the Clergy, effectively removing the clergy from papal control. Henceforth, priests and bishops were to be paid salaries by the state, and were to be elected by the Catholic laity. The constitution also confirmed that what had been church property now belonged to the state, and that all convents and monasteries were closed. Priests were permitted and even encouraged to marry.

The intent of all this was to nationalize the French church, making it in many ways similar to the Church of England. To no one's surprise Pope Pius VI and most of the French bishops denounced the Civil Constitution of the Clergy (CCC). In November the assembly voted that all clergy must take an oath accepting the CCC: those who refused to do so would be punished for causing public disorder. King Louis hated to sign the CCC into law, as his letter to the pope explained, but in December he did so under duress.<sup>23</sup> Of 23,093 priests who were told to take the oath, approximately half (henceforth the "constitutional priests") did so, and those who did not were labeled "non-juring" priests. Only a handful of the 125 bishops took the oath.

On April 13 of 1791 Pope Pius VI issued his encyclical *Charitas*, formally condemning the CCC and declaring that the National Constituent Assembly was waging "war against the Catholic church." The encyclical went on to state that the kingdom of France was now in schism, and that bishops who supported the CCC were schismatic and no longer had any ecclesiastical authority. The assembly was angered rather than frightened, and on May 2 French troops occupied Avignon. Until then, Avignon had been subject to the pope and governed by a papal legate.

### **Foreign attempts to stop the French Revolution**

The National Constituent Assembly had announced that the proposed government would be a constitutional monarchy, with the king flanked by a Legislative Assembly. According to the proposed constitution the powers of the king were to be much reduced. All new legislation was to come from the Legislative Assembly: the king was empowered to veto legislation, but not to issue royal edicts.

Most of the support that King Louis had among the commoners he lost when (June 20-21 of 1791) he and the royal family tried to flee to the fortress of Montmédy, on the border of France and the Austrian Netherlands. The flight got only half way there: at Varennes the royal family was recognized and arrested, on the likely suspicion that Louis was planning to muster opposition to the *révolution*. All were brought back to Paris and were then kept more or less under guard at the Tuileries Palace. On July 17 of 1791 radical republicans rallied against the prospect of a constitutional monarchy, and a large and violent crowd gathered on the Champ de Mars. The Marquis de La Fayette, as commander of the national guard, ordered his men to fire on the crowd and more than a dozen of the republicans were killed. The bloodshed resulted in denunciations of Lafayette, of the monarchy, and even of the National Constituent Assembly.

In August of 1791 Leopold II, the Holy Roman Emperor, met at Pillnitz with King Friedrich Wilhelm II of Prussia. The two monarchs agreed that if called upon they would send a military force into France in order to protect Louis and his family from the revolutionaries (Leopold was the brother of Marie Antoinette). On August 27 Leopold and Friedrich Wilhelm published the Declaration of Pillnitz, vaguely promising that they and other European kings would intervene should the French revolutionaries threaten the lives of Louis and Marie Antoinette. The Pillnitz declaration further enraged the French revolutionaries.

When elections were held for the Legislative Assembly, in summer of 1791, many of

those elected were associated with the Jacobin club - something of a political party - and were intent on protecting and extending the revolution. The Legislative Assembly opened on October 1 and was obviously more radical than the National Constituent Assembly that it replaced (the NCA delegates had decided - on a motion made by Maximilien de Robespierre, one of the younger and more democratic delegates - that they should not be eligible for the Legislative Assembly). The new assembly decided, for example, that all non-juring clergy (priests and bishops who refused to swear allegiance to the CCC) were to be deprived of their salaries and were to be punished, possibly with deportation. King Louis vetoed the measure.

In February of 1792 Leopold, in declining health although only in his forties, and Friedrich Wilhelm made a defensive alliance. On March 1, Leopold died in Vienna, and the Austrian throne and the title of Holy Roman Emperor passed to his young son, Francis II. On April 20 of 1792, the Legislative Assembly declared war on Austria. Louis did not veto this declaration, probably expecting that the Austrians and their allies would prevail and that the victors would put an end to the Legislative Assembly. At the outset such expectations would have looked promising: Prussian forces, led by Karl Wilhelm Ferdinand, the Duke of Braunschweig (Charles William Ferdinand, Duke of Brunswick), invaded France and took several French cities and forts. On July 25 the duke issued an order that full royal powers be restored to Louis. In his "Brunswick Manifesto" Karl Wilhelm threatened the general French population if their revolutionaries harmed the royal family. The revolutionaries - reminded again that their king was in league with the European monarchies - responded with a vengeance.

### **The second Paris commune and the slaughter of the priests**

On August 9, 1792, the incumbent Paris commune was overthrown by a Jacobin plot, and the Jacobins set up a new and avowed revolutionary commune. This new commune, dominated by the youthful Robespierre (1758-1794), was intent upon improving the lot of the poor, in large part by appropriating property of the nobles. Mobs of *sans-culottes* had taken over several arsenals, and had distributed the weapons among themselves. On August 10, 1792, an armed Parisian mob marched on the Tuileries Palace. The king and queen were able to flee to the Legislative Assembly, but some six hundred royal Swiss Guards were killed. That was a dramatic escalation of internal bloodshed. The Legislative Assembly itself, seen by the Parisian mobs as a partner of the constitutional monarchy, was cowed by riots. It refused to depose the king, but "suspended" him and agreed that a *Convention Nationale* should be called to put together a republican constitution in place of the constitutional monarchy that the assembly had until then been proposing.

On Aug 15, the Paris commune closed all remaining monasteries in Paris, and began a roundup of non-juring priests. Throughout the city surveillance committees were set up to arrest and incarcerate persons suspected of being enemies of the revolution. Priests were especially targeted, because they were reported to be generally against the revolution. At the beginning of September, as fear mounted that the Prussian invaders were headed for Paris and would reverse the revolution, mobs began to strike out at those whom they considered "traitors." Much of the Catholic clergy fell into that category. As two dozen non-juring priests was being transferred to a prison, a mob of men and women attacked and killed them all. Still worse was the massacre

at the monastery of the Carmelites, where many priests and monks had been imprisoned a few days earlier. Other scenes of slaughter were the abbey of St. Germain de Prés and the seminary of Saint Firmin. In the first two days of September several hundred priests were killed, including many who were “constitutional priests,” but were nevertheless lumped together with the non-juring clergy as counter-revolutionaries.

At Valmy (in northeastern France) the revolutionaries on September 20 of 1792 met the Prussian invaders. The main action was a cannon duel, resulting in a draw, and casualties on both sides were light. The Prussians withdrew across the Rhine, however, and the effect on French morale was electrifying. During the battle one of the French generals, François Kellermann, had rallied his infantry with the cry, *Vive la nation!*, and the cry soon became a slogan for the revolution. The very next day after the battle *la Convention Nationale* opened, and declared France a republic. The Capetian dynasty, after ruling for more than nine hundred years, was thus overthrown.<sup>24</sup> In this National Convention power lay with the third estate, especially with the people of Paris but more broadly with “the nation.”

After the execution of Louis in January of 1793, Spain, Portugal, Britain and even the Netherlands joined Prussia and Austria in war against the new French republic, but the republic was able to defend itself against this “first coalition.” Although the French armies were poorly trained and equipped, they were enormous, because they were raised through mass conscription. In the republic of France, so the leaders of the revolution declared, the state is synonymous with the nation, or with the people of France. And the men who fight and die in the nation’s armies are therefore doing so for themselves and for their revolution. The tricolor flag - blue white and red - had been produced in 1790 and quickly caught on as a symbol of the French nation. The republic was able to draft some 300,000 men into its armies, paying them subsistence wages. The kings of Europe, in contrast, had much smaller armies because they depended on volunteer and professional soldiers, who earned a competitive wage.

## **The Reign of Terror and the de-Christianizing of France**

The National Convention was considerably more radical than its predecessor. It served as the legislative body of the new republic, but was too large and unwieldy to play the executive role. That function was delegated, in April of 1793, to the nine-member Committee of Public Safety (*Comité de salut public*). From that point until July of 1794 the Convention and its Committee, which was dominated by Robespierre, ruled France. These fifteen months are summarized in the term, “Reign of Terror.” The terror was focused in the Revolutionary Tribunal, a court created on March 10 of 1793. Over the next fifteen months this court, which consisted of a jury and a public prosecutor and was responsible for trying all persons accused of opposing the revolution, sentenced to death more than a thousand of the accused “counter-revolutionaries.”<sup>25</sup>

It was at this time that the government of the republic attempted to de-Christianize France. Never before in Christendom had such an attempt been made. Although the attempt ultimately failed, its temporary success essentially marked the end of Christendom and the beginning of modern civilization. For the first time, some people in Christendom began to say

publicly what they had been thinking or saying privately for a long time, or had expressed in clandestine publications: miracles are imaginary, Jesus was nothing more than a man, most of the Bible stories are myths, and the existence of God is questionable. Public deism and atheism in France lasted less than twenty years, but their brief season permanently changed religious and intellectual discourse in Europe and in the Americas. Since the 1790s conflicts between Protestantism and Catholicism, and even between Christianity and Judaism, have been dwarfed by a much larger issue: “revealed” religion itself has been on the defensive against reason, or against philosophy, science and history. After the French Revolution and the Napoleonic conquests that followed, the nation-state became the primary source of identity and the focus of loyalty for millions of people in Europe, Britain, and even North and South America. For these millions, Christianity in particular and religion in general slipped into secondary importance, as nationalism itself became something of a religion.<sup>26</sup>

In revolutionary France one of the most important liberties to be proclaimed was freedom of the press. This was stipulated in Article XI of the Declaration of the Rights of Man:

The free communication of thoughts and opinions is one of the most precious rights of man: every citizen, therefore, can speak, write and print freely, save only that he is responsible for an abuse of this freedom, in those cases determined by law.<sup>27</sup>

Already in 1789 and more voluminously in 1790 printers in Paris and other French cities began to publish new material that would certainly not have been permitted by the royal and ecclesiastical censors, along with books that had previously been forbidden. Holbach’s *Christianisme dévoilé*, which had been printed in Amsterdam and officially banned in France until 1789, was now not only openly sold in France but was printed in Paris and went through several editions, as did Holbach’s *Système de la Nature* and his other rationalist works.<sup>28</sup> A larger project was the publication in Paris of Diderot’s massive *Encyclopédie*. Ecclesiastical opposition and lack of royal approval made the *Encyclopédie* all the more appealing to the wealthy bourgeoisie. Almost all of the books listed on the Catholic *Index* were suddenly available in Paris, as were skeptical and scurrilously anti-religious tracts and pamphlets. In such a climate, deism and atheism were nurtured, and by 1793 were flourishing among the *sans-cullotes* as well as in the upper classes.

Because the National Convention saw the Catholic clergy as a great threat to the revolution, on April 23 of 1793 it voted that all “non-juring” clergy - all clergy who had not renounced papal authority and taken the oath of loyalty to the republic - should be exiled to the penal colony in Guiana. Although several thousand priests were sent into exile, more remained in their churches. In southern and western France especially the new law was difficult to enforce, as many congregations defended their non-juring parish priests from arrest. The Convention passed an even more drastic measure on November 23, 1793, decreeing that all churches be closed: to assemble for mass was to undermine the revolution. Again, outside of Paris enforcement of the law was uneven.

Maximilien de Robespierre (1758-1794), a fervent deist, was the most powerful and therefore the most visible of the young leaders during the Reign of Terror. Others were even

more radical in their campaign against Christianity. Relatively few of the leaders were outright atheists,<sup>29</sup> but even fewer were sincere Christians. The skeptics and deists saw divine revelation as a tissue of lies and ignorance, and urged their fellow citizens to be guided instead by *raison* (reason, or rationality). Toward that end they organized a formal reverence for reason: the *Culte de la Raison*. Like Robespierre, most of these young men were guillotined in the savagery of 1794, as the revolution devoured its own.

Jacques Hébert (1757-1794) had amounted to very little before the revolution, and by 1789 was impoverished. He found backers, however, for an outrageous and obscene newspaper, *Le Père Duchesne*, which he began publishing in 1790. As the revolution evolved the newspaper attracted a devoted following among the most radical, anti-clerical and anti-Christian of the *sans-culottes*. “Father Duchesne” was a scruffy tabloid figure, the revolution’s Everyman. In order more quickly to sell their papers to a public eager for confrontation the news-hawkers would cry out, “Father Duchesne is very angry today!” At this stage of the revolution it seems that a majority of the *sans-culottes* in Paris considered themselves deists (relatively few claimed to be atheists) rather than Christians. By summer of 1793 the *Hébertistes* were a formidable element in the National Convention, and in October they took the lead in de-Christianizing the republic.

Gaspard Chaumette (1763-1794) was one of the youngest of the revolutionaries. He was a medical student at the outset of the revolution but immediately gained much attention as a contributor to the weekly newspaper, *les Révolutions de Paris*, the first issue of which came out on July 12 of 1789. After that, he devoted himself entirely to the revolution. Chaumette was elected president of the Paris commune. An outspoken critic of Christianity (not just Catholicism, but all Christianity), he took a leading role in setting up the *Culte de la Raison*.

One of the few who survived the revolution and remained powerful under Napoleon was Joseph Fouché (1759-1820). Perhaps the most ardent of the champions of *Raison*, Fouché rose quickly during the revolution and became the head of the national police. In that capacity he was sent to the large southern city of Lyon, which was regarded as a haven for reactionary forces. Believing that he must cleanse Lyon of its many counter-revolutionaries, from November of 1793 to April of 1794 Fouché supervised the execution of some two thousand people. The victims included most of the Lyonnaise clergy, along with monks and nuns.

In October of 1793 the Convention expressed its de-Christianizing agenda most explicitly by instituting a new calendar and a new era. The members of the Convention declared that the starting-point of history was no longer the birth of Jesus the Christ, but the founding of their republic: instead of dating an event *in anno domini*, that is, the French were now to date it to a Year of the Republic. The Convention decided that Year I of the Republic had commenced on September 21 of 1792, when the monarchy had been abolished. That momentous event, coinciding with the autumnal equinox, became New Year’s Day. By the end of October, 1793, the French were therefore no longer living in 1793, but suddenly found themselves early in Year II of the Republic. The year was divided into twelve thirty-day months, supplemented by five days of celebration. The old month names were replaced by new and descriptive names. The first month of the year was Vendémiaire (“Vintage”), followed by Brumaire (“Foggy”), then by

Frimaire (“Frosty”), and so on through Fructidor (“Fruity”) and the five-day Sansculottides. According to the new calendar the closing of all the churches thus took place not on November 23, 1793, but on 3 Frimaire, Year II of the Republic. Sunday of course disappeared in the un-Christian calendar, as did the week. In the new “decadal” calendar every tenth day was a day for rest and for appreciating and exercising *Raison*. Scattered throughout the year were various decadal festivals, meant as replacements for the Christian holidays. All weddings were to be performed on the decadal fêtes, which were also the occasion for games and athletic contests.

Many churches and monasteries in Paris and other cities were ransacked, destroyed, or converted to other uses. The great monastery on Mont Saint-Michel became a prison, and the Benedictine abbey at Cluny was pillaged and ruined. Appropriated as places of assembly for the new civic religion, many churches were renamed: what had always been the churches of Saint-Philippe, Saint-Eustache, and Saint-Germain were now to be called the Temple of Concord, the Temple of Agriculture, and the Temple of Gratitude. On 20 Brumaire of Year II (November 10, 1793) Jacques Hébert presided over a festival for Reason, the *Fête de la Raison*. At the Notre Dame de Paris cathedral a great pageant celebrated the triumph of Reason, which was equated with Truth and Liberty: the church’s statues of the Virgin Mary were temporarily covered up, as were other Christian icons, while images of Voltaire, Rousseau, Benjamin Franklin, and Montesquieu were set up on an artificial mountain. Outside of Paris some Christian buildings were defended by local communities: so the cathedral at Chartres survived the revolution with minimal damage. Overall, however, much Christian art and architecture in France was lost.

### **The Cult of the Supreme Being, and the renunciation of atheism**

Although de-Christianization had much popular support in Paris, and to a lesser extent in other cities, in the French countryside it was widely deplored and in some places physically opposed, despite the execution of those deemed the ringleaders of the opposition. Even Robespierre found fault with the *Culte de Raison*. Believing that the new republic needed somehow to worship God, in the early months of 1794 Robespierre persuaded the Convention to disestablish its Cult of Reason and in its place to establish a Cult of the Supreme Being (*Culte de l'Être suprême*). The Cult of Reason, he argued, was too extreme, while an explicitly deist cult would keep the rural population from turning against the revolution. Robespierre personally devised the *Culte de l'Être suprême*, and publicized a creed extolling deism and renouncing atheism. The republic, he made clear, firmly believed in the Supreme Being and in the immortality of the soul.

The new cult may have soothed the deists and even some liberal Catholics, but it angered the few atheists and the more numerous skeptics led by Gaspard Chaumette and Jacques Hébert. Insisting that the Cult of the Supreme Being was now the law of the land and was vital to the success of the revolution, Robespierre and the Committee of Public Safety sent Hébert to the guillotine on March 24, and Chaumette followed three weeks later.

To launch formally his new Cult of the Supreme Being, Robespierre organized a grand festival, in which the entire nation could participate. This festival, which took place on June 8

of 1794 (20 Prairial, Year II) was more earnest than the *Fête de la Raison* that Hébert had managed seven months earlier. Celebrations were held all over France, but of course the focus was on Paris. All Parisians, beginning at five o'clock in the morning, were to decorate their houses with the tricolor. All boys between fourteen and eighteen were to assemble and parade in square formations, carrying flags and banners. Women were to be dressed in the national colors of blue, white and red. In all parts of the city bands played music composed for the occasion.

The festivities opened with a fiery abolition of atheism. In the days prior to the festival Jacques-Louis David, who was both the most famous painter in France and a close ally of Robespierre, had seen to the construction of a huge papier-maché image of an ugly figure, Atheism personified.<sup>30</sup> This paper Atheism stood in the Tuileries Garden, where thousands assembled to watch its incineration. With great ceremony Robespierre lit the papier-maché with a torch, Atheism fell in flames, and the crowd erupted with joy. The high point of the festival came when Robespierre spoke to the citizens. In his speech he assured the audience that the Supreme Being was delighted that kings and priests had finally been eradicated from France. Because the Supreme Being not only took pleasure in the liberty and equality of all men, but was an active ally in promoting those virtues, Robespierre urged the French nation to spread its republican and religious revolution throughout Europe.

### **The “Great Terror” and the Thermidorian Reaction**

Two days after the grand festival, on 22 Prairial (June 10), the National Convention passed its Law of the Great Terror. This *loi de la Grande Terreur* gave to the dreaded court - the Revolutionary Tribunal - even more power than it already had: henceforth persons accused of counter-revolutionary activities were not entitled to legal counsel, and the only sentence permitted the court was the death sentence. In short, a defendant before the court would be either acquitted or sent to the guillotine. In the fifty-five days following the passage of the law some thirteen hundred defendants were sentenced and executed, more than had been executed in the preceding fifteen months of the court's existence. Because of his dominance in the Committee of Public Safety, Robespierre was able to arrange the arrest and execution of anyone whom he deemed to be a threat to the republic and its revolution. So far as Robespierre was concerned, all critics of his new cult posed such a threat.

Joseph Fouché had been one of the most ardent champions of *Raison*, and once back in Paris from Lyon he fell out with Robespierre over the latter's decision to replace Reason with the Supreme Being. Because he was known to be opposed to the new cult, Fouché found himself in mortal danger when the Convention passed Robespierre's *loi de la Grande Terreur*. Supposing that his only safety lay in overthrowing Robespierre, Fouché began vigorously to plot a coup d'état. He found collaborators on both the right and the left of the Convention, including the youthful but powerful Jean-Lambert Tallien (1767-1820). The conspirators set their coup d'état in motion on 9 Thermidor of Year II (July 27 of 1794), with leading members of the Convention denouncing Robespierre and his supporters. On the following day the Convention sent Robespierre and many of his allies to the guillotine. Fouché, Tallien and the other conspirators in this “Thermidorian Reaction” justified their action with the claim that

Robespierre's *loi de la Grande Terreur* was itself a crime against the revolution and the nation. By removing Robespierre, so the collaborators claimed, they were reining in the *terreur* and saving the revolution.

The coup eventually led to the drafting of a new constitution. The National Convention approved the "Constitution of Year III" on 5 Fructidor of Year III (August 22, 1795). The new constitution set up a legislative Council of 500, and a supervisory Council of Elders, which was empowered to veto but not to initiate legislation. Executive power was invested in a five-man "Directory."

## **Return of the churches, and the second establishment of deism in France**

With Robespierre's dramatic downfall and death the Cult of the Supreme Being quickly faded, because it had lost its status as the republic's established religion. The campaign to de-Christianize France was not reversed, because many of those who engineered the Thermidorian Reaction were opposed to Christianity and the other "revealed" religions. Some concessions to Christians were made, however. On February 21 of 1795 the National Convention revoked its law closing all churches. Worship services for both Catholics and Protestants were once again permitted, although public displays and noises such as processions through the streets and ringing of bells remained under ban. In this more tolerant climate by far the popular choice in the villages and small towns was the "constitutional" Catholic church.

In Paris and other French cities deism remained attractive. One form of deism that for several years held promise seems to have originated with a young bookseller named Jean-Baptiste Chemin-Dupontès, more often known as *Chemin fils*. Chemin had been a student of Claude Fauchet, a Catholic priest who was much in favor of the revolution and became a constitutional bishop, but was guillotined on October 31 of 1793. By that time Chemin had become a Freemason and a deist. Wishing to bring up his children as deists he discovered and deplored the lack of deist literature in French. In 1794 he therefore published a small anthology of deist prose and poetry, much of it translated from English, and also a deist catechism.<sup>31</sup> Although caught up in Robespierre's Cult of the Supreme Being, he abhorred his Reign of Terror, and saw the Cult of the Supreme Being go down with Robespierre. That lesson persuaded Chemin that deism was an intellectual conviction reached by individuals, and could be expressed within the bosom of the family or in a secret society such as a Freemason's lodge, but perhaps should not and could not be made into a public, established religion. With his wife and children Chemin began each day with a prayer to God of the Universe, making no requests but thanking God for life and liberty, and pledging to do good and to resist the temptation to do evil. For moral guidance Chemin and other deists looked to their own consciences, to which they supposed that God had imparted all of his commandments.

By 1796, however, Chemin was of the opinion - despite his disappointment with the Cult of the Supreme Being - that a more public or congregational expression of deism would be helpful to society. He therefore published a brief handbook that included an order of service that could be used at deist gatherings. In its second edition the handbook was titled, *Manuel des Théophilanthropes*, and "Theophilanthropism" thus began to attract attention.<sup>32</sup> The name was intended to denote love for God and for all of humankind.

A congregation of Parisian deists formed and on January 15, 1797, had its first public meeting, at the city's Institute of the Blind. Soon other deist congregations appeared in other parts of Paris. At their meetings the Theophilanthropists joined in song, in reciting hortatory prayers, and in expressing their belief in the God of the Universe. In imitation of Christian baptism, they brought their newborn infants into the assembly, where the congregation voiced its hopes and wishes that the infant would lead an enlightened life and find peace in Theophilanthropism. At this point the movement was innocuous and even commendable, although it has been ridiculed by a long line of historians.<sup>33</sup>

One enthusiastic convert to Theophilanthropism was Louis-Marie de La Révellière L peaux, who came to the decadal meetings with his wife and daughter. No ordinary Parisian, in 1797 La R velli re L peaux was one of the most powerful men in the city: he was a member of the Directory, the five-man committee that in 1795 had taken over executive powers from the Committee of Public Safety. Regarding Christianity and other "revealed" religions as baseless, La R velli re L peaux saw Theophilanthropism as a sound and defensible substitute.

On 18 Fructidor, Year V (September 4, 1797), La R velli re L peaux and two other members of the Directory - with the assistance of several armies (including that of General Napoleon Bonaparte) - executed a coup d'etat. They did so in order to cancel the recent election, which had brought in councillors who were critical of the revolution or who were suspected of aiming to put France back under the control of kings and popes. After the coup d'etat La R velli re L peaux took the leading role in the Directory and the government, and from that lofty position he attempted to make Theophilanthropism the republic's established religion. He saw to it that public funds were made available to publicize and support Theophilanthropism, and he also commandeered many churches - including the cathedral of Notre Dame de Paris - to serve as deist assembly halls, thus disturbing the constitutional Catholics.

With the government's backing Theophilanthropism grew dramatically, hundreds of thousands of citizens attending the decadal assemblies. Evidently, however, many of these people did so for political or patriotic reasons. In 1798, as La R velli re L peaux began losing both his dominance in the Directory and his enthusiasm for Theophilanthropism, the movement began to wane, and it did so precipitously after late June of 1799, when La R velli re L peaux was forced to resign from the Directory. Under Napoleon the Theophilanthropists were forbidden not only to assemble in Catholic churches but also to build assembly halls for themselves.

### **Reaction in Britain to the French Revolution: the ebbing of anti-Catholicism**

For the first year or two of its long duration, the French Revolution was looked upon favorably by many republicans and progressives in Europe, in Britain, and in the new United States of America. At that time it was most emphatically a rejection of absolute monarchy and an embrace of liberty and republicanism. In the United States, the prospect of a French republic inspired high hopes that the days of monarchy in Europe were numbered, and that republican governments were everywhere on the horizon. In England republicanism was of course less

pronounced, but in taverns and alehouses was often the topic of discussions and arguments. Liberty, especially religious liberty, was also much on peoples' minds in England, especially at universities. No one was admitted to Oxford unless he subscribed to the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Anglican church, and had sworn the Oath of Supremacy, recognizing King George III as his spiritual as well as his temporal ruler. Dissenters were admitted for study at Cambridge but were not eligible to receive a diploma. Many students and probably most of their teachers did not believe the doctrine of the trinity, but such skepticism could only be aired privately. To these and other constraints the "English Jacobins" in the early 1790s objected. Included among the "English Jacobins" were three young men who would become famous as romantic poets: Samuel Coleridge, Robert Southey, and William Wordsworth (as a twenty-year old Cambridge student Wordsworth visited Paris in 1790).

News of the Parisians' violence in August and September of 1792 was a disappointment for English liberals and republicans, but did not end hopes that the revolution would turn out well. Wordsworth wrote *Apology for the French Revolution* in 1793, in which he deplored the excesses of the revolutionaries but was keen to defend republicanism and condemn tyranny. As the Reign of Terror worsened in late 1793 and the first half of 1794, foreign support dwindled. After Robespierre's death, by which time they had become disillusioned by the terror, Southey and Coleridge collaborated in writing *The Fall of Robespierre*, a drama in three acts. They presented Robespierre as a deeply and tragically flawed hero.

The violence of the French Revolution brought Catholics and Protestants in Britain (as in parts of Europe) closer together, discredited atheism, and put deism in an unfavorable light. By late 1793 many saw the revolution as an attack on all of Christianity - which to a large extent it was - and therefore something to be opposed at all costs. Before the "Reign of Terror" the revolution was widely seen as an attack on the establishment of Catholicism and as a struggle for religious freedom, which it also was. The anti-clerical riots in the revolution inspired some imitation in London, where several churches were vandalized and threats were made against royalty and against government figures. In response, the British parliament in 1795 passed the Seditious Meetings Act and the Treasonable Practices Act. Especially targeted were meetings of "Jacobins" in taverns or alehouses.<sup>34</sup>

The hostility with which the British government and most of its subjects had for two hundred years viewed Catholics and Catholicism was much reduced by the French Revolution and its Napoleonic aftermath. Since the sixteenth century Anglican clerics had identified the papacy as the Antichrist described in the Book of Revelation.<sup>35</sup> The hatred of imperial Rome that the author of Revelation expressed in metaphorical language - Rome as Babylon, the beast, or the Great Whore - was easily translated into a hatred of the Rome of the popes. Because obedience to the pope was one of the most obvious traits that differentiated Catholics from Anglicans, through the 1780s most Anglicans and other Protestants in Britain referred to Catholics not as "Catholics" or even "Roman Catholics" but as "Romanists" or - much more often - as "papists."

By 1778, when it was bogged down in a war against its rebellious American colonists, was at the same time at war with France, Spain and the Netherlands, and feared a revolt in

Ireland, the British government removed a few of its traditional restrictions upon Catholics in Britain and Ireland. This was the Papists Act of 1778, and according to J. H. Hexter it “was passed unanimously and amid loud cheers by both houses of parliament.”<sup>36</sup> The 1778 act eased the constraints upon “any papist, or person professing the popish religion” who took an oath of allegiance, abjuring certain doctrines deemed dangerous to the kingdom. The act did not, however, provide the same relief to “any person who being a Protestant shall at any time become a papist, or who shall educate, or suffer to be educated, any of his children under the age of fourteen in the popish religion.” Modest as the new law was in providing relief for Catholics, it angered John Wesley and his “Methodists,” along with many other Protestants. In 1780 tens of thousands, led by Lord Gordon, mobbed the parliament, shouting against “popery” and demanding repeal of the 1778 act (it was not repealed). The Gordon riots caused much damage to property in London.

By June of 1791, only eleven years later, much had changed. The British parliament then entertained a bill to lift more of the restrictions on Catholics. This was two months after Pope Pius VI accused the National Constituent Assembly of France of waging war on Catholicism, and one month after French troops had wrested Avignon from papal control. By this time the British, worried about the revolution in France, were beginning to regard Catholicism as an ally, and the relief bill was supported by both Whigs and Tories:

Meeting no opposition in either house, it was approved by almost every British citizen. Events across the Channel were responsible for this change of heart. A panic fear of French Jacobin republicanism was spreading through England. Catholicism, no longer a soul-devouring ogre, was a virtuous Atlas, propping the tottering world against the vicious onslaughts of a godless sansculottism.<sup>37</sup>

Hexter observed that a month after the bill’s passage English Protestants rioted again, but this time the riot was not anti-Catholic. It was aimed, instead, at the Unitarian Joseph Priestley, who had expressed sympathy for the French revolutionaries. The rioters burned down Priestley’s house in Birmingham.

Although Catholicism was still, for most people in Britain, “the popish religion” and a Catholic was still “a papist,” the government was beginning to encourage more neutral terminology. Anglicans were reluctant entirely to concede the adjective, “catholic,” because they considered their own church to be “catholic” in the word’s original sense. The term “Roman Catholic” therefore seemed most appropriate for the former “papists.” An act passed in 1793 offered both the old and the new labels:

Whereas various acts of parliament have been passed, imposing on his Majesty's subjects professing the popish or Roman Catholic religion many restraints and disabilities, to which other subjects of this realm are not liable, and from the peaceful and loyal demeanour of his Majesty's popish or Roman Catholic subjects, it is fit that such restraints and disabilities shall be discontinued; be it therefore enacted.....<sup>38</sup>

When William Pitt succeeded in having the parliament pass his Act of Union in 1800, thus

creating the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, his intentions were to follow that unification with an emancipation of His Majesty's Catholic subjects. That did not happen, in large part because King George III - in his "Protestant conscience" - refused to sign such relief into law. Although many people supported Pitt's plan for relief many more cheered the king's stand, shouting, "No popery!"<sup>39</sup> Unable to persuade the king to change his mind, Pitt resigned from his prime ministry.

British antipathy toward Catholicism, however, was steadily if slowly diminishing. To a large extent Catholics in Britain were finally emancipated in 1829. In what is conventionally known as the Catholic Relief Act of 1829 the terms "popish" and "papist" were absent. The act was formally titled, "An Act for the Relief of His Majesty's Roman Catholic Subjects." Protestant rancor toward Catholics was softened in part by new interpretations of the Book of Revelation. As the French Revolution and the de-Christianizing of France unfolded, many Anglican and other Protestant clergymen in Britain revised their identification of the Antichrist. Exegesis of the text of Revelation, and news of what was happening across the Channel, persuaded them that the Antichrist was not the papacy, as had long been supposed, but one or another of the French revolutionaries, or more often the French republic itself.<sup>40</sup> Many Protestants, of course, continued to believe that the papacy was the Antichrist, but its exoneration in some quarters helped to remove from English Catholics the hostility that had plagued them since the sixteenth century.

Revulsion against the French Revolution was heightened in Britain by Augustine Barruel (1741-1820). A Jesuit, Barruel taught at various Jesuit colleges in Europe until 1773, when the order was suppressed by Pope Clement XIV, and he then turned to writing. Although he never headed a monastery, the title of abbot was conferred upon him by papal decree in recognition of his contributions to the Catholic church. For the rest of his life he was known as *l'Abbé Barruel*. Barruel fled from his native France to England in 1790, and in 1793 he published there his *Histoire du clergé pendant la révolution française* (History of the Clergy during the French Revolution). He dedicated the book to the people of England, an unusual tribute from a Catholic priest. A much larger work was Barruel's *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire des Jacobins* (Memoirs toward a History of the Jacobins). The first two volumes of this work appeared in 1797, and the last two in 1798. All four were quickly translated into English. As presented by Abbé Barruel, the French Revolution was an attack primarily on all of Christianity and only secondarily on the Catholic establishment. More strained was his argument that the revolution was the result of a conspiracy, and not from absolutism and the faults of the *ancien régime* and the Catholic establishment. Irreligious members of the Societies of the Illuminati, so Barruel claimed, had plotted the revolution, and in their conspiracy were joined by Freemasons and by the atheists who had frequented Baron d'Holbach's salon.<sup>41</sup>

People in Britain who had not the time to read Barruel's lengthy indictment soon had an easier presentation of the thesis that an Enlightenment conspiracy lay behind the French Revolution. In 1797, at almost the same time that the first two volumes of Barruel's *Memoirs* appeared, an English book was published with a sensational title. This was John Robison's *Proofs of a Conspiracy Against All the Religions and Governments of Europe Carried on in the Secret Meetings of Free Masons, Illuminati, and the Reading Societies*.<sup>42</sup> Robison, who invented the siren, was a professor of physics and mathematics at the University of Edinburgh.

He was also a firm supporter of monarchy and an opponent of Britain's republicans.

## **Reaction in the United States to the French Revolution**

Although the French Revolution was viewed more positively in the United States than it was in Britain, it also had many detractors here. Robison's book, along with Barruel's four volumes (the first American edition of the English translation appeared in 1799), helped to persuade many Protestant clerics that the French Revolution was the result of an international conspiracy by foes of Christianity. As a result, in America and especially among Federalist clergymen in New England "there was now raised 'the warwhoop of the pulpit' against the French Revolution as a deliberate attack upon the Church and the creeds."<sup>43</sup> Freemasons were occasionally identified as the conspirators, but most often the charge was made against the Societies of Illuminati. Timothy Dwight, who took over as president of Yale College in 1795 and soon was known as "the Pope of Connecticut," frequently attacked the Illuminati, but the most zealous of the clergymen denouncing them was the Reverend Jedidiah Morse, a Congregationalist minister in Charlestown, Massachusetts.

In the U.S. presidential election of 1796 the Federalist John Adams ran against the Democratic-Republican Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson was in sympathy with the French Revolution, favored a weak federal government, and leaned toward the French republic in its desultory war with Britain as a member of the "first coalition." Adams, to the contrary, leaned toward Britain, was greatly opposed to the French Revolution, and favored a strong federal government. Adams narrowly won the election, thereby becoming president, and Jefferson - as the Constitution then stipulated (the Twelfth Amendment had not yet been enacted) - became vice-president. A Unitarian Congregationalist, Adams was the first president to proclaim a national fast day (George Washington had seen no need for such a call).<sup>44</sup> In Puritan New England it was traditional to observe a day of fasting in one of the spring months: a day on which to hear "Jeremiads" from Puritan preachers, who would encourage their listeners toward individual salvation and toward a collective realization of New England's spiritual destiny. In addition to his Puritan roots, President Adams had other reasons for making his proclamation: after his election relations between the French republic and the United States had worsened and by 1798 were on the verge of war,<sup>45</sup> and in New England especially many people were fearful, after reading Robison's and Barruel's warnings, of an international anti-Christian conspiracy. As Jedidiah Morse expressed it, on the near horizon was a "torrent of irreligion which threatens to overwhelm the world."

On March 23 of 1798, with Alexander Hamilton's urging that a day of prayer and fasting would be religiously proper and politically expedient, President Adams appointed Wednesday, May 9 of 1798, as a day of "solemn humiliation, fasting, and prayer" and he recommended that on that day all citizens "acknowledge before God the manifold sins and transgressions with which we are justly charged as individuals and as a nation."<sup>46</sup> On the appointed day Jedidiah Morse delivered to his congregation a stern warning that unless Americans were vigilant the godlessness of the French Revolution would spread to the United States and undermine the republic. Implicit was a warning that only the Federalists could prevent such a disaster, while the Democratic-Republican party - headed by Thomas Jefferson - would hasten it. In 1799 President Adams proclaimed April 25 as a second day of national fasting, prayer, and confession

of sins. Americans should on that day, Adams exhorted,

call to mind our numerous offenses against the Most High God, confess them before Him with the sincerest penitence, implore His pardoning mercy, through the Great Mediator and Redeemer, for our past transgressions, and pray that through the grace of His Holy Spirit we may be disposed and enabled to yield a more suitable obedience to His righteous requisitions in time to come.<sup>47</sup>

Jedidiah Morse used the occasion to be more specific about the conspiracy that had already ruined France and that threatened the United States and the world. On April 25, 1799, Morse devoted his entire sermon (subsequently published) to the supposed conspiracy. The sermon, based largely on Robison's book, was aimed at the Illuminati and other secret societies:

It has long been suspected that secret societies, under the influence and direction of France, holding principles subversive of our religion and government, existed somewhere in this country. This suspicion was cautiously suggested from this desk on the day of the last national fast... I have now in my possession complete and indubitable proof that such societies do exist, and have for many years existed in the United States. I have, my brethren, an official, authenticated list of the names, ages, places of nativity, professions, etc., of the officers and members of a Society of Illuminati, constituted of one hundred members instituted in Virginia by the Grand Orient of France.... There is evidence of the existence of a society of like nature and probably of more ancient date at New York, out of which have sprung fourteen others."<sup>48</sup>

The goal of the conspiracy, according to Morse, was to spread unbelief, immorality and impiety: "the destruction of the clergy in all countries is evidently a part of the French system." Morse calculated that in the United States were some 1,700 Illuminati, all bound together by oath.

That the national fast days were politically expedient is doubtful. Except in New England they were widely ignored.<sup>49</sup> In the 1800 presidential elections Jefferson and Burr won handily over Adams and Pinckney, the Federalists carrying New England and New Jersey while the Democratic-Republicans carried the rest of the country. After the congressional elections in 1802, more than eighty per cent of congressmen were Democratic-Republicans. In the 1804 elections, Jefferson received 72% of the popular vote, and the Federalist Pinckney only 28%.

## **Napoleon and religion**

The French Revolution can be said to have ended with the coup d'état of 18 Brumaire, Year VIII (November 9, 1799), when Napoleon Bonaparte and two collaborators seized political power and a very new chapter of European history began. Napoleon, who had been the most successful general under the Directorate, moderated the revolutionary program but continued much of it, embodying in his Napoleonic code the ideals of the liberty and equality of all men. His conquests extended these revolutionary ideas through Europe. Freedom of the press and of speech was curtailed, but freedom of religion was expanded: Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish subjects were all free to practice their religion openly. Napoleon was not himself a religious man, and in that sense was a typical product of the Enlightenment. He was quite certain,

however, that religion was conducive to public order and morality and he therefore saw no value in the revolutionaries' project to de-Christianize France, or to promote deism or a Cult of Reason. Under Napoleon education was not meant to stifle religion, although the secularism of education did undermine those Christian doctrines that went counter to science and history. Napoleonic France was a secular state, but because of its complex relationship to Catholicism it did not separate church and state as could the United States of America.

After the revolutionaries' "war on the Catholic church" that Pope Pius VI had decried, Napoleon sought a *modus vivendi* with the papacy and the Catholic church. Opportunity came with his domination of Italy.<sup>50</sup> On June 14, 1800, at Marengo (thirty miles south of Turin), the French defeated the army of Francis II, Holy Roman Emperor and ruler of Austria. The Battle of Marengo both solidified Napoleon's position as "First Consul of the French Republic," and made Napoleon the *de facto* ruler of northern Italy. He organized a state that he called the *Repubblica Italiana*, reaching from the Alps to Rimini, and assumed its presidency. The pope, in contrast, was very weak. Pope Pius VI had died in 1799. His successor, Pius VII (1800-1823), had been chosen in large part by the Austrians, and when the Battle of Marengo was fought he had been pope for only three months. He had hoped, of course, that the Austrians would defeat the French at Marengo. The French victory there allowed Napoleon more or less to dictate to the pope what sort of relationship the Catholic church was to have with the French republic.

This was formulated in the Concordat of 1801. The Concordat recognized Catholicism as the traditional religion of France, but did not give it the exclusive status that it had enjoyed until 1789. Catholicism would be "freely exercised," but so would other religions. All Catholic bishops were to be nominated by the First Consul (that is, by Napoleon), and their appointments were formally to be made by the pope. After swearing obedience and fidelity to the French republic and its First Consul a bishop-elect was to be consecrated in the traditional sacrament. A priest could serve a parish only if he had been approved by the government. Property that had been alienated from the Catholic church would remain alienated and the pope would not disturb those who had acquired it. Catholic bishops and priests, like the Calvinist and Lutheran clergy, were to receive their salaries from the state.

In important ways the Concordat spelled the end of the campaign to de-Christianize France. Catholic churches could no longer be appropriated for use by Theophilanthropists or any other cult. Napoleon's law of 18 Germinal, Year X (April 8, 1802) went still further, banning the cults of the Supreme Being and of Reason. The Concordat also restored the week, and Sunday as the day of rest, to the French revolutionary calendar. On January 1 of 1806, by which time Napoleon ruled most of Europe, the rest of the revolutionary calendar was given up, with a return to the traditional month-names and to the *in anno domini* era.

In 1804 Napoleon summoned Pope Pius VII to Paris, and had Pius crown him as Emperor of the French. On March 17 of 1805 Napoleon added another title: King of Italy. This Kingdom of Italy replaced the Italian Republic, of which Napoleon had been president. Early in 1806, having defeated the Austrians and Russians at Austerlitz, Napoleon abolished the Holy Roman Empire, which had endured as a German and Catholic institution for almost a thousand years. In 1808 Napoleon invaded Italy once more, this time annexing the Papal States to his Kingdom of Italy. In this kingdom, Napoleon made Giovanni Bovara his *Ministero per il culto*.

Bovara had mostly to deal with clerical benefices and patronage, the clergy now being paid by the state and being therefore state employees.

Yet another aspect of Napoleon's relationship with Catholicism was his abolition of the Holy Roman Empire. His victory at Austerlitz, on December 2, 1805, over the armies of Francis II, Holy Roman Emperor, and of Tsar Alexander I of Russia, gave Napoleon control of central Europe. The Peace of Pressburg, signed later that month, allowed Francis to keep his title, Emperor of Austria, which he had assumed in 1804, but Napoleon instructed him to give up his title of Roman Emperor. On August 6, 1806, Francis abdicated that title, and the Holy Roman Empire - which had lasted for almost a thousand years - ceased to exist. As a German organization it was replaced by the Confederation of the Rhine, which existed at the pleasure and under the protection of Napoleon. At its largest the confederation comprised forty-two states and principalities, ranging from independent cities to small kingdoms. Although the Holy Roman Empire, the *Imperium Romanum Sacrum*, was not a religious institution, its long history and its "Roman" pretensions made it a traditional partner of the Catholic church. Its abolition was yet another indication of how secular Europe had become over the course of only fifteen years.

Indirectly, Napoleon's influence also loosened the Catholic hold on Latin America. In the Peninsular War (1807-1814) Napoleon's armies severely weakened Spain, and encouraged revolt in Spain's vast empire in the Americas. When Simon Bolivar succeeded in liberating much of Latin America from Spain, he looked to both the United States and Napoleonic France for guidance in constructing Gran Colombia. Bolivar himself was probably a deist (he was certainly a Freemason) rather than an atheist, but in any case his revolution disestablished Catholicism, and the Catholic church did not appear in the constitution he wrote for his new republic. As Bolivar saw it, religion is entirely a matter of individual conscience and the state should not support or prefer one religion over another.

## **Judaism and Judaeans in the French Revolution and under Napoleon**

Consequential as the French Revolution was for Christians all over Europe, it was far more so for Judaeans. This may be somewhat surprising, because the Jewish population of *ancien régime* France was very small. Of the 28,000,000 people who lived in France at the outbreak of the revolution only about 40,000 - one seventh of one per cent - were Jewish. Most of them were Yiddish-speaking Ashkenazi, living in scores of small communities in Alsace. A somewhat smaller number of Ladino-speaking Sephardi were found in southwestern France, and especially in Bayonne and Bordeaux, two cities much involved in Atlantic trade. The Jewish population of Paris was scarcely more than a few hundred.<sup>51</sup>

Some restrictions on Judaeans had been lifted already in the *ancien régime* (in 1785, for example, Louis XVI permitted Judaeans to live in all of France's forty provinces), but radical change came with the French Revolution. From the start the revolutionaries' emphasis on the liberty and equality of all men promised an end to the many restrictions within which the Jewish minorities had lived for centuries. The Declaration of the Rights of Man made no specific mention of Judaeans, but its general character and especially its first, fourth and tenth articles implied that in France Jewish and Christian men would henceforth have the same rights.

Leaders of the tiny Jewish community in Paris were quick to seize the opportunity. In late August of 1789 they submitted to the National Constituent Assembly a statement proclaiming their patriotism and requesting full citizenship. They had no desire, they said, to be subject to their own laws and their own officials, forming a sort of state-within-a-state, or nation-within-a-nation. They hoped, instead, to be fully French citizens, while remaining free to worship as they chose.<sup>52</sup> In the National Constituent Assembly several delegates, and especially l'Abbé Henri Grégoire, advocated vigorously for Jewish emancipation. Delegates from Alsace were against the proposal and the matter was postponed. Two years later, in September of 1791, the assembly - as one of its last acts before dissolving itself - decreed that Judaeans had full citizen rights.<sup>53</sup>

The 1791 decree was momentous. In retrospect we may say that it marked the end of the medieval and the beginning of the modern period of Judaism. In Alsace, the Jewish leader Cerf Berr urged Jewish parents to teach their children French instead of Yiddish, and to send them to French schools for a French education. The effects of the decree have been summarized by Paula Hyman:

The French Revolution transformed the status of the Jews in modern France, even as it shaped so much of what we understand as modern political culture. For the first time in Europe Jews were granted equal citizenship. Their position as members of autonomous communities governed by their own leadership according to Jewish law and subject to discriminatory taxation and restrictive legislation gave way to individual citizenship with all the rights and obligations attached to that status. From a community of minor importance in both size and cultural achievement among the larger Jewish populations of central and eastern Europe the forty thousand Jews of France were thrust into the forefront of modern Jewish history. They were the first to confront the opportunities and challenges offered by emancipation, the first to grapple with the problem of reconciling a modicum of Jewish particularity with the proclaimed universalism of citizenship in a modern state.<sup>54</sup>

This de jure equality, however, was offset by de facto opposition, and Christians in Alsace attacked many Jewish homes and businesses. In 1793 Judaism itself came under attack from a different direction. During the Reign of Terror, as first the Cult of Reason and then the Cult of the Supreme Being were being promoted as the religion of all France, synagogues were subjected to the same pillaging and vandalism as were the churches. Jewish men who retained their beards and sidelocks, and their traditional dress, were denounced and some of the beards were forcibly shaved. The mobs were mirroring attitudes in the National Convention: the few atheist and the many deist delegates in the National Convention regarded Judaism as no less ridiculous than Christianity, and almost all delegates saw Judaism as outmoded and as an impediment to the revolution.

Both the opportunities and the challenges of full citizenship for Judaeans were accentuated during Napoleon's rule. Well before he became the First Consul of the Republic Napoleon had followed an unusually liberal policy toward Judaeans and Judaism. In 1796, when serving as a young general for the Directory, his troops took the city of Ancona, on Italy's Adriatic coast south of Rimini. It was there that Napoleon first saw a ghetto, and it disgusted

him. He ordered his men to remove the gates, permitting the Judaeans to live wherever in Ancona they wished. The yellow bonnet or armband that Judaeans had been required to wear were, on Napoleon's orders, discarded (some Judaeans replaced them with the French tricolor). Much more spectacular than the capture of Ancona was Napoleon's taking of Venice, on May 12 of 1797. The ghetto in Venice was large, and news that Napoleon had opened it spread throughout Jewish communities in Europe. While on his way to Egypt in 1798 General Napoleon stopped at the island of Malta. The Knights of Malta had for more than two hundred years forbidden the island's Jewish minority to worship in a synagogue. Napoleon installed a revolutionary government on the island, and permitted the Judaeans to build a synagogue. During his Egyptian expedition Napoleon conceived the idea of taking Palestine from the Ottoman empire and making it a Jewish protectorate of the French republic, but he abandoned the idea when Horatio Nelson and the British defeated the French fleet in the Battle of the Nile.

As First Consul of the republic, and then as "Emperor of the French," Napoleon continued his liberal policies, hoping to assimilate Judaeans to the French nation. He believed, however, that over the centuries "the Jews" had acquired bad habits and characteristics, and that in order to achieve assimilation he would have to reform "the Jews." According to Albert Lindemann, Napoleon "was widely regarded by Jews in western and central Europe as their liberator and protector. He nonetheless continued to think of them as a peculiarly troublesome national group with a number of tenacious vices that would require special legislation to remedy."<sup>55</sup> To that end Napoleon in 1806 summoned to Paris more than a hundred Jewish "notables," and set before them a list of very precise questions. Were Jews permitted to marry Gentiles? Why did Jews not wish to associate with Gentiles? What rates of interest did Jewish moneylenders charge on their loans to Gentiles and to Jews? Why did the Jews avoid certain kinds of work? Did the Jews agree with the ideal of civil and human equality? Not much time was spent on that last question and a basic stumbling-block, according to Lindemann, was not addressed. "The more obvious question does not seem to have been posed explicitly: Could *halakha*, traditional Jewish law, and Enlightened-secular political principles be reconciled without doing violence to the essence of that law?"<sup>56</sup>

The Jewish notables whom Napoleon had gathered were eager to assure him that the Jews were appreciative of their full citizenship, were no less patriotic than Christians, deplored usury, and had no objections to dealing with Gentiles or even - under the right circumstances - to marrying them. On these and other matters the notables, having themselves been selected by government officials, hardly represented the views of the average rabbi or even the average Judaeans in France. As a result of the convocation Napoleon set up a Sanhedrin, named after the ancient council in Jerusalem, and a system of regional consistories to serve as an intermediary between the empire and its Jewish citizens. Like Catholic priests and Protestant pastors, Jewish rabbis were defined as state employees, their salaries paid by the state from a special Jewish tax. And, like the Christian clerics, the rabbis were clearly subordinate to the state.

Napoleon's project of Jewish assimilation had limited success. He continued to deplore Jewish usury and on March 17 of 1808 he issued what Judaeans regarded as his "Infamous Decree." It placed firm limits on Jewish commerce and especially Jewish moneylending for ten years. Napoleon expressed the hope that this would cure the Jewish propensity to amass fortunes and that after ten years there would be no difference, as he stated it, "between the Jews

and the other citizens of our empire.”<sup>57</sup>

Another measure meant to quicken the pace of assimilation was Napoleon’s order, on July 20 of 1808, that all adult Jewish citizens in his empire select legal surnames for themselves. This had already been required, as we have seen in Chapter 35, in some German-speaking lands, and Napoleon recognized its value. Although Judaeans continued to be identified by their patronymics within their synagogues, Napoleon made surnames mandatory for all civic or commercial activity. A Judaeans without a surname had no legal standing as a citizen and could be deported from the empire.<sup>58</sup>

Although the “Frenchifying” changes made during the French Revolution and under Napoleon were hailed by the small Jewish minority in Paris, they were not so well received by the more numerous Judaeans of Alsace, many of whom preferred to be *Juifs*, or *Juden*, and nothing else. Further east, the assimilation of Judaeans in France was regarded as a dereliction. As summarized by Lindemann,

The situation in eastern Europe in the nineteenth century was distinctly different. The *Ostjuden*, or eastern Jews, most of whom lived in areas under the control of the recently much-expanded Russian Empire, still typically lived in premodern conditions. And from the point of view of most ordinary Jews in eastern Europe - not just the rabbis - modern ideas originating in western Europe were a snare of the Evil One.<sup>59</sup>

Here most Judaeans insisted on remaining a separate people and had no desire also to become Russians, Bulgarians, or “Poles.” While the *haskalah* was stirring Judaism in western and central Europe various Hasidic dynasties or “traditions” were proliferating in Ukraine and elsewhere in Polish-Lithuanian territory. After the second partition of Poland in 1793, as described in Chapter 32, Catherine the Great of Russia established the “Pale of Settlement” within which all of her new Jewish subjects were confined.

During the incipient stages of nationalism in western Europe progressive Judaeans there were chronically embarrassed about the Judaeans of eastern Europe. As nationalism increasingly replaced religion in western Europe, however, it also became more virulent, infected by racist ideology and the belief in common descent from original “Aryan” stock. In such an environment Judaeans found it difficult and eventually impossible to identify themselves with the supposed French, German, or other European nations.

## **Religion in nineteenth-century America**

Populated as it was by immigrants, the United States of America was largely immune to the seductions of nationalism. Here religion continued to reign. Despite the great popularity of Thomas Jefferson’s presidency (1801-09), the United States was not headed toward deism, or even toward Unitarian Christianity, as Jefferson thought it was. Throughout the eighteenth century average Americans had been considerably more religious than their British or European counterparts, and in the nineteenth century were even more so. Nor did men in government wish to change that. After seeing the savagery of the French Revolution, Alexander Hamilton came to the conclusion that Christianity was necessary for public order.<sup>60</sup> Overtly anti-Christian

or anti-religious teachings seemed harmful to the republic, and the deism that Ethan Allen, Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Paine had frankly expressed in the 1770s and 1780s was by 1800 no longer commendable. Among skeptics there was a tacit assumption that although much of religion was untrue, it was best not to say so. As president, Jefferson made no attempt to promote his peculiar form of deism, being adamant about maintaining the wall of separation between church and state, or between religion and government. The traditional Christian denominations continued in their traditional locales along the east coast.

On the frontiers, citizens gravitated increasingly toward Methodism and toward “revivals.” In August of 1801 between 20,000 and 30,000 people traveled for several days on foot, on rafts, and on horseback in order to gather for the “Western Great Revival” that Barton Stone had organized at Cane Ridge, Kentucky. The vitality of the religious imagination in the United States was even more on display in the late 1820s, when Joseph Smith launched Mormonism. The Book of Mormon was published in 1830, and by 1847 tens of thousands of Mormon pioneers accompanied Brigham Young to the Utah territory. When Alexis de Tocqueville visited the United States in 1831, he concluded that “there is no country in the whole world in which the Christian religion retains a greater influence over the souls of men than in America.” He was especially surprised to find that in America liberty and Christianity were compatible:

Upon my arrival in the United States, the religious aspect of the country was the first thing that struck my attention; and the longer I stayed there, the more did I perceive the great political consequences resulting from this state of things, to which I was unaccustomed. In France I had almost always seen the spirit of religion and the spirit of freedom pursuing courses diametrically opposed to each other; but in America I found that they were intimately united, and that they reigned in common over the same country.<sup>61</sup>

In America, as in Britain and much of Europe, freethinking and deism had reached their zenith in the 1770s and 1780s. By the mid 1790s, where reaction against the French Revolution had begun the enthusiasm for deism and freethought was waning. Until the 1820s, however, freethinkers in American cities continued to hold private meetings.<sup>62</sup> Freemasonry also continued to flourish in the early decades of the nineteenth century, but eventually came under attack. Late in the 1820s the Anti-Masonic Party was organized in western New York, and for a time survived as a serious third party in American politics. Its organizers were motivated mostly by suspicions about the reach and intentions of the Masons, but the suspicions were heightened by the fact that Freemasonry was deist rather than Christian.

In the meantime, the United States welcomed an influx of Shakers, Amish, Mennonites, and other sects that faced opposition or ridicule in Europe. Once in America these sects tended to separate themselves from wider society, forming small communities of their own on the frontier. The religious diversity - more than a hundred Christian denominations, most of which were Protestant - reinforced the separation of church and state. Catholic immigration did not begin in earnest until 1845. Before the potato blight in Ireland (it first appeared in fall of 1845, and continued for the next five years) scarcely three per cent of Americans were Catholic. By 1900 approximately fifteen per cent of U.S. citizens were Catholic. Jewish immigrants were

few until the 1850s and did not become numerous until the 1880s, when pogroms in Russia resulted in more than a million Judaeans fleeing for safety to the United States.

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1. On this topic see Patricia Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion, Society, and Politics in Colonial America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). This is a second and updated edition of a 1986 publication.

2. Bonomi 2003, p. 3.

3. For an excellent overview of religious establishment in colonial America, with an eye toward today's decisions in the Supreme Court concerning the establishment clause in the First Amendment, see Michael McConnell, "Establishment and Disestablishment at the Founding, Part I: Establishment of Religion," *William and Mary Law Review* 44 (2003), pp. 2105-2208. Witte 2000, pp. 20-22, also discusses the tension between religious establishment and religious freedom in the colonies.

4. See Bonomi 2003, p. 33: "In only two places in seventeenth-century America - Rhode Island and the Quaker colonies on the Delaware - did a religious freedom fixed in principle take root."

5. Bonomi 2003, pp. 34-35.

6. In 1776 the three counties on the western shore of the Delaware bay, which from time to time were claimed by Maryland and Pennsylvania, declared themselves independent of Britain and created the State of Delaware.

7. Bonomi 2003, p. 36.

8. Bonomi 2003, p. 33.

9. On the ups and downs of freethinking in America see Susan Jacoby, *Freethinkers: A History of American Secularism* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2004). At pp. 13-34 ("Revolutionary Secularism") she reviews the extent of freethinking and secularism in America in the 1770s and 1780s.

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10. For a biography of Charles Carroll and a discussion of Catholic contributions to the American Revolution see Scott McDermott, *Charles Carroll of Carrollton: Faithful Revolutionary* (New York: Scepter, 2002).

11. The first Anglican bishop in the U.S.A. was Samuel Seabury, whom Anglican clergy elected in 1783 to be the first Bishop of the Anglican Communion in the United States of America (he was consecrated by bishops in Scotland, who overlooked his refusal to take the oath of loyalty to King George III). In 1789 John Carroll was installed as the first American bishop in the Catholic church, his diocese being Baltimore. He was elected by the Catholic clergy in Maryland and was consecrated after the pope approved the election.

12. On this subject I have made good use of Susan Ford Wiltshire's, *Greece, Rome, and the Bill of Rights* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992), pp. 89 ff. I am also indebted to Professor Paul Conkin for personal communications.

13. Witte 2000, pp. 1-2, quoting from a book that Stiles published in 1783.

14. Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *The Ancien Régime: A History of France 1610-1744* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996. Translated from the original French edition of 1991 by Mark Greengrass), pp. 192-93.

15. *Culottes* were knee-breeches, worn by aristocrats and other men who were not part of the working class. The term *sans-culottes* therefore had some of the connotations of our "blue-collar workers."

16. Judaeans had been expelled from the kingdom of France in 1394, but in the fifteenth century thousands of Judaeans were annexed along with the cities of Bordeaux and Bayonne. In 1648, when Louis XIV took control of Alsace and Lorraine in the Peace of Westphalia, thousands more were suddenly made subjects of the French king. Until 1789 an assortment of laws had restricted and controlled the kingdom's Jewish population.

17. William Sloane, *The French Revolution and Religious Reform* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1901), pp. 94-95.

18. Sloane 1901, pp. 103-04.

19. A substitute motion was passed, stating that the assembly did not consider itself capable of legislating control of men's consciences and religious beliefs.

20. Mita Choudhury, *Convents and Nuns in Eighteenth-Century French Politics and Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), shows how virulent was the attack, by men and women of letters, on convents in the 1770s and 1780s. Although Choudhury notes also the antipathy toward monks and monasteries she finds that especially obnoxious to the *gens de lettres* was the *vocation forcée*, which writers of the period described as a kind of slavery. On this see Choudhury 2004, pp. 98 ff. Once the revolution was under way some revolutionaries cried that the convents were more in need of being liberated than had been the Bastille.

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21. *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* (1754).

22. See Hobsbawm 1990, p. 20: “what characterized the nation-people as seen from below was precisely that it represented the common interest against particular interests, the common good against privilege.” On p. 21, however, Hobsbawm observes that the solidarity of the commoners was weakened by heterogeneity, and as a result a common language - French - was promoted by the revolution: “There is little doubt that for most Jacobins a Frenchman who did not speak French was suspect, and that in practice the ethno-linguistic criterion of nationality was often accepted.” So Bertrand Barère in reporting to the Committee of Public Safety warned that the Alsatians, who spoke the same language as the Prussians, were traitors who did not consider themselves brothers of the Frenchmen.

23. In October of 1790 a mob had more or less forcibly brought Louis and Marie Antoinette back to Paris from Metz, on the Moselle river, suspecting that the royal couple was planning to flee France and mobilize a counter-revolution. After that humiliation, King Louis XVI was essentially under the power of the assembly.

24. Louis was tried for various crimes, and was executed in January of 1793. Marie Antoinette went to the guillotine in October of 1793, a few hours after a show trial (the Committee of Public Safety had already decided that she must die).

25. The guillotine, first used in 1792, was named after Dr. Joseph-Ignace Guillotin, a member of the committee that recommended it. The committee proposed it as a more humane way of executing condemned criminals than the previous methods. There would be no more burning at the stake, or breaking on the wheel. Because it was used so often, however, the guillotine became a symbol of the revolution and of the *terreur*.

26. An excellent study of nationalism is Eric Hobsbawm's *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). On nationalism as religion there is a long line of books and articles. Most recently, see Emilio Gentile, *Politics as Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006 [Translated from the Italian original by George Staunton]).

27. “La libre communication des pensées et des opinions est un des droits les plus précieux de l'Homme: tout Citoyen peut donc parler, écrire, imprimer librement, sauf à répondre de l'abus de cette liberté, dans les cas déterminés par la Loi.”

28. See Cushing 1914, pp. 97-99.

29. See Lyttle 1933, p. 24: “Indeed, the only professed atheist prominent in Paris at this period was Salaville; and far from being pleased with the cult and fête of Reason, he protested against the whole affair.” Salaville was Jean-Baptiste Salaville (1755-1832), author of *De l'homme et des animaux*. In Year VII Salaville published *L'Homme et la société*. Here he argued that mens' morality was a necessary consequence of their living in society, and that a republic was the optimum society for that morality to express itself. Virtue was a civic quality.

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30. Lyttle 1933, p. 29.

31. Lyttle 1933, p. 32: “Chemin had rejoiced in the promulgation of the cult of the Supreme Being, although he had repudiated the ferocious and intolerant policies of Robespierre. To serve the cult he had published in 1794 an anthology of Deist prose and poetry from the great philosophers of ancient and modern times, as well as an *Alphabet Républicain*, a sort of catechism in which Deism and republicanism were represented as being affinities in principle and in purpose, i.e., the promotion of a highminded domestic and civic virtue.”

32. In 1797 John Walker’s English translation of the manual was published: *Manual of the Theophilanthropes, or Adorers of God and Friends of Men, Arranged by Certain Citizens and Adopted by the Theophilanthropic Societies Established in Paris*. Chemin-Dupontès is not named as the author of the French original.

33. Lyttle 1933, p. 22, regretted that Theophilanthropism is most often derided along with the Cult of Reason, the Cult of the Supreme Being, and the decadal calendar: “Following the precedent of the Abbé Grégoire, whose great *History of the Sects of the Revolution* appeared in 1814, these four phenomena have been classed together, with the obvious implication that all were tarred with the same stick, the ingredients of the tar being infidel fatuity and political chicanery.” Henri Grégoire (1750-1831) was in many ways an admirable man. As a first-hand witness of the revolution and a participant in the decisions of the National Constituent Assembly, he had a detailed recollection of the revolutionary sects. As a devout Catholic, however, he was stoutly opposed to deism. Much subsequent historiography, rather than commending the failed attempts to create a reasonable religion, has sympathized with faith, mystery and revelation.

34. Iain McCalman, “Ultra-Radicalism and Convivial Debating-Clubs in London, 1795-1838,” *English Historical Review* 102 (1987), pp. 309-333.

35. Leighton 2000, p. 129, generalizes that by the 18<sup>th</sup> century “the struggle against the papal Antichrist had become a particularly English duty.”

36. Hexter 1936, p. 287.

37. Hexter 1936, pp. 300-01.

38. From the Catholic Relief Act of 1793, passed by the Anglo-Irish (almost entirely Anglican) parliament of Ireland.

39. Hexter 1936, pp. 300-01.

40. Leighton 2000, pp. 131-32.

41. Barruel’s influence in shaping 19<sup>th</sup>-century thought on the causes of the French Revolution has been discussed by Alan Kors, “The Myth of the Coterie Holbachique,” *French Historical Studies* 9 (1976), pp. 573-95. See above, endnote 9 of Chapter 35.

42. The original was published at Edinburgh in 1797. The American edition was printed at

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Philadelphia in 1798. See Riley 1918, p. 253, note 21.

43. Riley 1918, p. 251.

44. According to Dickson 1987, pp. 188-89, Adams' days of national fasting were unpopular, and "helped make Adams a one-term president."

45. The refusal of the United States to repay its debts to France (on the grounds that the debts were owed to the French monarchy, which no longer existed), and the XYZ affair in 1798, led to French naval ships attacking or seizing American merchant ships.

46. Dickson 1987, p. 188.

47. Dickson 1987, p. 188.

48. Riley 1918, pp. 256-57.

49. According to Dickson 1987, p. 195, Federalist clergy "found the fast days wonderful opportunities to denigrate France and its Jeffersonian sympathizers; for the opposition, the fast days provided a fit occasion to rally against the Federalists." Certainly the fast days did not unify the country, as Adams had hoped. The Jeffersonians who objected to the fast days were described by Jedidiah Morse as "lost to every principle of religion, morality, and even to common decency."

50. Napoleon had initially won fame by bringing an end to the War against the First Coalition (1792-1798), in large part by taking Venice on 12 May 1797, and then extending French control in northern Italy. The Treaty of Campo Formio in October of 1797 ended the war. Campo Formio, now Compofornido, is some fifty miles to the northeast of Venice.

51. On the population and its distribution see Paula Hyman, *The Jews of Modern France* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), p. 1.

52. See Hyman 1998, p. 26: In their petition "the Jews of Paris disavowed and delegitimated the communal autonomy that had characterized European Jewry from the Middle Ages and proclaimed its inappropriateness for the future." Hyman observes that the disavowal of self-government was a small sacrifice, since the few Judaeans in Paris - unlike the many in Alsace - "had never enjoyed the privilege of communal autonomy."

53. Hyman 1998, pp. 25 and 30.

54. Hyman 1998, pp. 17-18.

55. Albert S. Lindemann, *Esau's Tears: Modern Anti-Semitism and the Rise of the Jews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 48.

56. Lindemann 1997, p. 49. On the convocation see also Hyman 1998, pp. 41-43.

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57. Hyman 1998, p. 46.

58. See Hyman 1998, p. 47: “To stimulate their integration into the French milieu, Jews were forbidden to select names drawn from the Hebrew Bible or the names of towns. The penalty for violating the provisions of the decree was expulsion.”

59. Lindemann 1997, p. 51.

60. Devout in his youth, in his maturity Hamilton was a nominal but non-practicing Episcopalian and was sympathetic to deism. But after the Reign of Terror, according to Ron Chernow, *Alexander Hamilton* (New York: Penguin, 2004), p. 659, Hamilton began to look upon religion as a bulwark against mob rule.

61. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York: A. S. Barnes, 1851), p. 337.

62. Riley 1918, p. 283, generalized that the 1820s marked “the beginning of the end of free-thinking societies in America.”