THE AMERICAN RESPONSE TO THE FRENCH REVOLUTION 1789 - 1801

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ABSTRACT

THE AMERICAN RESPONSE TO THE
FRENCH REVOLUTION 1789-1801

By

Richard J. Moss

This work is a psychological interpretation of the American response to the French Revolution. The response Americans made to events in Europe between 1789 and 1801 offers the historian a unique chance to investigate what Americans thought and felt about the American Revolution and revolution in general. In the past historians have seen the French revolt as having only political impact in the United States. Such a view neglects the important psychological changes the French Revolution produced in America.

At first, Americans overwhelmingly approved of the French revolt. Until 1793 there were only isolated but important murmurs of uneasiness about the news from France. In many cities there were large and riotous celebrations to mark French political and military triumphs. Americans, generally, believed that the French were following in American footsteps and throwing off the chains of tyranny.

After 1793 an increased number of critical voices were heard. Essentially, they simply expanded on the themes that had characterized the earlier expressions of disapproval. Events, however, gave the post-1793 criticism added urgency. The Reign of Terror in France and the belief that French revolutionary principles were infiltrating America caused great anxiety and forced the turn against the French. Psychologically, the revolutionary age, including the American Revolution, caused Americans to seek order and stability. Guilt about America's role in the revolutionary era was a major cause of the anxiety that led Americans to desire more security and order. To many it seemed as if all authority and absolute moral law were being banished from the world. The execution of Louis XVI, the visit of Citizen Genet, the growth of the democratic-republican clubs, the Whiskey Rebellion and the violent public opposition to the Jay Treaty and the Neutrality Proclamation all helped to creat a psychological predisposition toward order and stability. These events illustrated to many Americans that the revolutionary attack on authority of all kinds had left the nation without a strong center of authority and in reaction they sought to regain such authority.

This psychological predispositon was also largely responsible for the passionate anti-French activities in the last half of the 1790's. These activities took many forms. First, there was widespread growth of conspiracy theories to explain the French Revolution. Led by some prominent New England clergy, many Americans believed that the French Revolution was caused by a secret organization called the Bavarian Illuminati. Feelings of anxiety and fear also caused a rise in xenophobia and a related desire to repress domestic critics of the government. More generally, Americans sought ways to restore order and coherence to their lives. There was a marked return to more traditional forms of religious belief after years of growing liberality and innovation during the revolutionary period. Also, George Washington, and more importantly, the Presidency, emerged as a basic source of stability and authority in American life.

Thus, by the time Jefferson took office in 1801 America had, in large part, escaped the furor and chaos of a revolutionary existence. When revolution continued to challenge fundamental religious, social and political beliefs and the pressure of freedom became too great. A majority of Americans sought escape. In escaping they significantly altered the course of the new nation.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

> The French Revolution was the first revolution whose motive force was a determination to reconstruct life upon rational principles after all that reason perceived to be the weeds of human society had been ruthlessly plucked up and cast into the flames.
>
> Karl Jaspers, Man in the Modern Age (1951)

The relationship between America and Europe has been and still remains a complex maze of diplomatic, economic, intellectual and psychological connections. Perhaps the complexity of the relationship partially explains why historians have traditionally neglected the continuing role of the Old World in the development of the New. The American past has been largely portrayed as free from the influence of events in Europe. More often the historian has placed the emphasis on indigeneous factors such as the frontier or the rise of democracy which are seen as special and unique to American experience and foreign events of great magnitude are acknowledged only in footnotes and brief references.

The French Revolution stands as an example of a European event that changed the course of American history. During the Federalist period the news from Europe forced Americans of all political persuasions to readjust their thinking about revolution, authority, freedom and the individuals role in society. The adjustment was rooted in a complex psychological reaction to the broad-based attack on authority that many Americans eventually perceived the French Revolution to be. With the memory of their own revolt still fresh in their minds, Americans after briefly approving the French Revolt became anxious that the tide of revolution would sweep all authority and stability away and that life would degenerate into chaos and anarchy. In response to this feeling many Americans, during the 1790's, sought ways to restore order and cohesion to an infant nation born in an act of rebellion. To a great extent, the effort to restore a sense of order was carried on by what have traditionally been called conservatives but the need for stability was general and the message of this vocal conservative element had a powerful impact in many areas of society and was crucial in the first anxious years of the new republic.

In order properly to understand the impact of France's Revolution on America one must have some

picture of what America was like when the news of revolution began arriving from Europe. The Federalist era was a tense and crucial time in American history, the memory of their own revolt against England was still fresh and the meaning of that revolt was the subject of much debate. The debate over the meaning of the American Revolution that took place late in the 1780's and into the 1790's is a large topic that might be confined to four crucial areas--the conflict over the Constitution, religious change, the developing attitude toward Europe and the growth of propaganda and the amount of information available to the average citizen. The debate over these issues reveals, that Americans were deeply anxious about the meaning of their revolution and about the nature of revolution generally.

Anxiety was clearly present in much of what was said regarding the new Constitution. As the 1780's drew to a close many people felt that the Articles of Confederation were simply inadequate to govern the new nation. Beneath the feeling was a sense that the revolution had created a spirit hostile to order and efficient government. Benjamin Rush, an active participant in the revolution, by 1787 believed "the temple of tyranny has two doors" and in opposing monarchy "we bolted one of them by proper restraints;

but left the other open, by neglecting to guard against the effects of our own ignorance and licentiousness"[1] Rush, physician and pioneer psychologist saw the passion for liberty as a form of insanity:

> The termination of the war by the peace of 1783, did not terminate the American Revolution. The minds of the citizens of the United States were wholly unprepared for their new situation. The excess of the passion for liberty, inflamed by the sucessful issue of the war, produced in many people, opinions and conduct which could not be removed by reason nor restrainted by government. For awhile, they threatened to render abortive the goodness of heaven to the United States, in delivering them from the evils of slavery and war. The extensive influence which these opinions had upon the understanding, passions and morals of many of the citizens of the United States constituted a species of insanity, which I shall take the liberty of distinguishing by the name of Anarchia.[2]

Not everyone saw the problem in such scientific terms, but it was common among the proponents of the Constitution to see the new government it promised as a check on disorder and the excessive passion for liberty.[3] As Gordon Wood has shown, the Federalists and the Anti-Federalists debated the issue on grounds that were essentially social. The Federalists saw the passion for liberty they feared manifesting itself

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[1]Benjamin Rush, Selected Writings of Benjamin Rush, ed. by Dagobert D. Runes, (New York: Philosophical Library, 1947), p. 126.

[2]Ibid., Oct. 1, 1788, pp. 332-333.

[3]Gordon Wood, Creation of the American Republic (New York: W. W. Norton, 1969), p. 476.

in the form of "new men" coming to power in the states. The Anti-Federalists justified the infusion of new blood with a radical challenge to the fundamental Federalist belief in a hierarchical society and elite rule. They contended that society was no longer a homogeneous unit for which an elite could speak. Society had changed from a organic hierachy of ranks and degrees eternally linked to each other to a heterogenous mixture of many classes in which only a member of a certain class could speak for the wants and interests of that class. Faced with a fundamental thrust at their basic beliefs the Federalists, at first, refused to debate the Constitution on its social merits and implications. In the end they vigorously sought to defend the elitism at the center of their conception of politics and constitutional system. Wood concluded that all the Federalist hopes for a strong self-reliant nation and a healthy economy "in short, all of what the Federalists wanted out of the new central government seemed in the final analysis dependent upon the prerequsite maintenance of aristocratic politics".[4]

The fundamental debate over the Constitution was one of the most bitter in American history but

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[4] Ibid., pp. 490-93.

perhaps nearly as bitter was the conflict over religious matters. By the end of the Revolution religious orthrodoxy in America was in retreat. Indeed it had been under challenge since the early seventeenth century when the Puritans arrived to create their city of saints in the wilderness, only to find the freedom of the wilderness a stronger force than the pull of salvation. The revolution gave impetus to this gradual process by bringing the American soldiers into contact with the multitude of vistors from Europe at the time.[5] Perhaps the extent of this religious change was seen most clearly at Yale. During the early years of the 18th century Yale, under President Thomas Clap, had been a stern bulwark against infidelity. After Ezra Stiles replaced Clap the college began to change. The influence of European Enlightenment thinkers made a profound impression on the Yale students who debated whether religion had been a benefit to man and took for themselves nicknames such as Voltaire and Rousseau.[6]

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[5]G. Adolf Koch, Republican Religion: The American Revolution and the Cult of Reason (New York: Henry Holt, 1973), p. 23.

[6]Richard J. Purcell, Connecticut in Transition: 1775-1818 (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan U. Press, 1963), pp. 19-20.

The growing religious liberalism did not go unopposed however. Late in the 1780's and continuing through the 1790's the defenders of religious orthrodoxy launched a counter-offensive. In 1790, a Connecticut minister looked back fondly to 1740 as a time of religious purity and harmony. He claimed that "in those days . . . but few infants were not baptized, no families were prayerless, profane swearing was but little known and open violations of the Sabbath not practiced as is common now". He also noted that in 1740, "there were no Deists among us . . ." and after leveling a blast at the "neglect of family, religion, unrightousness, intemperance, imbibing of modern errors and heresies and the crying prevalance of infidelity against the clearest light" he concluded that his day was "peculiar for man's throwing off the fear of the Lord".[7] Such reactions are common in periods when religious opinions are changing and usually serve to moderate the gradual transformation of religious thought. In the last two decades of the eighteenth century such anxiety over religious matters has a special meaning. In the context of rapid political change, religious radicalism can create the feeling that all authority is being washed away and

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[7]Quoted in Ibid., p. 13.

leads to a desire to reestablish the old beliefs or in some way institute religious restraints on the social and political transformation of the time. Anyone reading the documents from the late eighteenth century encounters, incessantly, the idea that republicanism must be rooted in sound morals and the populace committed to a restraining religion.[8]

While the new nation was attempting to find its political bearings (in the Constitution) and its religious orientations, it was confronted with another problem. Since the founding the New World's position in relation to Europe had been at best problematical, after the Revolution the problem took on even greater complexity with the need to establish an identity in a world of growing nation-states. No single view of the relationship between New and Old Worlds had developed by the end of the eighteenth century; in the nearly two-hundred years of colonial existence, the colonies' attitude toward Europe was "troubled with a baffling mixture of defiant independence, righteous good will and humble piety".[9] This odd mixture carried over into the post-revolutionary years and created a tension

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[8]Bernard Bailyn, Ideological Orgins of the American Revolution (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1967), pp. 315-20.

[9]Cushing Strout, The American Image of the Old World (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), p. 16.

between a positive and negative view of Europe. On the positive side, Europe was seen as the fountain of culture and taste. Jefferson, who in other areas harbored no great love for Europe, saw the Old World as the source of true learning and culture. Upon returning from Europe in 1789 Jefferson carried fifty cases of luggage and over eighty packing cases of books and furniture he had acquired in Paris. In addition, his love of classical architecture and his attempts to hire European professors for the University of Virginia are further evidence of his submission to Europe as the arbiter of taste and learning.[10] Jefferson was not alone in this reliance on European culture; for even today Americans still turn to Europe as one of the main sources of high culture and art.

On the negative side the issue was not so clear cut. The motivations that drove men to the New World were, no doubt, complex. The evidence, however, is overwhelming that many, if not most people, abandoned Europe for America with the sense of leaving a corrupt decaying civilization for a bright promising new chance. Of course the Puritans were the most noted example of such a frame of mind. They came to the wilderness to create a society of purer principles

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[10] Ibid., p. 29.

and they saw their small communities as beacon lights of rightousness in contrast to the discord and immorality of the Europe they had escaped. The sense of this contrast between Europe and America survived in a more general way after the religious motivation was muted and the contrast became a central tenet in the American mind. What developed was the idea of historical mission; an historical mission to be the society where true freedom and rightousness existed. The sense of mission was compounded of three national goals: non-involvement with Europe and its politics and wars; the expansion of republican institutions in the new world; and the creation of an on-going example of freedom to enslaved people everywhere (including, of course, Europe). These national purposes contained within them three ideas of Europe which drew heavily on the Puritan contrast between Old World and New. Americans had come to see Europe as an alien stranger (isolation from European wars and politics), a threatening enemy in the path of American expansion, and as a potential pupil to whom Americans might teach the lessons they had learned in the colonial and revolutionary years.[11]

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[11] Ibid., p. 18.

So from the beginning Europe has lurked as the dark antithesis to a purer, more virtuous America. The Revolution gave great impetus to the contrast and in the years between 1783 and 1789 the Americans were eager to condemn Europe as a lost cause. For instance Timothy Dwight in his poem "Greenfield Hill" advised Americans

> Look not to Europe, for examples just
> Of order, manners, customes, doctrines, laws
> Of happiness, or virtue. Cast around
> The eyes of searching reason and declare
> What Europe offers, but a patchwork sway;
> The garment Gothic, worked to frittered shreds,
> And eked from every loom of following times.
> Such is his sway, the system shows entire
> Of silly pomp, and meaness train'd t'adore;
> Of wealth enormous, and enormous want
> Of lazy sinecures, and suffering toil;
> Of grey-beard systems, meteorous dreams;
> Of lordly churchs and dissention fierce
> Rites farcial, and phrenzied unbelief.[12]

What Dwight said in poetic flights Noah Webster said straight forwardly when he wrote "Europe is grown old with folly, corruption and tyranny - in that country laws are perverted, manners are licentious, literature is declining and human nature debased".[13]

Implied in Webster's and Dwight's criticism was a firm belief in isolation from the rotten civilization they perceived in Europe. There was another

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[12]Timothy Dwight, Greenfield Hill: A Poem (New York: 1794), p. 18.

[13]Emily E. F. Ford, Notes on the Life of Noah Webster, Vol. I (New York: Private printing, 1912), p. 61.

side, however, because many people perceived Europe as a potential student of America. As early as 1765 John Adams had written that "the settlement of America was part of a grand scheme and design in Providence for the illumination and emancipation of the slavish part of mankind all over the world"[14] After the Revolution such sentiments took on new meaning, America could now go to the world and especially Europe with concrete evidence of its superiority and teach the methods they had used.

The Americans view of Europe discussed to this point has contained no special reference to France. At the deepest level Americans generalized Europe into one amorphous mass. At the same time, however, there were definite opinions about individual countries. While the view of Europe was composed of different conflicting elements the same was true of the perception of France. The French had long been hated in America, first as a powerful Catholic nation all too close to their Protestant haven in the New World and later as the enemy of England in the eighteenth century wars which drew the colonists in on

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[14]John Adams, Works of John Adams, Vol. III, ed. by Charles F. Adams (Boston: 1850-56), p. 452.

the side of the mother country. In opposition to the long standing hostility was the aid offered to the rebels by Louis XVI during the Revolution and formalized in the French Alliance of 1778. While such aid engendered a warm regard for France in many Americans the alliance was seen by many as a "bitter necessity"[15] which ran counter to their strong desire to remain free of attachments to European powers. In a more generalized way France was warmly regarded in the 1780's and 1790's as the traditional enemy of England against whom the colonies had just fought a bitter war. In any case with France, as with Europe, American opinion was divided and new events would determine the position of Europe and France in the scale of American opinion. The French Revolution would be a major event in turning Americans away from France and the problems of Europe in general.

Thus far in this brief portrait of the new nation in the late 1780's one can see deep divisions over the Constitution, religious opinions and a confusing view of Europe in relation to America. The growing complexity and confusion of attitude and belief was deepened and promoted by steady growth

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[15]Dexter Perkins, A History of the Monroe Doctrine (Boston: Little, Brown, 1963), p. 6.

in the availability of information. Of course, this means newspapers to a large extent but there was also a spurt in the publication of books, pamphlets and orations and an exceptional increase in the production of material of all kinds that was openly ideological, agressive and, at times, scandalous.[16] In the years between 1783 and 1801 Americans saw the birth of 450 newspapers, but many of these papers enjoyed only a brief life span.[17] Along with the growth of newspapers came the emergence of newspaper editors as public figures.[18] These editors helped set the tone of hostility and the bitter feelings which characterized the Federalist period. Men such as Philip Freneau, the editor of the National Gazette, made American political journalism a battlefield characterized by violent rhetoric and verbal abuse.[19] There were many others, such as Ben Franklin's grandson Benjamin Bache, editor of the Aurora, who tangled with several

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[16]This emotionalism of the 1790's is made clear in Marshall Smelser, "The Federalist Era as an Age of Passion", American Quarterly, vol. X (1958).

[17]Frank Luther Mott, American Journalism: A History of Newspapers in the United States Through 250 Years. 1690-1940. (New York: MacMillan, 1941), p. 113. In 1801 there were 202 newspapers.

[18]Ibid., p. 114.

[19]Ibid., p. 124.

of the other partisan editors. Bache and John Fenno, editor of the Federalist, Gazette of the United States, fought in public to what appears to have been a draw. Bache also carried on a feud with another conservative editor, William Cobbett (better known as Peter Porcupine) who went so far as to slander the memory of Bache's grandfather. Cobbett called Franklin a "lecherous old hypocrite" and wrote that "the statue of Franklin in Philadelphia seems to gloat on the wenchs as they walk the State House yard".[20]

Along with the growth of violent political journalism came an increase in the output of books and pamphlets of a highly opinionated and critical kind. The debate over the Constitution produced a large crop of such works but as that issue died out others took its place and the battles fought in print continued. The best example of this situation was the conflict between Paine and Burke over the French Revolution. Americans debated the virtues of Paine and Burke and their only sources were the books since neither man set foot in America in the 1790's. Perhaps the largest producers of pamphlets were clergymen reacting not only to religious issues but a broad

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[20]Quoted in Ibid., p. 130.

range of topics. It was not uncommon for a sermon or oration to strike the public fancy and end up in print.

The period 1789 to 1800 produced a great deal of literature on a multitude of topics. To a large extent the newspapers and fiery literature were a product of the highly charged revolutionary years which had also produced its quota of partisan rhetoric. There is, however, a deeper meaning to the growth of printed material in this period. Obviously, American society during Federalist period had no real center or concensus and the newspapers and books were violent testimony to the fact that Americans were desparately searching for stability, both political and intellectual. In 1800 a Connecticut paper put the issue this way:

> Here various news we tell of love and strife,
> Of peace and war, health, sickness, death and life,
> Of loss and gain of famine and of store,
> Of storms at sea, and travels on the shore.
> Of prodigies, and portents seen in the air,
> Of fires, and plaques, and stars with blazing hair,
> Of times of fortune, changes in the state,
> The fall of fav'rites, projects of the great
> Of old missmanagements, taxations new
> All neither wholly false, nor wholly true.[21]

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[21] New London (Conn.) Bee, March 26, 1800, quoted in Donald H. Stewart, The Opposition Press of the Federalist Period (Albany, N.Y.: State U. Press of New York, 1969), p. 14.

The above may seem to be a bit of newspaper space-filler but it reveals alot about the 1790's, especially the last line which the writer chose to underline. It indicates a fundamental problem of the age, a growing belief that truth, final and absolute, was a thing of the past and only opinion and "prodigies and portents seen in the air" remained.

Such was the situation in 1789 when the news of the French Revolution arrived in America. The new government had just taken office but the bitterness of the debate over the Constitution still lingered and all parties anxiously watched to see how Washington and his administration would function. In addition, there were religious anxieties as the new religious point of view boldly confronted the established Protestant orthrodoxy and both sides saw the other as a fundamental threat to America's well-being. The question of the relation to Europe in the post-revolutionary era was another vexing problem. Europe seemed to offer so much in the areas of trade and culture but this attraction was in conflict with a profound and long standing sense of Europe as a corrupt civilization from which so many Americans had fled. Thus in 1789 many people in the United States came to see the new nation in terms of their historical mission and this view included instructing the Old World in

the nature of true freedom while maintaining a strict separation from their intended pupil. Promoting the discussion of these questions was the rapid growth of information available to the people. Newspapers, books and pamphlets produced sudden outbreaks of rhetoric all appealing to the public for their vote or support in issues. So by 1789 it seems that the meaning of the American Revolution was still in doubt. The Constitution had by no means settled the political implications of the revolution nor had the religious conflict been settled, while at the same time, America's role in the world and the question of the average citizen's right to information were still being debated.

Taken together these four problems are, in reality, part of a larger problem. In sum they symbolized the question which confronted the United States in the twenty years after the revolution: to what extent human freedom should be allowed to increase? This question was really the central issue in the debate over the Constitution, in religion, and in the press. Americans were seeking the limits of political freedom in the case of the Constitution; the limits of religious and philosophical freedom in the conflict over religion and the limits of a free press in the bitter journalism of the time. At first glance the

uncertainity over Europe may seem not to be a question of expanding freedom. However, at the heart of the dilemma over America's relation to Europe was the question of the applicability of the American experience with freedom to the Old World context. For people like John Adams, only in the unique setting of America could freedom be safely extended and expanded, while for others the American success, especially in the revolution, should, and must be, extended to Europe and all parts of the world.

The American response to the French Revolution was based on the question of the nature of human freedom. The French Revolution acted as a test case for many Americans: a test case to answer the question, how far should human freedom be expanded? In the first years of the French revolt Americans were overwhelmingly in favor of what was happening in France. To them it seemed as if their fears about the spread of their revolutionary ideas to foreign-shores were unfounded and that other countries could enjoy the blessing of liberty which America had secured. The mood of enthusiastic approval was the dominant mood from 1789 until 1793 when criticism began to grow. It would be a mistake, however, to see American opinion during these three years as completely approving the events in France. Amid the

loud chorus of praise for French revolutionaries there can be found important but somewhat isolated criticism which in time would come to serve as the basis for the negative reaction which characterized the years after 1793. From 1793 until 1800 the American view of events in France grew increasingly negative, but again, it would be a mistake to see this reaction as entirely dominant. Even during the bitterly anti-French years of 1798-9 there was a small but persistant group of people who defended the revolution in the face of overwhelming opposition. In this pattern of approval changing into condemnation the theme of expanding freedom was central for as the revolution in France passed into its more violent and innovative stage Americans could see before their eyes (or in their newspapers) their worst fears coming true.

So it is the theme of expanding freedom and the resulting contraction to a more limited view of liberty which must serve as the basic framework for understanding the American reaction to the French Revolution. In the early years of the revolution in France the exhileration in America was widespread and vocal. Americans were reacting to what was in their minds a startling event. It was welcome, however, because it bolstered the pride of Americans in their own revolutionary accomplishments and in their sense

that their revolution was having an impact all over the world. Also, the early French successes seemed to enhance the chances of America pushing her revolution to a successful conclusion. Finally, it appealed to the American anti-European bias. To many Americans Europe meant priests, kings, Catholicism and England. The French Revolution seemed to be directed against all those things, especially England after the French and English went to war in January of 1793. The anti-English motivation should not be underestimated, Anglo-American relations were not cordial and thus the coming of a revolutionary France in Europe to battle reactionary England was greeted as a blessing. The French Revolution was also welcome because it provided Americans with ammunition to use against what they saw as a growing anti-revolutionary sentiment. Thus, for many reasons Americans welcomed the news of revolution in France, however, all these reasons came under one general heading - Americans were thrilled by new evidence that freedom and liberty were growing and prospering not only in the United States but in France as well.

After 1792 however, more and more voices were heard critical of the revolt and critical of Americans who supported it. The reaction was dominated by a set of themes heard again and again. The

disapproval of the French Revolution was rooted, first of all, in a fear of the religious innovations purposed in the more radical stages of the revolution. This criticism of religious changes later in the revolution was embarassing to clergymen and others who had approved of the anti-Catholic tone of the early years but could not accept the religion of reason and the generally anti-religious nature of what they read was happening in France during the Reign of Terror. The idea of equality ran counter to the basic desire of some in America to establish a firm government in the wake of the revolutionary period. Third, the negative opinion of the events in France resulted from what Americans saw as a fundamental attack by the French Revolutionaries on sacred social institutions such as marriage and the family. Continually, without specific references, Americans pointed with horror to so-called French legislation and other actions which, to their minds, seemed to destroy marriage and the family and in turn legalize prostitution and separate children from their parents. Fourth, racial fear was to some extent important in turning Americans against the revolution. The bloody uprisings in Santo Domingo early in the revolutionary years struck fear in the hearts of many Americans "burdened" with responsibility for the care

of slaves of their own. It was common in the South to connect the massacres in Santo Domingo with the French revolutionary doctrines which seemed to be in the air everywhere. Lastly, many Americans saw the French Revolution as the direct outgrowth of unbridled factions and the resultant lack of political and social cohesion. This idea was an extremely common weapon in the anti-revolutionary arsenal. They pointed to the excesses of the French Revolution and declared them the work of ambitious and often secret factions. The lesson to be learned, they continued, was that harmony and patience were virtues, a lesson they felt many Americans needed to learn.

Thus far the discussion has concerned only the response or opinion Americans made to the events in France. While this is an important question it leaves another question unanswered. It is logical to ask, at this point, exactly what did Americans do,[22] if anything, in reaction to the events in France. The answer to this question is complex since it is often impossible to separate the motivations for any action. During the 1790's there was a great deal of discussion of fundamental issues, there was

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[22]In this case the word "do" should be understood to include not only overt actions but internal psychological and intellectural reactions over and above simple opinion.

perhaps, more discussion of basic questions than American history has witnessed since. Many Americans felt that they were charged with the duty of setting the basic forms in which the nation would operate.[23] The French experimentation served America as a case study in various methods of organizing a nation. As the French attempted an experiment in political structure, religion or social organization the Americans would also instantly relate its merit or lack of merit to the American situation. When a French innovation seemed to produce unwanted results such as violence or inefficiency Americans immediately began seeking ways of avoiding that innovation and the unwanted results. The situation was further complicated by what can be called secondary reactions. For example, when one group in America saw the French Revolution in a totally negative way the proponents of the revolution would react in a variety of ways to counter this anti-revolutionary sentiment.

In order to make some sense of this confusing matrix of reaction and counter-reaction it is best

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[23]A number of works on the Federalist Period make this point, among them are, John C. Miller, The Federalist Era: 1789-1801 (New York: Harpers, 1960), pp. 3-5, William Nisbet Chambers, Political Parties in a New Nation (New York: Oxford U. Press, 1963), pp. 9-10.

to keep in mind the watershed year of 1793. Up to that time most Americans had found little to critize in the French Revolution. After that time however one begins to see the pattern of conflict emerging. On both sides of the issue individuals began to make similar reactions, some responding to events in France, some to related events in America. When it became apparent to the proponents of the French Revolution that there was a significant opposition to the revolution they made several important responses. Among them was the growth of a conspiracy theory which held that in America there was a group of men who advocated monarchy and, in general, a blunting of the revolutionary spirit in America, France and the world. Those who believed in this theory had some basis in fact for their belief. There were men such as Noah Webster who had confessed that he would "infinitely prefer a limited monarchy . . . to the ignorance and passions of the multitude".[24] Also, to many, the new government seemed to be gradually introducing monarchical tendencies in the form of excessive pomp and the use of kingly titles. Even with this evidence, those who saw a conspiracy to introduce monarchy went far beyond reasoned debate in promoting their theory.

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[24] Connecticut Courant, Nov. 20, 1786.

The suspicion and distrust evidenced in the growth of the conspiracy theory was also central in the development of the democratic-societies. Obviously, the forces that led to the birth of these infant political organizations were many and complex. The French Revolution, however, was vitally important in their founding, growth and policy. For example, the visit of Edmund Genêt, the first minister from revolutionary France, served as an impetus to the societies though they were founded before his arrival. Also, a reading of the platforms and charters of these groups shows an intense interest in French affairs and in the opposition to the French Revolution in America.

When the opposition to the French Revolution became clear those who favored the Revolution turned to propaganda and education in order to fight the criticism coming from these conservative circles. To the twentieth-century mind inured to the constant outpouring of propaganda and education geared to ideological and social ends such a response would seem normal. In the late eighteenth century, however, there had not yet developed either a firm basis for opposition to government or a philosophy of education in the new republic. So when the proponents of the French Revolution protested in response to the Neutrality

Proclamation or the Jay Treaty they were treading a new and highly controversial path. When they called for education in republican principles and education for equality they were running counter to the common belief that education served to train an individual to occupy his natural station in life.

Thus those who favored the French Revolution made three basic responses. They developed and promoted the theory, which had roots prior to 1780, that there was a conspiracy to promote monarchy in the United States. They developed the democratic societies as a new form of political awareness and organization. Last, they turned to propaganda and education as a means of promoting both their pro-French sentiments and countering what they saw as an anti-French and anti-revolutionary movement.

Quite frankly, the reaction of the anti-French group was to me more interesting and significant. They also developed a conspiracy theory but it was more fantastic and widespread. In order to explain events which seemed to run counter to so much they held dear the conservatives created a variety of conspiracies to explain the historical process that swirled about them. Certainly the most significant of these was the widely held theory first put forth by the Englishman John Robison, that the French

Revolution was only part of a plot against virtue and truth by a secret sect connected to the Masonic Order called the Bavarian Illuminati. It might be easy to shrug this theory off as the temporary delusion of the New England ministers who promoted it if it were not for the variety of people who believed it. Clearly Abigail Adams accepted it as fact, and in a letter to Reverend G. W. Snyder, George Washington indicated he believed the Illuminati were not only behind the events in France but that their doctrines had spread to the United States.[25] In addition to the Illuminati conspiracy, conservatives came to see dangerous plots nearly everywhere. For example, they created a short lived but loud scare over some documents found hidden in a tub in Charleston, South Carolina. There were several other instances of individuals finding conspiratorial design in the most innocent event.

The conservatives also developed a higher political awareness in response to the French Revolution and the efforts of its supporters in America. They launched an attack on the whole idea of factional

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[25]John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. XXXVI, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1941), pp. 518-519.

politics and sought to establish the idea that opposition to government was unhealthy, unpatriotic and even sinful. Figures in the Federalist administrations and supporters of them outside government pointed to the factions in France and the excesses they caused and claimed that the United States could expect similar excesses if factions were allowed to exist in the new political system. For awhile the Federalists were willing simply to talk against faction such as in Washington's Address to Congress in November 1794 where he condemned the "self-created societies" as a danger to the republic. Late in the 1790's, however, they came to feel that stronger measures were needed to fight the danger of faction and open criticism of the government. So, in great measure, in reaction to the French Revolution and its influence in America the Congress passed the Alien and Sedition Laws in hopes of silencing criticism and inhibiting the influence of foreigners who too often sided with the critics of government.

These acts were motivated largely by fear and it was also fear that drove the conservatives to the use of propaganda and education to fight what they saw as the evil influences of the French Revolution. As indicated earlier they were not alone: the pro-French sympathizers had also become convinced

of the importance of swaying opinion and educating the young. To a great extent the battle took place in the primitive newspapers of the day, but, especially in the case of the Federalists, the sermon and oration were also utilized. Of special interest was the role of the New England ministers who, found the French Revolution to be a fundamental threat to their beliefs. The literature produced by these men provides an important insight into the workings of the conservative reaction to a revolutionary age. Most significantly, these ministers used their sermons to spread their conspiracy theories concerning the French Revolution. If the New England divines really believed these theories is an almost impossible question to answer but there is no doubt that it was propaganda designed to turn their audiences away from an attachment to the revolution.

Obviously, the reaction of the anti-revolution forces was markedly similar to the pro-revolution group. They both developed higher political awareness, conspiracy theories and turned to propaganda and education to promote their point of view. The conservatives, however, reacted in one way that the pro-French faction failed to do. For many in America at the time, the French Revolution symbolized the flux and discontinuity that had characterized the

revolutionary years in America. By the 1790's, there developed an obvious desire for stability which many conservatives found in the figure of Washington. The process whereby Washington was made a demigod was complex both politically and psychologically. It of course went far beyond the reaction to the French Revolution, involving Washington's military record and the need for a stabilizing influence before the French rebellion began. Nevertheless, it is clear that the figure of Washington was evoked in an attempt to break the attachment many Americans had for the revolution in France.

The use of Washington as a hero-figure to create stability went beyond mere propaganda and leads to the heart of the reaction to the French Revolution. Clearly the period was one of high passions and anxieties and to some extent these passions and anxieties can be seen more clearly if we limit the discussion to the reaction to the French Revolution. It must be noted, however, that people were passionate and anxious over more than just the news from France. As indicated earlier, when the French Revolution began the Americans were confronted with a number of profound questions on fundamental issues. The reaction to the French Revolution was, to a great extent, a product of the

concern over those issues. The course of the revolution in France added to their anxiety, however, and created a situation where the historian can see clearly the manifestations of anxiety arising from great historical changes.

In the most general sense the anxiety was rooted in the expansion of human freedom which was evident to everyone in the 1790's. Of course the process of expansion was gradual but the last twenty-five years of the eighteenth centruy seemed to many individuals a time when every restraint on man was called into question. Around the world many people were straining at the bands of political, social and religious authority. By the 1790's, however, the cost of the long war against authority was, in the United States at least, becoming apparent. Freed from the restraints of feudal, pre-individualistic society, which gave man a feeling of security as they limited him, man discovered that while the external political and social restraints had been broken there were also internal restraints on freedom. Independence and freedom had produced isolation, anxiety and a sense of powerlessness. Confronted with these feelings man may either escape from the new freedom he has acquired into new or old forms of dependence and submission or he may seek to take full advantage of the opportunities

freedom offers.[26] In the 1790's Americans, more often than not, sought to establish new dependencies and, in general, escape from the challenge of individual freedom. While this reaction was rooted in a general reaction to the times, the response to the French Revolution allows one to examine it in a limited context. Also, the French Revolution was seen as the key symbol of expanding freedom thus making the reaction to it significant.

In the attempt to flee from freedom and independence man utilized several methods. One of the most important was a tendency toward authoritarianism. As the pressure of freedom became too much to bear one of the responses was "to fuse one's self with somebody or something outside of oneself in order to acquire the strength which the individual self is lacking."[27] Very often this process will include the development of secondary bonds to replace the primary bonds which have been broken. During the Federalist Era men were rapidly establishing such secondary

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[26]Eric Fromm, Escape from Freedom (New York: Avon Books, 1965), p. VIII. Much of the following discussion owes its besic outlines to Fromm's insights about the nature of freedom.

[27]Ibid., p. 163.

bonds in an attempt to allay their worry over the lack of cohesion in their society. The near deification of Washington was an attempt to create a stable bond between people and leader in the wake of continued revolt against authority. The Americans had rebelled against their king, the French had beheaded theirs, to many people it seemed as if there would never be stable rule again. Against such a background the figure of Washington was a welcome substitute for a king, and people gave their trust and independence to him.

Beyond the figure of Washington there were several developments which show this submerging of the self into a larger and more powerful unit. The growth of political parties during this period was aided by the sense of isolation and powerlessness among the people. As a member of a party, a person could gain a sense of effectiveness and direction in a new confusing political system, but more important party membership allowed one to give over his burdensome freedom to a larger unit and let the party take care of it. People also sought reassurance in the traditions of their section of the country. Sectionalism was evident in New England where, in the face of innovation, many turned to the New England traditions as a source of stability. To some extent, the sense of nation and

national pride also served as a larger unit in which people submerged their new freedom. Of course, the rise of American nationalism had causes which go beyond the anxieties of the age but it is clear that in the 1790's the nation gave many people a sense of belonging and power that they badly needed. The sentiment "my country right or wrong" is partially an easy way of avoiding freedom and allowing vital decisions to be made by some larger group. In all the varieties of escape from freedom by acquiescence to authority the individual surrenders his newly emancipated self and loses intergrity and freedom but gains "a new security and a new pride in the participation in the power in which one submerges".[28]

A second form of escape from freedom quite different from authoritarianism was an inclination toward destructiveness and violence. At the root of this tendency was the anxiety produced in the free individual by the massive forces of the outside world. Without a sense of unity and power the individual seeks to wreck that which threatens him, and during the 1790's there were numerous examples of such violence. The newspapers of the decade were filled with violent and

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[28] Ibid., p. 177.

destructive rhetoric much of which was aimed at crippling or destroying opposing views on social and political questions. Late in the nineties the destructive and violent mood peaked with the war frenzy against France. While the XYZ Affair and French attacks on American commerce were important causes of anti-French feelings, clearly there was more to it than that. Americans feared France and her revolution as a threat to cherished assumptions and beliefs. This threat produced great anxiety and a desire to lash out at the object that was so threatening. France, thus was seen as a source of ethical corruption which had to be resisted in order to insure American righteousness. The passionate desire to seek a war with France may partially be seen in this light.

A third form of escape from the new freedom was the need for conformity and the desire to produce or enforce conformity. This method of escape often dealt with what seemed like trivial matters. In some cases, the mere wearing of a cockade could set off an incident. Some Americans showed great desire to attack any sign or symbol that indicated an attachment to an opposing position. Largely a very generalized reaction, it often indicated only the fear that some Americans were more attached to France or England than to their native land. Also, much of the thinking

during this period on education showed a strong desire to use the schoolhouse as a tool to produce conformity among the young. The French Revolution became the opposite of conformity, often it would be characterized as rampant innovation and then it would be compared with the security of adherance to traditional values and beliefs.

The root of these reactions was the growth of a profound anxiety about the way the world was changing. Too often anxiety is used as a completely negative term indicating needless irrational worry or dread. Anxiety may be actual worry over a real problem. In many ways the anxiety generated by the French Revolution was real; the Revolution did pose a serious threat to the American people. John Adams and his thoughtful concern about the Revolution was an example of such real anxiety. Anxiety may also be neurotic and the outcome of the desire to avoid even the remotest sign of danger. When anxiety is of this type the response is often uncontrolled and irrational.[29] The conspiracy theory of history and

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[29]This analysis of anxiety is common. See, "Anxiety and Politics" in Franz Neumann, The Democratic and the Authoritarian State: Essays in Political and Legal Theory (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1957), pp. 270-300. Cited hereafter as Neumann.

the three reactions of authoritariansim, destructiveness and conformity were largely products of neurotic anxiety over what the French Revolution represented.

At this point it might be in order to defend the emphasis on anxiety as a force in history. It seems that power, politics, economics or perceived progmatic necessity are presented as basic motivating historical forces without great hesitation. The use of human anxiety has no such clear sanction but many historical problems can be dealt with only by examining the effect anxiety had on historical actors. The conspiracy theories which have regularly appeared in American history are too often seen as "fun" history where Americans go a bit daffy for no particular reason and soon return to normal. These theories, on the contrary, may be the manifestation of profound anxiety rooted in a variety of historical circumstances.[30] In any event, the impact of anxiety ought to be a central concern of scholars since anxiety inhibits freedom and indeed it may make freedom impossible.[31]

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[30]In recent years this tendency to develop conspiracy theories has received some serious treatment. For example, the introduction in David Brion Davis, ed. The Fear of Conspiracy: Images of Un-American Subversion from the Revolution to the Present (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell U. Press, 1971).

[31]Neumann, p. 270.

One of the purposes of the chapters that follow is to investigate the role of anxiety in the American reaction to the French Revolution.

It seems worthwhile also to explain the extent to which this investigation seeks to find a Freudian pattern in the American reaction to revolution. It is tempting to see eighteenth-century revolution as a form of father-killing and to see the reaction to the revolutions as guilt over the deed. To a great extent the pattern is born out by the events and tenor of thought in the 1790's. It, however, would be a mistake to try to fit the facts into a rigid Freudian pattern. In the aftermath of so much direct attack on authority (the father) during the eighteenth century the sons did come to feel a sense of guilt or sin and this sense was important in shaping the reaction to the French Revolution. But, perhaps, one should follow Norman O. Brown's suggestion that

> Freud's myth of the rebellion of the sons against the father in the primal, prehistoric hords is not a historical explanation of origins, but a supra-historical archetype; externally recurrent; a myth; an old, old story.[32]

In the 1790's there was a recurrence of this "old, old story" and there is no need to connect the deeds of that time with the primal rebellion so central to the Freudian view.

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[32]Norman O. Brown, Love's Body (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), p. 3.

Regarded in this less rigid way, the Freudian emphasis on the rebellion of sons against fathers offers an insight into the pattern of revolution and counter-revolution. The destruction of the father was motivated by a desire to be free of his dominance but the act of toppling the father produced a sense of guilt and anxiety and a lack of cohesion among the sons. Their sense of common crime and the chaos of life without supreme authority produced a desire to seek surrogate forms of the missing father. Thus, Freud's historical insight was to see the interplay of freedom and restraint in the workings of society and history. Man's need for liberty has always co-existed with the need for dependence - each having its moment in history and always followed by the other. In the 1790's, many Americans found the vision of human freedom less than alluring and consequently sought, in many ways, restraints on their lives and the lives of others. The turn against the French Revolution (a symbol of freedom and chaos in their minds) was caused largely by the internal, often unconscious, psychological transformation.

The American reaction to the Great Revolution in France was a complex development of opinion and response. The upheaval in France came to the United States at a time when there was great uncertainity over

the final outcome of our own revolution. The political, social, religious and international implications of the American Revolution were still unsettled. In the years between 1789 and 1792 Americans generally hailed the French Revolution as an advance in human history; often Americans saw it as a continuation of their own revolution. After 1792 the general approval began to decline and turned gradually into widespread condemnation. Beyond the basic change of attitude the reaction to the news from France was complex and varied. Growth of the explanatory conspiracy theories and elevated political awareness was common to both pro and anti-revolution partisans. Both sides turned to propaganda and education in order to promote their positions. As the nation turned against the French Revolution after 1793 it was clear that anxiety about it played an important role. The anxiety was rooted in the prospect of expanding freedom and the breakdown of traditional religious, social and political restraints. In dealing with the anxiety Americans tended to seek ways of escaping the new freedom by giving over their independence to authority figures such as Washington or to larger units such as the nation or political parties. Growing anxiety also produced a desire to destroy the threatening new world - and France seemed

for a time the symbol of that new order. There was, in response to the anxiety, a growing desire to conform; to seek comfortable, traditional ways of thinking and living.

Clearly if the French Revolution had never happened much of the reaction would have occurred anyway. The American reaction the the events in France gives us a test case on which we can isolate our vision and come, in a small way, to understand the human reaction to profound changes in the world. The French Revolution of 1789, in obvious conjunction with other events, started a major reorientation in American thought. That reorientation is the subject of the chapters which follow.

CHAPTER II

THE FLAME IS PASSED

Boy! fill the generous goblet high;
Success to France shall be the toast:

Philip Freneau, "On the
Fourteenth of July" (1792)

In April 1789, the new government of the United States was assembling in New York City. There was a measure of uncertainty about how to address various members of the new system. John Adams was at a loss as to how the Congress should greet General Washington when he appeared to be sworn in as President. Should the Congress stand or sit when the President addressed them? While the Senate fussed over these questions the city of New York greeted the old General with roaring cannons and pealing bells. Dressed in a plain suit of blue and buff and accompanied by thirteen pilots in white, Washington arrived by barge at the Wall Street wharf. After a brisk walk on Wall, Pearl and Queen Streets he arrived at his new home on Cherry Street. The next day he appeared on the balcony of the Senate Chamber and was sworn in as the first President of the United States, while the cheers of

the people rang in his ears he entered and, with some awkwardness, spoke to the Congress. During all this the city was gaily decorated with flowers and wreaths hanging from the windows and giant paintings of Washington to mark his coming to the Presidency. To the people the old General had come to make the nation--to create a court and a government.[1] A few weeks later the Estates General of France would meet and begin the long process of taking their government apart and putting it back together again. Americans, ironically, cheered as loudly for the French as they had for George Washington.

From 1789 to 1793 Americans almost as a body expressed sympathy and approval for the amazing course of the French Revolution. A time of happy celebrations and toasts to the French, Americans somewhat smugly wished the French good luck as they began on the path America had so recently taken. Emotional poetry and foreign news drove the shipping schedules and domestic news out of the primitive newspapers of the day. The general approval was rooted in three main motivations. First, the Americans had immense pride in their own revolution and were quick to see

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[1]Claude Bowers, Jefferson and Hamilton: The Struggle for Democracy in America (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1925), p. 6-7. Cited hereafter as Bowers.

the French efforts as the extension and vindication of the revolutionary spirit they had felt in 1776. This led to the idea that revolution in the name of freedom was spreading around the world. Second, the Americans were quick to see that the existence of a revolutionary France could aid them in preserving and extending their revolutionary gains. Many Americans believed that no revolution was safe from counter-revolution and many believed the aid of the powerful French would help them preserve their revolution. Also, the example and ideology of the new revolution in Europe served as a useful tool against conservatives at home who wanted to temper the revolutionary spirit. Third, the French attack on aristocracy and Catholicism appealed directly to a deep bias in the American mind. The widespread approval of pre-1793 French reforms in religion and society were rooted in the predominately Protestant nature of the United States and nearly two hundred years of American life without the feudal, European distinctions of class. It must be noted that the dominant theme of these early years of approval was an emotionalism and freedom from anxiety rooted in the fact that until 1793 the news from France told of only mild innovations and heroic deeds that most Americans could accept. With the execution of Louis XVI, the violence of September 1793 and Genêt's

blunders in America, approval of the revolution became much more problematical.

Before these problems became apparent, Americans felt that there would be a short period of disorder but authority would soon be restored on a basis which allowed more individual freedom. Even before the Estates General met, Benjamin Franklin, perhaps the man most closely associated with Franco-American brotherhood, wrote,

> The Convulsions in France are attended with some disagreeable circumstances; but if by the Struggle she obtains and secures for the Nation its future Liberty, and a good Constitution, a few years Enjoyment of those Blessings will amply repair all the Damages their Acquistion may have occasioned.[2]

Franklin concluded with the hope that the spirit of revolution would spread to all the lands of the earth. Both in his disregard for the "disagreeable Circumstances" and his hope for the spread of revolution Franklin touched two basic themes of the American response to the news from France.

For awhile at least, few cared about the convulsions that always come with revolution, instead they emphasized the notion of freedom's spread to other

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[2]Benjamin Franklin to David Hartley, Dec. 4, 1789 quoted in, Adrienne Koch, ed., The American Enlightenment (New York: George Braziller, 1965), p. 107.

parts of the world. Theodore Dwight, who later turned against the French Revolution, stated that "the fire of freedom" had been caught from America and "flames with godlike ardour in the other parts of the earth" while "the forces of tyranny are consumed by its power, and the sinews of despotism shrink from before it."[3] Dwight made it clear that freedom was not only spreading to the civilized people of the world, but also to the most enslaved of all - the blacks. He said "the negroes of Africa, whose injuries exceed computation, conception or credulity, behold the day-star of liberty, rising on the gloomy, and desparate region of slavery."[4] Dwight's view was very common, he started an oration on the revolution in France and progressed easily from approving that revolt to forecasting the spread of freedom to all parts of the earth.

Even the conservative newspapers promoted the idea that freedom was making great advances from its inception in America. In the autumn of 1789, a writer in the Gazette of the United States felt that "liberty will have another feather in her cap. The

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[3]Theodore Dwight, An Oration Spoken before the Society of the Cinncinati, of the State of Connecticut, July 4, 1792. (Hartford: 1792), p. 17.

[4]Ibid., p. 16.

seraphic contagion was caught from Britain, - it crossed the Atlantic to North America - from whence the flame has been communicated to France."[5] Later, in the issue that reported in great detail the fall of the Bastille, a Gazette reporter contended that "Europe, from America has caught the sacred frame of freedom - it has illuminated their darkness."[6] It was the custom of the Gazette to print a summary of the year's major events and this summing up for 1789 was significant. It began with praise for the new central government in the United States, ("the dreams of anarchy are no more") but it also commented that "our enjoyments may justly be heightened with the reflection that our example has proven contagious to the Nations of Europe . . ." and that they, "under the favor of Providence are now on the high road to the glorious state of freedom and just government."[7]

The feeling that liberty's hour had come was clearly expressed in the pages of the Massachusetts Mercury. The following paragraph shows that they were not thinking of only a small advance for freedom, but rather a world-wide movement.

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[5]Gazette of the United States, Sept. 2, 1789.

[6]Ibid., Sept. 26, 1789.

[7]Ibid., Dec. 30, 1789.

> The flame of liberty, which is now pervading the European dominions will shortly spread itself into the remotest corners of the globe: The galling chain of the tyrant, and the iron rod of the despot, must vanish at its appearance: proud Castles and lofty places, with their lordly monarchs shall sink together in the general conflagation: Even the gally slave of Turkey, and the miserable wretch in the mines of Golconda, shall feel its powerful ray, and enjoy the rights of mankind.[8]

The poets responded with much the same sentiments using both newspapers and the spoken word as mediums. Poetry was a common feature of the early newspapers and, in general, played a larger role in the eighteenth century than in the largely poetryless twentieth century. The often anonymous newspaper poet found the French Revolution to be a popular subject. Such poems continued the theme of spreading liberty and revolution. For example, one poet wrote,

> Now freedom is the universal call
> The love of freedom, Heav'n inspires in all;
> From shore to shore aloud resounds her fame,
> And Afric's swarthy sons now bless her name:
> Bright, bright from Gaul her silver star ascends,
> And every patriot at her altar bends.[9]

Such poetry was not restricted to newspapers. The oration was an important aspect of American life and poetry was often a part of these speeches and

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[8] Massachusetts Mercury, Aug. 20, 1793.

[9] Dunlaps American Daily Advertiser, Jan. 3, 1793.

addresses. Noah Webster, during his 1790 "newsboy address" included this verse on revolution and freedom

> Fair LIBERTY, whose gentle sway
> First blest these shores has cross'd the sea,
> To visit Gallia, and inflame
> Her sons their ancient rights to claim.
> From realm to realm she still shall fly,
> As lightning shoots across the sky,
> And tyrants her empire over,
> And at her feet submit their crown.[10]

Towns commonly set aside a day to celebrate the French Revolution and often poetry was part of the festivities. At Plymouth, Massachusetts, Joseph Croswell presented his poem, "To Liberty", at a civic feast, January 23, 1793. The people of Plymouth heard him say,

> Hark from the Gallic shore,
> Hear the loud cannon roar
> Fame's trumpet sounds;
> Despotic armies fly,
> France gains the victory
> Freedom abounds.
>
> See the bright flame arise
> In yonder eastern skies
> Spreading in veins;
> Tis pure Democracy,
> Setting all nations free,
> Melting their chains.[11]

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[10] Quoted in Harry R. Warfel, Noah Webster: Schoolmaster to America (New York: MacMillan, 1936), p. 200-1.

[11] Joseph Croswell, "To Liberty" printed in Chandler Robbins, An Address Delivered at Plymouth on the 24th, Day of January, 1793, to the Inhabitants of that Town: Assembled to Celebrate the Victories of the French Republic Over Their Invaders (Boston: 1793), p. 25. Cited hereafter as Robbins. Croswell's poem was read as part of the celebration.

The poems from the newspapers, Webster and the Plymouth civic feast were occasional poetry of a very common type. Such poetry was written rapidly and served to mark special events. In comparison, more serious poets responded to the French Revolution with poems they hoped would have a more permanent place. Joel Barlow was, to a great extent, responding to the French Revolution when he wrote his Conspiracy of Kings. Barlow had spent more time in France and had seen more of the Revolution than any American and he never gave up his deep approval of it. He felt the French, by revolting against their role as "the tyrants sport,/ Machines in war and sycophants at court" had become men in the true sense and were "lords of themselves and leaders of mankind."[12] Even Royal Tyler, who by nature had no great love for revolution was happy to see that America's revolutionary spirit had spread to Europe.

> He [God] taught us to discern
> Blest Freedom's sacred plan;
> And Europe's kingdoms learn
> From us the rights of man

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[12]Joel Barlow, The Vision of Columbus, to which is Added the Conspiracy of Kings (Paris: 1793), p. 299. Cited hereafter as Conspiracy.

From us the rights of man
Your voices raise!
To him who broke
Oppressions yoke,
Be Endless praise.[13]

In reality, it was almost impossible to separate serious poetry from daily newspaper fare. Perhaps the best example of the blending of forms was the work of Philip Freneau. Freneau was one of the few serious poets of his time, but even his work was often first produced for newspapers. For instance, Freneau's first word on the French Revolution appeared in the Daily Advertiser of New York. In this poem, entitled "On the Prospect of a Revolution in France", Freneau also expressed the idea that the United States had provided the first spark that was growing into a world-wide conflagation of revolution against tyranny,

From the bright spark which first illumed these lands,
See Europe kindling, as the blaze expands,
Each gloomy tyrant, sworn to chain the mind,
Presumes no more to trample on mankind:[14]

Later, in 1792, Freneau was still writing on the same theme. In a poem that first appeared in the National Gazette he saw July 14 as "a Day ever memorable to

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[13]Marius B. Peladeau, ed., The Verse of Royal Tyler (Charlottesville, Vir.: U. of Virginia Press, 1968), p. 19.

[14]Fred Lewis Potter, ed., The Poems of Philip Freneau: Poet of the American Revolution, vol. II, (Princeton, N. J.: University Library, 1903), p. 385.

Regenerated France" and acknowledged that the United States was "a partner in thy joy."[15]

Clearly, the poetry and newspaper opinion of the day reflected a common feeling and belief about the French Revolution. Americans felt a pride in what they perceived as the spread of their revolution to Europe and they also felt that it was destined to spread to all parts of the world. If one looks carefully at this emotional rhetoric there was a deep internal contradiction in it. The image of freedom as an ever increasing flame or blaze was so common that it was nearly universal, but in contrast to this, and nearly as universal, was the belief that both French and American Revolutions were regenerative not innovative movements. The emphasis was on the elimination of monarchy and privilege, not on the new system that would replace them. Freneau saw the fall of the Bastille as regenerating France, not freeing her to create new social and political structures. Thus, as it became clear that France was going beyond the vague boundaries of traditional structures in religion, society and politics this emotional wave of approval crested and fell.

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[15] Ibid., vol. III, pp. 72-73.

The American approval of the French Revolution was based on more than pride and emotionalism. Many Americans saw that the situation in France was closely connected to the situation in the United States. As the new central government began to function fears arose that the democratic gains of the revolution might be eroded. While it was a small matter, the debate over titles in the Congress was seen by some as a sign of growing aristocratic tendencies. William Maclay, the Senator from Pennsylvania, wrote that it was "strange, indeed, that in the very country, where the flame of freedom had been kindled . . ." men should be attempting "to introduce these absurdities and humiliating distinctions [titles] which the head of reason, aided by our example was prostrating in Europe".[16] The fear of a rising nobility went far beyond the fear of titles and indications of rank. To many people the French Revolution operated against the creation of an aristocracy in America for a Freneau's National Gazette claimed "the downfall of Nobility in France has operated like an early-frost towards killing the germ of it in America".[17]

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[16]The Journal of William Maclay, (New York: Albert and Charles Boni, 1927), p. 12. Cited hereafter as Maclay.

[17]National Gazette, Jan. 19, 1792.

Beyond the fear of aristocracy was a more generalized fear of "absolute power" or "conspiracy of monarchies" and their intentions toward the infant American Republic. Twentieth-century Americans often fail to realize that once the United States was a relatively weak nation with much to fear from stronger powers. Yet in the 1790's this was a great concern. The revolution in France and the prospect of her becoming a sister republic was seen as a great stroke of luck. The fact that France had aided the American Revolution added to the sense of a growing alliance of republican nations in opposition to the combined monarchies. The newly formed democratic-republican societies expressed this sentiment often in their charters and circulars. For example, a circular of the Republican Society of Charleston, South Carolina claimed

> The interest of absolute power requires that the voice of liberty should be heard no more, and in the event of the overthrow of the French Republic, the United States, then without ally, may be forced to yield to European confederacy.[18]

Nearly every democratic-republican society expressed a similar sentiment in their constitution or statement

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[18]Quoted in Eugene Perry Link, Democratic-Republican Societies: 1790-1800 (New York: Columbia U. Press, 1942), pp. 126-127. Cited hereafter as Link.

of principles. Clearly, however, this sentiment was not lacking in practical and material motivation. The enthusiasm for the French Revolution, especially in the West, was partially rooted in the hope that French success might force England to relinguish the western forts they held in violation of the Treaty of Paris.[19]

Of course, when war broke out between the combined powers of Europe and the French Republic the issue of the Revolution heated up in America. The question in the United States was to what extent should we become involved in this war. The pact of 1778 with France seemed to oblige us to aid France, yet in many quarters there was a desire to escape that obligation. The desire was particularly strong in the executive branch of the government and resulted in the Neutrality Proclamation of April, 1793. Among the people there was a strong sentiment to aid France and hostility toward those who wished to remain neutral. A writer for the Newark Gazette found the talk of neutrality "curious" and claimed that "the times demand decision . . ." and that neutrality was only aid to

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[19]Judah Adelson, "The Vermont Democratic-Republican Societies and the French Revolution", Vermont History, vol. 32 (Jan. 1964), p. 6. Hereafter cited as Adelson.

the anti-French faction "under the specious name of impartiality."[20] The democratic-republican societies were enraged by the decision for neutrality. They resolved that any treaties made with a nation that acts honestly and faithfully toward us "ought to be inviolably adhered to and guarded from infraction at every risque . . . ." They also announced that "the causes of France is our own; that our interest, liberty and public happiness are involved in her fate . . . ." For those in America who would not support France they maintained undisguised hostility,

> for any man or set of men, either in private or public and particularly those to whom the welfare of our community is intrusted, to advocate doctrines and principles derogatory to the cause of France, or her commerce in America, or in support of the base measures of the combined despots of Europe, particularly Great Britain, is a convincing manifestation of sentiments treacherous and hostile to the interest of the United States, and well deserves the severest censure from all true republican citizens of America.[21]

The Neutrality Crisis produced one of the first basic conflicts between the American people and their government. While the people were animated by a brotherly sense of affection and obligation toward France, the government was forced to act in a strategic and

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[20] Newark Gazette, Sept. 4, 1789.

[21] Independent Chronicle, Apr. 8, 1794.

realistic manner. On one side of the neutrality issue were those who felt France could aid them in preserving their revolutionary gains and on the other side were those willing to abandon the sense of revolutionary brotherhood in favor of the security and stability of neutrality. The outcome was predictable; both sides saw perfidous design in the actions of the other. Those attached to the government saw foreign influence luring the people away from their government. The pro-French element saw the government as the tool of British or monarchical interests.

The third factor promoting the wave of approval for the French was a deep bias against what many Americans saw as the way of life in Europe. In the wake of the American Revolution suspicion and condemnation of Europe increased. Many Americans believed that Europe was riddled with political tyranny and religious error. In the rhetoric touching on the French Revolution during the years of 1789-1793 no terms were more common than despotism, tyranny, religious superstition and the like. Americans conceived of Europe as opressed by a aristocratic political system and a repressive religious establishment. The American Revolution had been a major revolt against both and they thrilled when it appeared France was doing the same. It should be noted, however, that the Americans in no way rejected God as a force

in history; on the contrary, they often noted that the French Revolution was another step in the coming of true religion to the world.

At the head of those who condemned the kings and priests of Europe was Joel Barlow. He concluded that soon there would be no more monarchs, no more titles but rather, the only title would be "Man".

> Tis Reason's choice, tis Wisdom's final plan,
> To drop the monarch and assume the man.
> Hail Man, exulted title! first and best,
> On God's own image by his hand imprest;
> To which at last the rea'ning race is driv'n,
> And seeks anew what first it gained from Heav'n.[22]

Barlow felt that all human problems were rooted in "those prolific monsters Courts and kings." He saw deference to kings as rooted in a "habit of thinking." From Barlow's point of view subjects do not submit to a king because he was born to govern, or because he was physically or intellectually stronger, they submit because they were in the habit of submitting. For him the idea that some were born to rule and some to be ruled was a dying habit of thinking and that the National Assembly of France had expressed the new habit when it claimed "men are born and always continue free and equal in respect to their rights."[23] Logically, this led him to see the importance

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[23]Joel Barlow, Advice to the Priviledged Orders, in the Several States of Europe, Resulting from the Necessity and Propriety of a General Revolution in the Principle of Government, Part I., (London: 1791), p. 17-22. Cited herafter as Advice.

of education. He wrote that children are taught "to repeat about fifty Latin prayers" and that this exercise sets up "the Pope, the Bishop and the King, as the trinity of his adoration . . . ." Children were then taught that "the powers that be are ordained of God, and therefore the soldier quartered in the parish has the right to cut his throat." Barlow went on to note that "half this instruction upon opposite principles would go a great way . . . ." for if we teach each person that "all men are equal in rights and that the government is their own and then persuade him to sell his crucifix and buy a musquet . . . you have made him a good citizen."[24] Barlow's continued devotion to the French Revolution was rooted in his dislike of priviledged orders and the belief that the Revolution was bringing a new day of equality and freedom. Significantly, he was not going to leave the transition to chance - education was the key.

While Barlow stated his position in lofty intellectual terms the same general dislike of kings and priests filled the daily newspapers, public addresses and private reflection. For many Americans the Bastille was a symbol of aristocratic outrages and when it fell Americans saw clearly that the blow had, in reality, been against the aristocracy.

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[24] Ibid., p. 27-28.

Here many a fathom down, despotic rage,
Hung victims in the dreadful cage -

To sooth a mistress, wanton Louis gave
To one who dared be just, this lingering grave.[25]

Often Americans saw the monarchy and the nobility as the cause of the Revolution. For example, C. Robbins saw "the yoke of monarchical oppression and ecclesiastical avarice . . ." and the debt created by the king's greed and the "wanton profligacy of the court" as the two main causes of the Revolution.[26] Robbins felt that amid the applause for the French, Americans should stop and "drop a tear of commiseration and sorrow, at some instances of intemperate fervor" but he immediately excuses this fevor by noting that "oppression will make a wise man mad."[27] The Maryland Gazette story noted that "the dreadful massacre of the 2nd of September cannot be thought of without horror . . ." but quickly went on to state that such violence can not injure the cause of France in the minds of thinking men because the major cause of that violence was the intrusion into French affairs by "the conspiring princes" and that nothing threatened the life of Louis XVI more than the designs of the united monarchs then invading France.[28]

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[25] Gazette of the United States, Oct. 14, 1789.

[26] Robbins, p. 7.

[27] Ibid., p. 11.

[28] Maryland Gazette, Nov. 15, 1792.

While the newspapers and orators carried on a running attack against monarchy and aristocracy, William Maclay, wrote the following in his journal.

> By this and yesterdays papers France seems travailing in the birth of freedom. Her throes and pangs of labor are violent. God give her a happy delivery! Royality, Nobility, and the vile pagentry, by which a few of the human race lord it over and tread on the necks of their fellow-mortals seem likely to be demolished with their kindred Bastille [sic], which is said to be laid in ashes. Ye gods, with what indignation do I review the late attempt of some creatures among us to revive the vile machinery! O Adams, Adams, what a wretch art thou![29]

This unguarded journal entry illustrated not only that the coming destruction of "Royality, nobility, and . . . vile pagantry" was wonderful news to Maclay but also that he saw the return of monarchy and aristocracy to America as a possibility.

Indeed, after the international war broke out in 1792 some Americans came to see the struggle as a conflict between good (the French people) and evil (the forces of monarchy and aristocracy). Robbins felt that the "repeated acts of deceit, equivacation and treachery" by Louis had turned the good people of France against him. When Louis was deposed the European monarchs were enraged and frightened and attacked

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[29] Maclay, p. 151.

France. This produced "the brightest part of the scene . . . a whole nation animated with but one soul . . ." to repel the attack from outside.[30]

It was generally believed that the people of France were ignorant rabble incapable of orderly political change. Between the years 1789-1793, Americans often expressed amazement at the virtue maintained by the French in their revolution. One newspaper wrote that they had "showed that is possible for a most dispicable rable [sic] . . . to arise into the first consequence in the scale of nations . . . ."[31] Barlow, for one, found French mobs preferable to English mobs especially on the "point of indiscriminate ferocity and private plunder." He wrote, as an eye-witness that "a popular commotion in Paris was uniformly directed to a certain well explained object; from which it was never known to deviate . . . .", they were composed of "honest and industrious people, who had nothing in view but the public good."[32]

The Americans not only saw the French revolting against political tyranny but also against religious

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[30] Robbins, pp. 13-14.

[31] Dunlaps Daily American Advertiser, Jan. 3, 1793.

[32] Advice, p. 6.

superstition and bigotry. God, as defined by Americans, played a central role in the coming of the Revolution. Robbins, for example, concluded his 1793 address by asserting that the French Revolution

> . . . affords this pleasing reflection to every serious and devout mind, that such revolutions, in the hand of Providence prepare the way for a more free, rapid, entensive diffusion of the gospel light and truth, and thereby for tne advancement of that kingdom, which is founded in benevolence, exalted by righteousness, and which will be consummated in glory.[33]

A play written and produced by the students of Dartmouth College also illustrated sensitivity to the religious issue. A French noble in the play expressed hope that the new France will be like the United States where

> Men assert their native rights:
> They know no soverign but the one supreme.
> The unshackled mind there wades immensity
> Bound to no popish farsical religion.[34]

However, while Americans saw "popish farsical religion" as a target in the Revolution, they also felt that the era of revolution was part of God's plan.

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[33] Robbins, p. 18.

[34] The French Revolution: Including a Story Founded in Fact, Leontine and Matilda: A Drama (New Bredford, Mass.: 1793), p. 9. The play was written and first produced in 1790 by the United Fraternity of Dartmouth College.

The expansion of human freedom was under "the governing Providence of Jehovah . . . ."[35] One unknown poet wrote:

> Thus was he [God] rambling thro' his sphere,
> And watching (what he held most dear)
> The "rights of man" below;
> He saw the chains with which they're bound,
> He heaves the groan, the heavens rebound
> "No more shall it be so."[36]

The brief bit of popular poetry above illustrates the emotional quality of the American response to the French Revolution. There was a sense of great drama; a sense of living in fabulous times in which great historical changes were taking place. Some Americans sensed that the American Revolution had been the spark for the events in France and they took great pride in this. Further, they sensed that the French and American Revolutions were clear evidence that man was shedding his age-old chains to embrace a freer life. Many Americans were glad to see France enter the thin ranks of republics because then America would not be so alone in a world of powerful monarchies. Added to this was the hope that French success would help preserve the liberty America had gained in her own revolution against

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[35] Robbins, p. 4.

[36] "The Decree of the Sun; or, France Regenerated. A Poem in Three Cantos" (Boston: 1793), p. 6. The title page lists this work as "The first offering of a Youth Muse."

Great Britain. Finally, the French assault on aristocracy and Catholicism touched a deep prejudice against those institutions which were so much a part of the typical American's image of Europe. The conjunction of these feelings and beliefs created a highly emotional situation. When the French and the monarchies of Europe came in conflict the tension in America rose noticeably. Rumors of French victories or defeats were daily newspaper items; one of the most persistant rumors insisted that George Washington was going to France to lead the revolutionary troops.[37] In any event, early in 1793, the victories by the French at Valmy and the Duke of Brunswick's retreat were greeted in America with a round of civic celebrations, meetings and general approval. During the later stages of 1792 and especially the first half of 1793 the approval of the French Revolution reached its peak.

Expressions of this approval ranged from wearing a liberty cap with a French cockade to massive city-wide celebrations. Those who supported the French Revolution often showed it by wearing a liberty cap. The Massachusetts Mercury said, the liberty

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[37] South Carolina Gazette July 24, 1793; Concord N.H. Mirror Nov. 26, 1793; New Haven Conn. Journal Jan. 2, 1793; Donald H. Steward, The Opposition Press of the Federalist Period (Albany N.Y.: State U. of N.Y. Press, 1969), p. 119.

caps ". . . may well represent a freedom from abject submission, and a restoration to the rights of man." They also noted that "the cap is found not to inspire its wearer with odd notions of superiority, unlike a crown."[38] Joel Barlow found deep significance in the liberty cap and other revolutionary symbols. He claimed that their origin was in the phallic symbols used to worship Osiris in Egypt. He found that they had later been adopted for the worship of the gods Bacchus and Liber and were the symbols of freedom for the bacchanalia. The cap itself symbolized the stalk of grain growing from the abdomen of Osiris and he also noted that in Rome the cap had symbolized the freed slave (the Phrygian cap).[39] The historical accuracy of Barlow's interpretation was not really important; what was important was the fact that he linked these revolutionary symbols with past symbols of total freedom and abandon. Barlow's comments indicate a key fact about the spirit of the times. There was a sense that the restraints on man were breaking down; many associated themselves with this phenomenon by responding to such symbols as the liberty pole and cap.

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[38] Massachusetts Mercury, Aug. 20, 1793.

[39] From "Genealogy of the Tree of Liberty" in Joel Barlow's Notebook, Box 4, Barlow Papers. Quoted in Link, p. 22.

The sense of increasing freedom and relaxing restraint was clearly evident in the civic celebrations in early 1793. At the celebration in Alexandria, Virginia the Americans Daily Advertiser reported that "the emotions of those assembled . . . can be conceived only by being felt." At the festivities there was much drinking and some of the toasts give an indication of the mood of the day. They drank to speedy success for the French Revolution and to the sentiment, "may the flame of Liberty, kindled at the Taper of the American Revolution, illumine the whole world." Included in the many other toasts were ones to freedom of the press and "the Rights of Women".[40] In Carlisle, Pennsylvania bells were rung from three in the afternoon to nine in the evening and the whole town agreed to place signs "in large letters legible at a great distance" over the court house windows - they read,

1. LET MAN BE FREE
2. TYRANNY IS ABOUT TO CEASE[41]

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[40] Dunlaps American Daily Advertiser, Jan. 3, 1793.

[41] Ibid., Jan. 1, 1793.

In New York City Tammany Hall rang with toasts and congradulations to France and this song,

> By hell inspir'd with brutal rage
> Austria and Prussia both engage
> To crush fair freedom's flame;
> But the intrepid sons of France
> Have led them such a glorious dance
> They've turned their backs for shame.
>
> May Heaven continue still to bless
> The arms of freedom with success,
> Til tyrants are no more;
> And still as Gallia's sons shall fly
> From victory to victory,
> We'll, shouting, cry Encore![42]

Perhaps the largest, and surely the grandest, of these celebrations took place in Boston on January 24, 1793.[43] A group of citizens announced that they would provide an ox and ample drink to make attending worthwhile. On the day of the festivities a parade was formed to escort the ox, whose horns had been gilded with gold, over 1800 loaves of bread and a hogshead of punch to the site of the feast. As the food and drink rolled along on carts the procession became gradually larger; at one point it stopped at

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[42] Columbian Centinel Jan. 9, 1793.

[43] The discussion of this celebration is based on several sources. Charles D. Hazen, Contemporary Opinion of the French Revolution (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1897), pp. 165-167; Charles Warren, Jacobin and Junto (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U. Press, 1931), pp. 46-47; Justin Winsor, Memorial History of Boston (Boston: 1881), pp. 10-12; and the Columbian Centinel Jan. 23, 24, 25, 26, 1793.

Olivers Dock and re-named it Liberty Square. The banquet took place on State Street where tables stretched all the way to Kilby Street. In the afternoon a more sedate banquet for about four hundred was held in Faneuil Hall presided over by Samuel Adams and the French Consul. That evening there were fireworks and, significantly, during the whole day Bostonians were careful to include the young so as "to impress the tender minds of the younger generations with the percepts of equal liberty . . . ." To that end each youth was presented with a cake impressed with the words "Liberty and Equality."

In sum, the accounts of the festivities make it sound like a Boston version of the Bacchanalia. It was a Boston January and yet the main events were held outside and it was reported that "bevies of our amiable and beautiful women, by their smiles and approbation cast a pleasing lustre over the festive scene." The presence of the fairer sex was not enough to prevent the event from ending in a small riot in which drunken throngs tore the remainder of the ox apart and, according to reports, threw it in the air and at the "bevies of . . . amiable and beautiful women."

The theater became a stage for the expression of this emotional revolutionary spirit. Gradually,

since 1789 the theaters in Boston had adopted the practice of playing the French Revolutionary songs, Ca Ira or La Marseillaise, before the performances. On several occasions, more conservative patrons had "politely" objected by hissing and hooting. Such "Aristocrats" were warned to stop such behavior or they would be turned out of the theater by the "Sons of Liberty."[44] It was common for audiences to boo anything they perceived as anti-French. On one occasion, the famous actor Hodkinson appeared in British uniform and the crowd hissed their disapproval; Hodkinson turned to the audience and remarked that he was playing the bully and the hisses turned to cheers.[45]

In conclusion, Americans overwhelmingly approved the early stages of the French Revolution. They felt a strong sense that liberty, sparked by their revolution, was spreading to Europe and would spread beyond to the whole world. They also felt the inclusion of France into the list of republics would help America maintain their newly won republican system against enemies both foreign and domestic. Last, the French

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[44] Independents Chronicle, Apr. 25, 1792.

[45] Bowers, p. 222.

attack on aristocracy and Catholicism touched an American bias against these institutions and the prospect of their reduction or destruction in a major nation such as France provoked great enthusiasm in America. Also, the conjunction of these three motivations and the war between France and her monarchical enemies produced a wildly emotional display by Americans.

Too often historians view the impact of the French Revolution in totally political terms. Typically, the French Revolution has been characterized as accelerating indigeneous movements or as bringing foreign principles to America.[46] This emphasis on the development of political parties and politics in general has hidden the broader significance of the impact of the French Revolution. At first it produced a great roar of approval and in the wake of that approval came the feeling that restraint was loosening, that human freedom had broken the chains of tyranny. In response to this feeling in America and the growing violence and innovation in France came a strong reaction in the name of control and limitations on human

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[46] R. R. Palmer, The Age of Democratic Revolutions, vol. II, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton U. Press, 1964), p. 509.

freedom. The roots and growth of that reaction are the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER III

OPINION SHIFTS

> Jacobin, n. the member of a private club to overturn or manage government, one who opposes government, in a secret or unlawful manner or from a unreasonable spirit of discontent
>
> Noah Webster, A Compendious Dictionary of the English-Language (1806)

In 1793 American opinion about the French Revolution began to change. Prior to that year Americans warmly endorsed the efforts of the French, although there had been isolated but significant grumblings of discontent. After 1793, in response to an intricate series of foreign and domestic events, the themes of the earlier criticism of the Revolution began to have more proponents and received a wider hearing.

For the most part, these events have been exhaustively treated by historians, however, no one has yet investigated their total impact. It is hard, but profitable, to attempt to assay the meaning and effect of the following incidents.

1. Genêt's visit and public response, 1793.
2. Neutrality Crisis and public response, 1793.

3. Whiskey Rebellion, 1794.
4. Jay Treaty and public response, 1795.
5. Formation of the Democratic-Republican Societies, 1793-1795.
6. Execution of Louis XVI and European War, 1793.
7. The Reign of Terror under Robespierre, 1793-1794.

All these events were packed into a relatively short period of time and were seen in the context of the wild enthusiasm for the French Revolution prior to 1793 and the problems of launching a new nation in a revolutionary time.

To a great extent, the response to these events was a generalized fear and anxiety. While the fear and anxiety was highly generalized or non-specific there were certain specific elements in it. A definite fear of the religious changes coming from France and also present in America characterized the growing anxiety. Also, Americans feared that the moral and religious foundations of good order were in danger and that the sense of duty to some higher law was weakening. In close conjunction with the religious fear was the feeling that French innovations were undermining the traditional institutions necessary for social order. Some Americans pressed the fear that marriage, the

family and the deferential class system were threatened and that infidelity, prostitution and rule by the unfit would characterize the new age.

Closely connected to the fear of social change was the feeling that the French emphasis on equality would spread. In the South especially many came to believe that this equalitarian spirit would swamp not only the political system in America but also the racial system. The black uprisings in Santo Domingo inspired by the French Revolution caused a small shiver of fear to run through many Americans especially when they became aware that blacks were capable of tremendous violence. Most important of all however, was the fear that all social, political and intellectual cohesion was under attack. This anxiety encompasses all the other fears into a more general but also more virulent dread. A feeling arose that all the past certanties about politics, society and belief were being eroded and that life was becoming more relative and less absolute. The rise of factions both in France and America was important to the development of this fear. The idea that groups or individuals could freely critize the government or the elite and could transcend national loyality to support France and the general notion of revolution was seen by many as heresy. More than a political problem; it was a

question of the nature of human freedom and its limitations. After 1793, the perceived need for social and political cohesion led many to view the emphasis on freedom with alarm and to turn to ways of preserving order and harmony in American society.

Thus, the purpose of this chapter will be two-fold. First, to outline the early pre-1793 criticism and show that it grew into a more widespread mood of disapproval. Second, this chapter will attempt to prove that the French Revolution and collateral events produced a sense of fear and anxiety in America after 1793 and that this fear was central to the turn against the Revolution.

In the period between 1789 and 1793 most of the American people found the French Revolution to be a source of great hope and pride. Mixed in with this approval however, were some significant grumblings of discontent and worry about the news from France. While most Americans saw only the prospect of twenty-five million Frenchmen in revolt against tyranny some saw that the revolt threatened more than tyranny. Subtle fears were expressed and clearly some Americans hoped that "prudence teach them not to go too far, nor whelm their country in war".[1] Some felt that the

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[1] Gazette of the United States, Jan. 2, 1789.

comparison between the French and American Revolution was absurd. A writer in the Gazette of the United States found a clear difference in the people who had participated in the two revolutions. The American Revolution was the product of "the united exertions of an oppressed people . . ." while the French revolt was the product of "a frantic populace, who always clamor against the Government in time of scarcity, and return to admiration and submission upon the appearance of plenty . . . ."[2]

The sceptical attitude regarding the French people was a common theme in the anti-revolutionary criticism. Later in the 1790's it grew into a fundamental assumption that there was a basic difference between the French and American people. Gradually Americans came to see themselves as morally and politically able to carry on a experiment in republicanism while the French were seen as unfit to be entrusted with a freer political system. In the earlier period, prior to 1793, several important Americans expressed this belief before it became a common theme. John Adams grumbled that a nation of

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[2]Ibid., Jan. 13, 1790. Reprinted from Massachusetts Mercury (N.d.).

atheists could not carry off a successful revolution,[3] but perhaps the most persistant holder of this position was Gouverneur Morris, the United States ambassador to France during the early revolutionary years. As he watched the French revolt he concluded that while they wanted to become like America they did not realize that their citizens were unlike American citizens.[4] The clear implication was that the French were too politically inexperienced and too morally weak to support a social and political system which provided for more individual freedom. Without actually saying it both Adams and Morris implied that the religious nature of the American people was a key factor in their thinking. They felt that Americans were restrained by their religious commitment while the French had no such commitment, only the oppressive Catholic heirarchy which produced no sense of duty to higher law but only taught obedience and submission to the inscrutable and to superstition.

Another aspect of the early negative criticism of the French Revolution was rooted in the fact that

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[3]Edward Handler, America and Europe in the Political: Thought of John Adams (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U. Press, 1964), pp. 163-5.

[4]Cushing Strout, The American Image of the Old World (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), p. 43.

the infant American nation had to deal realistically with the foreign policy implications of the French revolt and the war that developed from it. In these considerations there was no room for emotional attachments or any feeling that ran counter to what the policy makers saw as national interest. The United States was in a difficult position, caught in the continuing struggle between France and England. The problem was to stay out of the affairs of these European powers. The 1778 alliance with France was the greatest problem since it committed the United States to come to the aid of France in the event of war. The pact had been formed during the American Revolution when French aid was essential, but there had been much anxiety about it since it committed the United States to involvement in European quarrels. In 1790, anxiety found its object when the spectre of a Anglo-French war arose and it became likely that France might call on America to hold up her end of the alliance. Alexander Hamilton, Washington's closest advisor, tried to lay the groundwork for an escape from those obligations. He argued that France had aided us not out of any attachment "to our independence and liberty . . ." but because they sought to diminish the strength of the British Empire. Hamilton thus

concluded that the advantages stemming from the French aid to America had been mutual and that "the account is balanced . . . ."[5]

In the largest sense, Hamilton was simply playing the role of strategic thinker. He viewed the revolution in France in cooler terms than most of his countrymen. He saw that France, because of the revolution, would be difficult to appraise and deal with. From his point of view he concluded that the change "from slavery to liberty . . ." might make France stronger but he also saw that "the ebullitions of enthusiasm must ever be a precarious reliance." Thus any calculation of France's future actions "must be universally fallible . . . ."[6] It was important that Hamilton was so advising Washington in September, 1790. At that time the vast majority of the American people were shouting their approval of the news from France and the idea of Franco-American brotherhood was running rampant. So as early as 1790 one can see the faint outlines of the impending conflict between the people and the government which would flare over Genêt, Neutrality and the Jay Treaty.

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[5]Harold C. Syrett, ed., The Papers of Alexander Hamilton (New York: Columbia U. Press, 1965), vol. VII, p. 43.

[6]Ibid., pp. 50-1.

The sense that the United States had a strategic interest in the European world was not limited to the government. A desire to stay out of European affairs was rooted in American colonial history but this desire had other elements. A letter reprinted in several newspapers in 1790 goes to the heart of the matter.

> Happily situated out to the vortex of this secene of pell-mell, havoek [sic] and confusion every principle of interest must induce the United States to observe a strict neutrality - and by cultivating the earth, and the arts of peace, become a granary to supply the wants of the elder world and an asyslum to its unhappy citizens.[7]

Such a statement reflected several strong currents in the American mind, especially the feeling that America was distinct from Europe and must remain that way. It also subtly illustrated the pro-agrarian, anti-urban bias that was part of the desire to reject the over-urbanized (from the American point of view) Europe. Again there was a conflict within American opinion, while most Americans were deeply involved in the universal issues of the French Revolution there was also the belief that they were none of their concern. At the crux of the matter was a simple question - was America involved in the world and its problems or

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[7] Maryland Gazette, Sept. 9, 1790. Reprinted from "a Boston paper".

by some special dispensation had they been separated from the rest of the world to serve as "a granary" and "an asyslum". The celebrations and general approval of the French Revolution before 1793 indicated that many Americans rejected the idea of an isolated America and willingly were caught up in world affairs but beneath this was muted but important evidence of an opposite inclination toward isolationism.

While the question was important in the early criticism of the French Revolution it was only a part of a larger theme. The desire to stay aloof from European affairs was rooted in a desire for order and harmony. America had just emerged from several decades of turmoil and change and the desire for a stabilization period was deep and profound. The most important aspects of this early disaproval derived from and appealed to this need. The Gazette of the United States, for example, printed a remarkable piece on the French Revolution by an Englishman during the summer of 1790. In most cases it ran next to John Adams' Discourses on Davila and presented a unique contrast to the scholarly, slightly ponderous opinions of Adams. The author, J. Countenay, was alarmed by "the dangerous and rapid progress of democracy in France." Democracy, in his view, ran counter to "the political truth, confirmed by the ages that the

tranquility and happiness of a well regulated community can only be maintained by implicit obedience and unconditional submission."[8]

From this basic position, Countenay goes on to show that France was tampering with the eternal verities of human existence. First, he purposed that the Christian religion was dead in France and that "the National Assembly have covertly and insidiously introduced a system of atheism in its stead."[9] As evidence for this conclusion he cited the seizure of church land and church revenue to aid the poor.[10] Second, he claimed that "a new sect of philosophers" had appealed to the common man and "have had perverted their understandings and corrupted their morals . . ." by leading them to neglect the mysteries and complexities of theology in favor of a simple belief in "nature's God."[11] The opinions of these philosophers were presented in the form of novels "amidst the feigned adventures and passionate endearments of lovers" and this added to their influence. He listed

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[8]Aug. 11, 1790.

[9]Aug. 14, 1790.

[10]Ibid.

[11]Aug. 18, 1790.

Montesquieu, Voltaire and Rousseau as the main villians who had "with combined force assailed and unsettled the consecrated opinions of the ages."[12] Third, he was alarmed by the growing disregard for chasity and celebacy. He was particularly anxious that the people would no longer have the sublime sexlessness of the monks and nuns as an example since he understood they had been released from their vows. Fourth, Countenay sought to alert his readers by pointing out that France was going to attack the institution of slavery. In his view, "it is our indispenable duty to accomplish the divine predications of Noah, and hold Ham's descendents in chains forever." Since the National Assembly had sought "to weaken the credibility of this sacred history, by emancipating the negroes," Countenay suggested that all slave ships be supplied with Bibles so the negroes could be informed of their position in the Bibical scheme of things.[13]

While Countenay was an Englishman his position was significant for American opinion in that Fenno, editor of the Gazette, saw fit to print it and that Americans read it. Clearly much of what Countenay had to say hit a nerve in many Americans. His position

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[12] Ibid.

[13] Aug. 18, 21, 1790.

was similar to the Puritan stance on sensuality and on literature while his defense of slavery had been a standard one in the South for many years. The Discourses on Davila by John Adams, which appeared at the same time in the same paper, has received considerable attention, while Countenay's treatise no doubt has been neglected as the work of a crank. The arch-conservative opinions of Countenay may have received a wider hearing than those of Adams. Countenay was one of those conservatives who took wild swings at the historical changes around him and in so doing became a precursor of similar activities by native Americans later in the decade.

Countenay was not the only writer in the British Isles to have an impact on American opinion. Edmund Burke, defender of the American cause in 1776, added to the defense of the established order with his Reflections on the Revolution in France. Published originally in England in November of 1790, Reflections quickly found its way to America. John Adams was praising it in the spring of 1791[14] and soon it was a common topic of discussion.[15] Burke was the ideal

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[14]Journal of William Maclay (New York: Albert and Charles Boni, 1927), p. 243.

[15]Alexander Graydon, Memoirs of His Own Time with Reminiscences of the Men and Events of the Revolution Philadelphia: Littell, 1846), p. 358. Cited hereafter as Graydon.

spokesman for the conservative position. He was seen as a defender of the American Revolution and thus avoided the stigma of Tory, but more important he had the tools of a propagandist. Among these tools was an excellent and highly emotional style and the instinctive sense of what appealed to man's need for order and peace. His work appealed to those, like John Adams, who were seeking stability for the new nation. Such men liked Burke's insistence that one should not pass judgment on the events in France until it became clear how the "new liberty . . . had been combined with government; with public force; with discipline and obedience of armies; with the collection of . . . revenue; with peace and order; with civil and social manners." Burke claimed that "all these . . . are good things too . . ." and without them this new freedom was not progress and would not last.[16]

From this firm stand in favor of order Burke moved on to show that the French Revolution was indeed an enemy to order. He was not against change but he was against change that did not take its form from the example of history. He held up the English Constitution and its transformations as the model

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[16]Edmund Burke and Thomas Paine, Reflections on the Revolution in France and The Rights of Man (Garden City, N.J.: Doubleday, 1961), p. 20.

for orderly progress and expressed the hope that any future changes "will be carefully formed upon the analogical precedent, authority, and example."[17] France, he saw, had ignored precedent and was trying to create a government out of new cloth. One of the basic precedents the French had ignored was the central role of religious sentiment in the establishment of new governments. He claimed that when other nations have created a new government they have secured some measure of peace and order "by establishing originally, or by enforcing with greater exactness some rites or other of religion." France, in his view, had failed to do this and by this failure had "doubled the license" so common in periods of change.[18] Change in political sentiments was difficult enough when regligious sentiments remained steady but Burke was obviously frightened by the changes in both politics and religion. Without stability in one area the prospects for the future were grim. On a variety of fronts, Burke appealed to the innate sense of order in the Americans who read his work. He wrote that "hair-dressers and tallow-chandlers should not be oppressed by the state . . ."

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[17] Ibid., p. 43.

[18] Ibid., p. 50.

but neither should they be allowed to rule for if such people should come to power "you are not combating prejudice, you are at war with nature."[19] Burke saw government as a restraint on the passions of men and this restraint was only effective if the power came from outside themselves. The power to restraint passion can not be "subject to that will and to those passions which it is its office to bridle and subdue. In this sense the restraints on men, as well as their liberties, are to be reckoned among their rights."[20] Both the attack on equality and the defense of a restrainting power outside men made a strong appeal to those in America who believed in the deferential system and the idea that man was not fit to entirely rule himself.

Perhaps Burke's position rested most completely on an appeal to what might be called the conservative emotional matrix. The arguments for the centrality of precedent, for religion as a control, for government as a restraint and the attack on leveling or equality all served to bolster the flagging conservative cause in a revolutionary time. The appeal to the emotions hit its highest note when it dealt with

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[19] Ibid., p. 62.

[20] Ibid., pp. 72073.

women, children and the past. One of the emotional peaks of the book was the indignate criticism of the rough handling of the king, queen and her children. He saw ominous meaning in this -

> . . . the age of chivalry is gone - that of sophisters, oeconomists and calculators, has succeeded: and the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever. Never, never more, shall we behold that generous loyality to rank and sex, that proud submission, that dignified obedience, that subordination of the heart, which kept alive even in servitude itself, the spirit of an exalted freedom.[21]

From this point Burke looked to the future where he saw all absolutes dissolved, all stability vanished and the roots of life gone.

> No certain laws, establishing invariable grounds of hope and fear, would keep the actions of men in a certain course, or direct them to a certain end. Nothing stable in the modes of holding property, or exercising function, could form a solid ground on which any parent could speculate in the education of his offspring, or in a choice for their future establishment in the world. No principles would be early worked into the habits.[22]

Fear of a relative world without certainties or pattern coincided with the faith of many conservatives. Later, Americans would turn against the French Revolution for the very reason that it seemed to destroy the old

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[21] Ibid., pp. 88-89.

[22] Ibid., p. 109.

absolutes and rendered every opinion or practice equally valid.

Of nearly equal interest to Reflections was the storm of controversy that followed in its wake. Thomas Paine almost immediately responded to Burke with The Rights of Man. Soon the conflict between Paine and Burke was a staple of discussion. Paine was, like Burke, able to speak to Americans with some favorable credentials. He was remembered as a hero of the revolution and no doubt received a wider hearing because of that service to America. While Burke had argued for the maintainance of traditional absolutes that bound all generations, Paine claimed that no such absolutes existed. In Paine's view,

> That which a whole nation chooses to do, it has a right to do. Mr. Burke says, No. Where does the right exist? I am contending for the rights of the living, and against their being willed away, and controlled and contracted for, by the manuscript assumed authority of the dead; and Mr. Burke is contending for the authority of the dead over the rights and freedom of the living.[23]

Paine, in this statement, by using the dualism of "living" and "dead" argued for what Burke feared so much - the banishment of tradition to the ashcan of irrelevancy. Paine chose his words carefully, it would seem that by "authority of the dead" he means

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[23] Ibid., p. 278.

tradition and if he had used that word his position would have lost supporters. In the end, however, the Paine - Burke conflict is fundamentally concerned with the nature of truth. Paine claiming that truth is the creation of each generation while Burke held to the view that certain truths were absolute and that each generation can only make changes with these principles as a guide.

In America, John Quincy Adams came to the defense of Burke's position. This defense took the form of a series of letters which appeared in The Columbian Centeniel in the summer of 1791. These letters were part of the widening split between Jefferson and John Adams. Jefferson believed that they were written by John Adams and were, at least in part, an attack on Jefferson's support of Paine's work. Jefferson had added a note to the American edition of The Rights of Man in which he claimed Paine's book would answer "the political heresies that have sprung up among us."[24] In the first letter John Quincy Adams criticized Jefferson for seeing heresy when there was none and for trying to force political orthordoxy on the American people.[25] In sum, the

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[24]Worthington Chauncey Ford, ed., The Writings of John Quincy Adams, vol. I (Letter I), p. 67. Cited hereafter as JQA Writings.

[25]Ibid., p. 68.

episode was evidence that at least the Adams family was not going to accept the standard version of the French Revolution and that they perceived in Jefferson a man willing to accept the French doctrine they were slowly coming to fear.

After the first letter which dealt with these personal and political anomosities, John Quincy Adams turned to a consideration of Paine's work. Most significantly, he found that Paine's main point was that "what a nation chooses to do, it has a right to do."[26] Adams disagreed in terms that Burke would have liked; the younger Adams claimed "the eternal and immutable laws of justice and of morality are paramount to all human legislation."[27] So in other words there were absolutes that transcend the flux of coming and going generations and these "immutable laws" must be obeyed. He had a fear of government that did not ascribe to these laws -

> If a majority thus constituted [in a representative body] are bound by no law human or divine, and have no other rule but their sovereign will and pleasure to direct them, what possible security can any citizen of the nation have for the protection of his unalienable rights?[28]

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[26] Ibid., (Letter II), p. 70.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid., pp. 70-71.

Behind this fear was an equal fear and distrust of the people and especially the lower classes. He felt relief that America had only a few such people, or as he put it ". . . it is the happiness of Americans scarcely to be able to form an idea . . ." of this class of men. In both France and England, such classes "can not be considered free agents, and therefore are neither the subjects of praise or blame . . . ." They can be aroused to action only "upon no other principles than those of a frantic enthusiasm and ungovernable fury . . .," and thus they are "the proper tools for any man who can inflame their passions . . . they have nothing to lose by the disolation of civil society . . . ."[29]

Fear of the people and the fear that the "immutable laws" were losing out were clearly connected. If man gave up his attachment to these laws then only the opinions and power of the isolated man would be left. There would be no control on the fury of the vast bulk of mankind and passion would reign. In America he believed that the people possessed the "gentleness of manners and habits of virtue . . ."[30] in sufficient amounts to allow them to enjoy their natural rights

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[29] Ibid., (Letter V), p. 82.

[30] Ibid., (Letter VIII), p. 95.

and still maintain order in the land. Such was not the case in France, they did not have these qualities and they certainly lacked the religious restraint found in America. Thus, in Adams' mind, France was headed for chaos. The French people were not ready for American-style freedom.

The deepest theme of this pre-1793 criticism was the real fear that human freedom was expanding past the safety point. Countenay, for example, feared that the new freedom threatened the traditions of the church, the family and race relations. He saw the French Revolution as creating new doctrines of liberty that overturned old restraints. With Burke, there was the concern for tradition, the tradition of Old Europe, which seemed to hold men in check. John Quincy Adams felt much the same way. He saw that French innovations might conflict with his "immutable laws." More than any specific cause it was this vague dread of relativism that motivated their work. Perhaps their deepest fear was of a world with no deference, no elite and no certainities - of a world in which opinion, propaganda and discord had replaced final absolute judgment and eternal order.

After 1793, these and other doubts gradually become more widespread. No fine lines can be drawn concerning so illusive a subject as fear, but beginning

with 1793 and progressing on to the end of the decade Americans, building on the earlier criticism, became generally more anxious and apprehensive about the French Revolution and its implications.

To begin with, Americans became alarmed about the religious changes taking place in France, especially after the Jacobins came to power in June, 1793. In 1814 Lyman Beecher looked back on this period and after discussing the general decline of churches in the later part of the eighteenth century he claimed that French Revolution "brought to our shores contagion and death." A spirit was created in which "no maxims were deemed to wise to be abandoned, none too horrid to be adopted, no foundation too deep laid to be torn up, and no superstructure too venerable to be torn down . . . ." The outcome was "a brood of infidels, heretics and profligates . . ." who responded to every new idea in religious matters.[31]

One of the people to respond quickly to the religious changes in France was Noah Webster. In Webster's view the French had substituted "atheism and materialism" for Christianity. As evidence for

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[31]Quoted in Vernon Stauffer, New England and the Bavarian Illuminati (New York: Columbia U. Press, 1918), pp. 101-102.

this conclusion he cited the fact that France "acknowledged no doctrine except that of national sovereignity and omnipotence" and that France had also decreed death to be only "an everlasting sleep." He found this position on death to be "an explicit denial of the immortality of the soul and the establishment of materialism by law."[32]

Webster attempted to put the religious situation in France into a larger context. Before 1789 the French, he believed, were torn between the false religion of Catholicism and atheism; the one holding its "mock devotions at Nortre Dame"; the other celebrating with "revels of prostitution." The Revolution, in Webster's mind, began as an attack on political evil but soon found religious error mixed with politics. So instead of carefully cutting away the error Robespierre and the Jacobins "waged an inveterate war with Christianity."[33] The importance Webster placed on the religious factor was indicated by the organization of his essay "Revolution in France, Considered in Respect to its Progress and

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[32]Noah Webster, "The Revolution in France Considered in Respect to its Progress and Effects", in A Collection of Papers on Political Literary and Moral Subjects (New York: Webster and Clark, 1843), p. 10. The essay originally appeared in 1794. Cited hereafter as Revolution Considered.

[33]Ibid.

and Effects". His purpose in this essay was to determine the effect of the Revolution on a variety of areas such as the national debt, agriculture and commerce but most of these areas were dealt with in a few vague paragraphs. The subject of the Revolution's effect on "Religion" and "Morality" moved him to nearly twelve pages of discussion.

William Cobbett, the transplanted Englishman, who was perhaps the most vocal propagandist against the French Revolution, attacked the French for their religious experiments. He saw such innovations as a conscious plot to harden the hearts of the lower classes,

> they were to be rendered brutal; all fear of the hereafter was to be rooted from their souls, before they could be instruments in the hands of the hellish Assembly. With this object in view, they declared our blessed Lord and redeemer to be an Imposter, forbade the acknowledgement of him and the exercise of his worship.[34]

Even the realistic and somewhat callous hearted Alexander Hamilton claimed to be horrified by the religious heresay in France. After reviewing "the disgusting spectacle of the French Revolution . . ." he found it hard to ignore "those features of it which

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[34]Peter Porcupine (William Cobbett), The Bloody Buoy Thrown Out . . . (Philadelphia: 1796), p. 232.

betray a plan to disorganize the human mind itself, as well as undermine the venerable pillars - that support the edifice of civil society." He concluded that the French have tried "to destroy all religious opinion, and to pervert a whole nation to atheism."[35]

The fear of the religious change in France went beyond political divisions. While men such as Hamilton, Cobbett and Webster might have had political reasons for their religious views such was not the case with Samuel Adams. In general, Adams was a staunch supporter of the French Revolution and politically far to the left of Hamilton and Webster yet he also found the news of radical religion in France disturbing. In his 1794 Fast Day proclamation he expressed the hope that God might return the French "to a spirit of wisdom and true religion . . . ." He hoped France would rely on God in their quest for a just government but "above all" Adams wanted the religion of Jesus Christ in its true spirit to spread far and wide "till the whole earth shall be filled with His glory."[36]

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[35]Richard B. Morris, ed., Alexander Hamilton and the Founding of the Nation (New York: Harper and Row, 1957), p. 431. Cited hereafter as Morris.

[36]Independent Chronicle, Mar. 6, 1794.

Anxiety about religious change was not isolated from the other issues. For one thing, men like Hamilton felt that some form of religious belief was necessary for the maintainance of society. So in this respect religion was part of the larger question of order and restraint in society. Religion was a power outside man that kept him in line and insured a measure of restraint on his passions. Without such restraint man's passions and cravings might be released and this fear of the repressed devils in man's soul caused much anxiety.

The social institutions of the family and marriage were also seen as restraints. When Americans saw that these institutions were under attack in France they responded much as they had to religious innovations. Noah Webster felt that the people of France "are let loose in the widefield of mental licentiousness." One aspect of this licentiousness which upset him was the new laws on divorce in France, which offered "allurements to infidelity."[37] Hamilton also found the changed divorce laws disturbing; he was also incensed by the fact that "the journals of the convention record with guilty applause the accusations preferred by children against their parents."[38]

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[37] Revolution Considered, p. 19.

[38] Morris, p. 430.

The fear for the existence of traditional social arrangements went far beyond the issue of marriage and family life. To begin with, there was a growing fear of the equalitarian movement in France. Chauncy Goodrich wrote his friend Oliver Wolcott Jr. "our greatest danger is from the contagion of levelism . . . what folly is it that has set the world agog to be all equal to French barbers."[39] The apprehensiveness about equality, however, was almost never so clear cut, often it appeared as a vague uneasiness about the French Revolution in general. For example, Alexander Grayden found that in "this rage for French liberty and fraternity, there has been all along an utter disregard of the most obvious dicates of justice, humanity and consistency." In attempting to expand on this vague sentiment he notes "that ca ira was the word, and no matter by what monsters the business was conducted." He was upset by the fact that power had become "the criterion of right" and that while the French were attempting to make "a huge republic of the world, wherein all men were to be equal . . ." those men who did rise to power did so by "their intellectual acuteness in the acquistion of pelf,

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[39]Quoted in Richard B. Morris, Emerging Nations, p. 68.

or popular suffrage . . . without question to superiority among men!"[40] Grayden was clearly struggling with something he found difficult to understand and deal with. Deference was a keystone of American society at the time and it was so ingrained that any challenge to deferential arrangements came as a profound shock.

The issue of names and titles illustrates the nature of the social fear generated by the French Revolution. Noah Webster maintained that while the French dealt with feudal and papal systems their cause was just but "when they descended to legislate upon names, opinions and customs . . . they became contemptible . . . ." While he felt that some changes would be just and necessary, he was shocked "that the common titles of civility and respect should be attacked . . . ." Webster cited the abolition of Monsieur and Madame as evidence of French disregard for the animities of the deferential system. He strongly objected to the use of the term "citizen" in the place of deferential titles. For him, "citizen" was a badge of distinction just as the feudal titles had been. He kept the reasons for this assertion to himself, yet one can

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[40] Graydon, p. 370.

surmise that citizen and, its female counterpart citness, implied an equality of persons that he was unwilling to accept.[41]

French innovations such as the term "citizen" made some headway in America. By 1793, however, there was clearly a counter-attack on such practices. The Columbian Centinel published the following satirical poem on the use of the term citness,

> No citness to my name, I'll have, says Kate,
> Though Boston lads so much about it prate;
> I've asked its meaning, and our Tom, the clown,
> Says darn it 't means "women of the town."[42]

In this simple popular poem was the essence of the attack on the revolutionary French social theory. From 1793, many Americans tried to show that French ways were clearly and simply immoral.

In the United States the characterization of the French as immoral was reflected in a growing social division between the supporters of France and those who were shocked by the news of violent excesses. In effect, the French Revolution became the issue on which society turned. In Washington's administration the social life reflected this view of "the Jacobins" (American version) as ill-mannered and beyond the pale.

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[41] Revolution Considered, p. 15, 21.

[42] Columbian Centinel, Mar. 16, 1793.

Martha Washington openly denounced "the filthy democrates" and her example was followed by Mrs. William Bingham and Mrs. Robert Morris, leaders of the younger and older Federalist social sets, both of whom made it a strict practice to exclude Republican gentlemen from their social affairs.[43] Theophilus Parsons remembered that, as a child, he believed Jacobins were monsters and that once there was a great stir in the house because a Jacobin was coming to dinner. Parsons recalled that he had experienced both a great fear of the monster and an equal desire to see such a creature.[44]

The cane fields of Santo Domingo were far removed from the social whirl of Washington but the black uprising in the French island colony was connected to the growing concern about the social implications of the French Revolution. The situation in Santo Domingo prior to the Revolution was tense. Approximately 40,000 whites controlled nearly 500,000 blacks and the situation was further complicated by divisions between the rich and poor whites and between

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[43]Chester McArthur Destler, Joshua Coit: American Federalist (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan U. Press, 1962), p. 56.

[44]Memoir of Theophilus Parsons (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1859), p. 108.

the free mulattos or Gens de couleur and the black slave population. On May 15, 1791, the Constituent Assembly of France granted citizenship rights to free mulattoes, causing isolated black revolts and the decree was revoked on September 24, 1791. News of this was the cause of further rioting and in April of 1792, with the Girondins in power both mulattoes and free blacks were given the same political rights as whites. Three commissioners were sent to the island to inforce the April decree. Soon the ruthless commissioners came into conflict with the new governor of the island, General Galband, as a result Galband agreed to return to France but before he could sail his men were insulted by some mulattoes. This touched off armed conflict between Galband's forces and the commissioner's troops and as Galband gradually gained the upper hand the commissioners, in desperation, opened the city to the blacks and this started a general massacre. Thousands of whites fought to board the few available ships and on June 23, 1792 they sailed for the United States. They brought with them not only the story of horrible blood baths but, more importantly, they came with news of what the French Revolution was all about.[45]

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[45]Winthrop D. Jordon, White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812 (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1969), pp. 376-77. Cited hereafter as White Over

To Americans "Santo Domingo assumed the character of a terrifying volcano of violence . . . ."[46] for while a single black revolt was bad this was worse because it dragged on for years. Even this was not the most terrible part, in Santo Domingo the blacks had been successful "and for the first time Americans could see what a community really looked like upside down."[47]

The vision of a black dominated island was only part of the anxiety Americans felt in response to the events in Santo Domingo. There was also fear about what influence the Santo Domingo situation would have on American race relations. The fear was made all too real by the influx of emigres from Santo Domingo. There was a great outpouring of charity for the white exiles. The United States Congress appropriated fifteen thousand dollars, against the debt to France, for the use of those fleeing the island. The city of Baltimore produced twelve thousand dollars while New York built a hospice on Vesey Street to shelter the homeless exiles.[48] There was quite another type of greeting

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Black. Francis S. Childs, French Refuges Life in the United States, 1790-1800 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1940), pp. 13-18. Cited hereafter as Refugee Life.

[46] White Over Black, p. 380.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Refugee Life, pp. 85-87.

for the blacks who came either with their masters or alone. In 1793, Georgia barred the admission of free Negroes from the West Indies and South Carolina followed suit in 1794. In North Carolina all Negroes over fifteen years old were denied entry into the state. Maryland dealt with those slaves who succeeded in entering the state by passing a law that called for the arrest of any disorderly French slaves and their removal from Maryland by their owner. If the owner refused to remove the slave the state had the right to sell the slave back to the West Indies.[49]

Behind these laws was the great fear that slaves and free blacks from Santo Domingo would spread the French revolutionary doctrines of equality and freedom among the American black population. It was reported in the newspapers "that the NEGROES have become very insolent . . ." and that citizens in the South were keeping the militia on constant guard. The cause of this new outbreak of insolence, it was agreed, was the fact "that the St. Domingo negroes have sown these seeds of revolt . . . ."[50] In response to this contagion the slave codes in the South were tightened

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[49] White Over Black, p. 382.

[50] New York Journal and Patriotic Register, Oct. 16, 1793. Quoted White Over Black, p. 381.

to prevent the spread of dangerous ideas. In South Carolina, gatherings of blacks for worship or education were prohibited before dawn and after dark.[51] There also developed a movement to end the slave trade. To many in the South, the slave trade came to be the method of introducing dangerous ideas to America and by ending it they did not invision the end of slavery but rather the sealing of America against notions of black equality and revolt. In fact, the events in Santo Domingo were a severe blow to the small abolitionist movement in the United States. The movement was caught between its impulse toward abolition and its reluctance to support violence. In the end the abhorrance of violence proved a stronger sentiment and by late 1790's the antislavery movement was clearly being weakened by the news from Santo Domingo.[52]

In August 1789, the Gazette of the United States had pronounced that "among the innumberable advantages derived to the world from the revolution in America . . ." was the beginning of a profound feeling in favour of a movement "to vindicate the rights, and redress the accumulated injuries of the natives of Africa."[53]

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[51] Ibid., p. 383.

[52] Ibid., pp. 379-80.

[53] Gazette of United States, Aug. 29, 1789.

They called for France, England and Spain to join in this movement and aid the spread of freedom to their black brothers. When this sentiment returned to the United States, via France and Santo Domingo, it was apparent that they had not been totally sincere.

In reality, the anxiety about racial turmoil, religious and social change that began to appear in America in 1793 was only part of larger, more inclusive fears. Americans responded to specific events in France as they happened and this might lead to seeing the total reaction to the French Revolution as a series of unconnected responses. But in truth, there was a more general and more important reaction. Many Americans began to exhibit a fear for the cohesion and order of their society. They came to feel that the legimate bounds of human liberty had been reached and that the very existence of civil society was threatened. To a large extent, this fear was rooted in their interpretation of certain domestic events but it was never detached from the vision they constructed of the French Revolution. They saw, both in France and the United States, the coming of relativism and the decline of the absolute doctrines that had existed for so long. No longer were government decrees submissivly accepted, no longer were government officials free from the scandalous satire and criticism and perhaps

most important, the events of the middle 1790's seemed to say that every voice was of equal weight and that the hierarchical system, in all its ramifications, was being profoundly challenged. John Quincy Adams was talking about more than politics when he wrote his mother and said that France suffers most from one error; "the unqualified submission and the unwise veneration for opinion publique . . . ." He felt no nation could function by the dictates of the people and that if any nation tried to operate that way it would be "inconsistent with any regular permanent system of government or of policy."[54]

One important event that stirred the anxiety of Americans was the visit of the revolutionary minister from France, Edmund Genêt. Closely connected to Genêt was the fundamental threat to the government's Neutrality Proclamation and the desire to stay uninvolved in the European war. To those in the government and their supporters Genêt seemed like the Devil come to American shores. He stirred the people to turn against the express policy of their government and he was, in sum, the sower of fragmentation and pluralism and the destroyer of unity and harmony.

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[54] JQA Writings, vol. I, p. 210.

Before Genêt uttered a word against the government he seemed to pose a threat to order. He landed in Charleston, South Carolina and staged a triumphant march to Philadelphia. Along the way he was greeted by enthusiastic throngs of Americans who expressed their support of him and France. He had been dropped at Charleston by the ship l'Ambuscade which sailed to Philadelphia to announce Genêt's arrival. The ship itself seemed as threatening as Genêt. It was a floating propaganda machine with the foremast emblazoned with the motto "Enemies of equality, reform or tremble!". The bow and stern figures both wore liberty caps as did the top gallant mast and on the main mast was written "Freeman, behold, we are your friends and brethren". Finally, to insure that everyone knew she was a warship, the mizzen mast carried the words "We are in arms to defend the rights of man".[55] The reception of Genêt was looked on by some as a clear indication of future trouble. Alexander Grayden saw the whole affair as "hugging and tugging . . .addressing and caressing!" and a perfect example of "sans culotte foolery!". But more important he wrote, that from the start ". . . it was evident that

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[55]National Gazette, July 10, 1793.

the government was to be forced from its neutrality. . . ." He thanked God that Washington had control of the government and that he had turned back "the rage for universal republicanism . . . ."[56]

Soon Genêt took steps that were aimed at forcing the United States from the policy of neutrality. Bolstered by the pro-French response of the people, Genêt set out to make the United States a base from which pirvateers could prey on British shipping. He issued commissions to American citizens and used American ports to outfit ships. Gradually the hostility of the government grew and when Genêt was requested not to send the Little Sarah to sea he became outraged and reportedly said he would appeal to the people over the government. Apparently, Genêt had been influenced by his popularity among the people and led by this to believe that the people would support France rather than their own government.[57] There was some basis for this view besides the thunderous welcome he had recieved. Since his arrival Genêt had been part of the running critique of the Neutrality Proclamation. For example, the National Gazette felt

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[56]Graydon, pp. 363-4.

[57]John C. Miller, The Federalist Era 1789-1801 (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), pp. 137-41. Cited hereafter as Federalist Era.

that Genêt should "act with firmness and with spirit . . ." since "the people are his friends, or the friends of France, and he will have nothing to apprehend; for as yet, the people are sovereign in the United States."[58] In any event, Genêt issued a challenge with his brashness and revolutionary ardor. In substance, his actions asked who ruled in America, the government or the people.

The question was answered quickly by the government when Washington asked France to recall Genêt, which they did in exchange for the American recall of Gouvernor Morris. This mutual recall, however, by no means settled the question. Genêt and the general opposition to neutrality had stirred the feelings of those attached to order and government. They announced that neutrality was "the law of land" and that "surely it is the spirit of cavil or design" to claim that Washington was acting out of anything but the purest motives.[59] William Cobbett asked what else could Americans expect from a French minister "educated in the subaltan walks of the most intriguing court in Europe . . . versed in all the menial offices of

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[58] National Gazette, July 10, 1793.

[59] Massachusetts Mercury, Aug. 16, 1793.

corruption . . . ."[60] There were celebrations in favor of neutrality that mirrored the earlier pro-French feasts. In June 1793, at Richardets Tavern, in Philadelphia, a large group gathered to celebrate the birthday of George III. They ate an elegant dinner and toasted the British consul, Phineas Bons, George Washington and most of all, neutrality.[61]

By far the most important aspect of the Genêt episode was the response to Genêt's challenge to the government. As a representative of the French Revolution Genêt gave Americans their first real look at the meaning of the European uprising. Genêt, in effect, took seriously the revolutionary doctrine that the people were absolutely sovereign and such a position ran counter to the ingrained deferential and hierarchical pattern shared by many Americans. The Gazette of United States put this position in focus when after taking note of the raging debate on neutrality announced that "this discussion must cease . . . the government has said we must be neutral and the people have no right to question its wisdom."[62]

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[60] From Porcupine's Appendix, "History of American Jocobins" in William Playfair, The History of Jacobinism . . . (Philadelphia: 1796), p. 10.

[61] Gazette of the United States, June 8, 1793.

[62] Ibid., June 15, 1793.

The case of Noah Webster provides an individual example of the reaction to Genêt. Webster was an early supporter of the French Revolution. On August 12, 1793 he came to New York City and lodged at Bradley's Tavern on Maiden Lane; one of the people lodging there was Genêt. During his stay in New York Webster toured the l'Ambuscade and one night, at dinner, Genêt and he had a fierce debate. After this incident Webster's support for the French Revolution waned considerably and it was no accident that four days after his arrival in New York a group of government supporters including John Jay, Rufus King and Alexander Hamilton convinced Webster to start a newspaper to counter the pro-French propaganda.[63] Later, in 1797, Webster looked back on the incident and recalled that he had "exulted" at the beginning of the revolution in France, "but the mission of Mr. Genêt compelled me to abandon my faith." To him the Genêt mission was evidence that France was seeking more than the return of their rights, they sought to control or conquer the world. More important, however, Webster saw that France and her revolutionary dogma justified and promoted "defiance to the constitutional authorities."[64]

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[63]Harry R. Warfel, Noah Webster: Schoolmaster to America (New York: MacMillan, 1936), pp. 226-30.

[64]Harry R. Warfel, Letters of Noah Webster (New York: Library Publishers, 1953), "To the Public", Mar. 4, 1797, pp. 145-7.

While Genêt and his antics were important in generating anti-French and anti-Revolution sentiments in America, the rise of the Democratic-Republican societies also produced a strong reaction. Many Americans in the 1790's believed that Genêt had spawned these peculiar organizations, but in reality, they were modeled after earlier organizations in the United States and England such as the Sons of Liberty in America and the Revolutionary Society in Great Britain. What caused the strong reaction against them was that they purposed to function as a watch-dog over the actions of the government and "to guard against every encroachment on the equality of freemen."[65]

No phenomenon during the 1790's provoked more virulent and continuing criticism than these societies. A lady in Virginia who signed herself as "Xantippe" wrote that the Democratic Society in Kentucky was

> that horrible sink of treason - that hated synagogue of anarchy - that odious conclave of tumult, - that frightful cathedral of discord, - that poisonous garden of conspiracy, - that hellish school of rebellion and opposition to all regular and well-balanced authority.[66]

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[65]Eugene Perry Link, The Democratic-Republican Societies, 1790-1800 (New York: Columbia U. Press, 1942), p. 20. Cited hereafter as Link.

[66]Virginia Chronicle, July 17, 1794.

Such violent sentiments came not only from Virginia ladies but from northern conservatives such as Fisher Ames. To him the societies "were born in sin, the impure offspring of Genêt. They are the few against the many, the sons of darkness (for their meetings are secret) against those of the light . . . ."[67] Both of these statements reflect the growing generalized feeling that some insidous form of evil had sprouted from the French Revolution and that, with Genêt, this evil had come to the United States.

In many cases this evil went under the name faction. There was a common belief that factions were the major reason republics failed. At the time the Constitution was written there was much discussion of faction and how to deal with it. When the democratic societies and clubs appeared on the scene it seemed as if these earlier fears were coming true. Noah Webster quickly made the connection between the French Revolution and the rise of factions in America. He pointed to the excesses of the revolution in France and found their cause to be faction. Thus, he concluded that the events in France should show

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[67]George Gibbs, ed., Memoirs of the Administrations of Washington and John Adams, edited from the Papers of Oliver, Secretary of the Treasury (New York: 1846), vol. I, p. 179. Cited hereafter as Gibbs.

Americans that "in America . . . there can exist no necessity for private societies to watch over the government." Most significantly, he added that the French should learn "that the executive power must be vested in a single hand . . . and to secure liberty the executive must have force and energy."[68]

To Webster, the idea of private clubs, factions or any popular check on the government raised the spectre of perpetual disharmony and the absence of absolute power in society. In effect, this position is both political and psychological. Webster was a Federalist and a strong supporter of General Washington and thus his criticism of Jeffersonian democratic societies was political in that he was attacking the opposition. But the reaction was also deeply rooted in the psychology of the situation. Webster was steeped in the traditions of a deferential society. He looked upon authority as absolute. To him society was based on the submission of the people and their passions to authority and the idea that the people had the right to challenge the government or any form of authority was a threat to him. In response to this threat he sought to link himself with, and promote any idea or institution that would blunt that threat.

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[68] Revolution Considered, p. 23, 41.

He found both the idea and the institution in the concept of a strong, single executive as personified by Washington. The vision of a leader such as Washington dispelled the clouds of uncertainities for Webster. Washington provided a guiding light in a time when the obligations and anxieties of newly expanded freedom seemed too heavy to bear.

Webster was a man trying to adjust to the flow of history. He saw around him great changes in attitudes and beliefs. His response to the democratic societies was only the outward manifestation of much more massive inner anxiety. Perhaps nothing indicated the presence of anxiety more than his invention and use of the word "demoralizing". This small footnote in his long and busy life was significant. He sought for some way to deal with the history that buzzed about him and the word "demoralizing" was an important response. He used the word to describe the effect of the revolution in France and resultant war. The people of France were "released, not only from the ordinary restraints of law, but from all their former habits of thinking." They were "let loose in the wide field of mental licentiousness . . ." and, significantly, he choose the new easy divorce laws in France as "singular proof" of the low regard for morality there. Most of all, however, "demoralizing"

meant the efforts of France "to exterminate everything that looks like imposing restraint on the passion by fear of a supreme being and future punishments . . . ."[69] Thus, a large part of Webster's response to history was a vision of two worlds, one was the moral world of restraints and checks on freedom while the other was the "demoralized" world of the French Revolution.

When the Whiskey Rebellion broke out, it seemed that Noah Webster's "demoralized" world had come to the United States with a vengence. The issue at the center of the rebellion was the high exise tax on whiskey passed by Congress in 1791. The high rate and the fact that those indicted for violation of the law were often forced to travel far from their homes for trial caused a smoldering resentment until open rebellion broke out in the summer of 1794. The rebellion was quickly associated with the democratic societies and with the French Revolution. To some extent this connection had a basis in fact. When the large contingent of troops sent under Hamilton to crush the revolt arrived they found the French flag flying from the court house. The rebellion was,

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[69] Ibid., pp. 19-20.

however, not inspired by the French or the societies and the societies in Pennsylvania denounced it publically.[70]

In general, however, the response to the Whiskey Revolt neglected the essential grievences of the rebels and emphasized the influence of the clubs and their connection to French influence. David Tappan found that secret clubs were an "unhappy influence in this country" and that they were direct imitations of the clubs which had caused so much trouble in France. This influence was

> exemplified in that spirit of falsehood, of party and faction, which some of them, at least, assiduously and too successfully promote, and especially in the late dangerous and expensive western insurrection, which may be traced, in a great degree, to the inflamatory representations and proceedings of these clubs, their abettors and friends.[71]

The association of the clubs and the rebellion was further generalized to include the influence of France. Many conservatives saw that the revolt against authority in Pennsylvania was part of a larger movement which a writer in the Newark Gazette described in "A New Chapter - Political".

> 1. This is the book of the generation and downfall of Jacobinism.

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[70] Federalist Era, pp. 155-60.

[71] David Tappan, Christian Thankfulness Explained and Enforced . . . (Boston: 1795), p. 36.

2. Brissot begat the Jacobin clubs of Paris. The Jacobin clubs of Paris begat Genêt, and His French brethern:
3. Genêt begat the Democratic Societies in America; the Democratic Societies begat the Pittsburg Rebellion and its consequences:
4. The Pittsubrg Rebellion begat an armament of 15,000 men:
5. The armament of 15,000 men will begat an expense of near two million dollars, of which all the people of the United States must bear a proportion:
6. The expense will beget an attention of the people to the rise and origin of the clubs: and
7. That attention will beget the detestion and downfall of Jacobinism . . .

Thus endeth the first political chapter.[72]

One of the most significant responses to the revolt in Pennsylvania was Washington's message to Congress on November 19, 1794. In it Washington found the cause of the rebellion in "certain self-created societies" which had taken it upon themselves to resist the operation of the law. Washington's choice of words was revealing. By labeling the democratic clubs "self-created" he illustrated the basic objection to such societies. The implication conveyed by the term was that only organizations established by law or tradition were justified and that the "self" or individuals had no right to create agencies outside this pale of legality. Again the fear was the fear of relativism and the decline of authority. If

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[72] Newark Gazette, Oct. 15, 1794.

anyone (selves) could, at any time, create a group to promote a cause then would not life degenerate into a constant battle between conflicting groups and violence be the logical outcome. Thus, behind the term "self-created" was a real fear for the continued existence of absolute authority and control in society.[73]

In addition, the feeling that the "Pittsburg Rebellion" was an outgrowth of French influence spawned mild stirrings of nativist sentiments. There was a tendency to see disorder as a foreign import and to blame foreigners for the Whiskey Rebellion. Oliver Wolcott Sr. wrote to his son that "there is much to be apprehended from the great numbers of violent men who emigrate to this country from every part of Europe."[74] His son agreed and felt that the Whiskey Rebellion was "a specimen of what we are to expect from European immigrants."[75] Later in the decade this distrust of foreign elements would blossom into full-blown nativism and urgent calls to seal America from the contagion of Europe.

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[73]John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington (Washington: U.S. Printing Office, 1941), vol. 34, p. 29.

[74]Gibbs, vol. I, pp. 136-137.

[75]Ibid., p. 153.

Even before the anxiety over the Whiskey Rebellion had subsided, another event arose to further stir the fear for order and harmony, John Jay returned from England with a treaty which was to settle the long standing differences between America and England. In several areas Jay had capitulated to the British and when the provisions of the treaty became publicly known the people showed their disapproval with vocal and violent demonstrations. The Fourth of July in 1795 served as an occasion to insult the treaty and Jay in every possible manner. The Boston Town Meeting condemned the treaty and both it and Jay were burned in effigy. During the entire summer and early fall mobs roamed the streets of Boston protesting the treaty.[76]

To those attached to the Washington administration this popular reaction was frightening. Fisher Ames wrote that "Boston is in a very inflammatory State . . ." and he had "learnt that the Jacobins have been successful in prejudicing the multitude against the treaty." What worried him the most was that "the merchants and steady men" lack the courage to resist the popular outcry.[77] John Quincy Adams,

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[76]Charles Warren, Jacobin and Junto (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard U. Press, 1931), pp. 58-60.

[77]Gibbs, p. 210.

writing from Europe, saw the resistance to the treaty as "a combination of personal envy . . . factions enmity against the government . . . and foreign influence operating unseen . . . ."[78] Perhaps worst of all those who attacked the treaty, attacked the person of Washington in the most violent terms. Benjamin Bache claimed that, via the treaty, Washington had "debauched" the nation. Bache saw Washington's behavior as a lesson "that no man may be an idol, and that a people must confide in themselves rather than in an individual."[79] To those conservatives, like Webster for example, who looked to Washington as a source of stability, Bache's statement must have been profoundly frightening.

In essence, the fear was rooted in the discovery that the people, inspired by the American and French Revolutions, were insistent upon exercising their new freedom. It was one thing for the masses to elect their leaders, but it was something else for the people to maintain a stream of criticism against those leaders between elections. To those who sought order and stability in society it was necessary that the

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[78] JQA Writings, vol. I, p. 418.

[79] Aurora, Dec. 23, 1796.

people submit to the leaders they had elected. Freedom was, in simple terms, the right to choose your leaders, not the right to control them. A writer named "Order" made this very clear when he claimed that the people

> know that the majesty of the people is vested in the constitution they have adopted; that the sovereignty of the people is delegated to those whom they have freely appointed to administer the constitution, and by them alone can be rightfully exercised, save at the stated periods of election, when the sovereignty is again at the disposal of the whole people. The idea of delegating power and reserving the right to exercise it, is too absurd to be for a moment entertained by any but such as chiefly compose our Jacobin societies.[80]

This view of the nature of freedom was at the heart of growing reaction against the French Revolution. Both the events at home and the events in France seemed to be in opposition to any kind of rational liberty. As noted earlier, the religious and social innovations of the more radical stage of the revolution had frightened men like Webster and made them aware that France was intent on the destruction of Christianity and such social pillars as the family. The execution of Louis XVI even more than the social and religious issue, alerted them to the fact that the French Revolution was a threat to order

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[80] Columbian Centinel, Sept. 3, 1794.

and harmony. William Cobbett warned that what happened in France could happen in America and he drew a parallel between the execution of Louis and the attacks on Washington. Across the United States the people responded with remorse and dejection at the king's death and in many towns bells tolled in mourning. To some the regicide was part of growing evidence that the French Revolution was markedly different than the American. John Trumbull compared "the calm splendor of our own Revolution . . ." which "scarcely stained the scared robe of rational liberty with a single drop of blood . . ." with the "horrible blaze of glory of republican France . . ." which made "the very streets of Paris flow with blood."[81]

There was a growing sense that the French had passed the point of justified revolution and were sinking back into barbarism. Royal Tyler and Joseph Dennie compared the French to savage Indians

> We hear from France, that our ancient brothers, the French, the friends of Hurons, have tomahawked their chief Sachern, and his squaw . . . . It is said they made great canoes and bound their brethern, their sisters, and their infants, with moose thongs, and sunk them in the river, without allowing them time to sing their death song.[82]

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[81] Bloody Buoy, pp. 239-40. John Trumbull, Autobiography . . . (New Haven: 1841), pp. 168-9. See also, Diary of William Bentley (Salem, Mass: Essex Institute, 1905), p. 13.

[82] Marius B. Peladeau, ed., The Prose of Royal Tyler (Rutland, Vermont: Vermont Historical Society, 1972), p. 211.

The execution of the king had a profound psychological impact on the French and, to a lesser extent, the similar reaction was present in the United States. Louis had held a high position in the hearts of Americans mainly for his aid to them during their own revolution and when he was beheaded some Americans wondered why such a benevolent king should fall before the rapidly expanding revolution. Some thought that if Louis had been less kind and more tyranical he would have escaped the quillotine.[83] At the deepest level, however, the reaction to the execution was rooted in unspoken feelings about the nature of authority. If the people had the right to kill kings what then might be the limit of their rights? Were there to be no restraints on man's passions? Was civil society going to be the subject of constant assault? Was there no "greater authority" than the whim of the people? Regicide and the associated violence in France was evidence that these questions were valid and urgent.

Thus a combination of factors promoted the development of a strong sense of disapproval and fear of the French Revolution. The antics of Genêt, the democratic clubs, and the Whiskey Rebellion, the Jay

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[83] Dunlaps Daily Advertiser, April 22, 1793.

Treaty and events in France all worked together to create a sizable opposition to the Revolution. This does not mean that the enthusiasm for it disappeared over night. There was a continuing effort to defend the French and to defend those developments in America which were seen as the ominous products of Gallic influence.

First, there was an attempt to defend France against the charge that her revolution was bringing on general immorality. For example, "a Citizen of Philadelphia" translated what he claimed was an authentic French school textbook.[84] The translator noted that some in America had tried to make the French Revolution odious to Americans his translation, he claimed, was made to show that the French had not lost their morality. The book was full of maxims that defended the family, Christianity, soberiety, hard work and "submission to the Laws". One maxim was directed at the common criticism of the French experiments with divorce laws and infidelity. It advised "suffer not thyself to be led astray by bad women, but live in happiness with her whom thou has chosen

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[84] The Morality of the Sons-Culottes of Every Age, Sex, Country, and Condition; or, the Republican Gospel by Chemin, trans. by a Citizen of Philadelphia (Phil.: 1794).

for a wife."[85] Truly Spartan advice. In summary, the book argued that the French emphasis on equality would not lead to chaos but rather that "equality enjoins virtue, the practice of which forms the true republican and which only can bring . . . that happiness which tyranny and fanaticism have banished from it for so many ages."[86]

While such books sought to defend the Revolution as moral and upright, others sought to defend French actions as justified. While many Americans were repelled by the execution of Louis some were joyous that the life of a despot had been taken. The witticism "Louis Capet has lost Caput" made the rounds and was reprinted in the newspapers several times.[87] One of the most gentle and sincere Americans of the period found no cause to blame the French for their use of the guillotine. Ezra Stiles, the president of Yale, wrote that he never had doubts that France would gain her "glourious Triumph of Liberty". He believed, however, that "there must be more Use of the Guillotine . . . as I believe it has been exercised with Great Justice in general . . . ." This further use

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[85] Ibid., p. 12

[86] Ibid., p. 28

[87] National Gazette, April 20, 1793.

of terror was justified, he felt, because there remained in France "more hurtful and poisonous Weeds to be mown down in the Field of Liberty, before Right Liberty and Tranquillity can be established." He signed the letter "an unchanged Son of Liberty", indicating his awareness of the turn against the Revolution in America.[88]

There were other signs that the regicide had not completely dampened the approval of the French revolt. For example there was a popular song which some attributed to Joel Barlow. The song gloried in the fall of Louis and implied that freedom would be possible only after all the monarchs had experienced a similar fate.

> When all the sceptred crew
> Have paid their homage to
> The Guillotine
> Let freedoms flag advance
> Till all the world, like France
> O'er tyrants' graves shall dance,
> And peace begin.[89]

Similarly, there were attempts to defend those domestic developments which were connected to the French Jacobins. Ezra Stiles, from his prominent

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[88]Quoted in, Edmund S. Morgan, The Gentle Puritan: A Life of Ezra Stiles, 1727-1795 (New Haven: Yale U. Press, 1962), pp. 456-457.

[89]Quoted in Esther E. Brown, The French Revolution and the American Man of Letters (Columbia, Missouri: U. of Missouri Studies, 1951), p. 88.

position at Yale, came forward to defend the existence of political clubs. He found that the Jacobin societies had been "the salvation of France". He concluded that no good government need fear criticism from any quarter and "none but tyrants need fear them." In the end, he felt, they would be worthwhile if they only promoted discussion and informed the people on public issues, but ultimately they were to be valued as critics of unjust governments.[90]

Most important, there was an attempt to shift the blame of events in France and the United States from the revolutionaries to the insidous practices of the aristocracy. Concerning the situation in France, it was common for people like Joel Barlow to excuse the violence on the grounds that it was the product of the "complicated wiles of expiring despotism." James Sullivan, Massachusetts Republican and pamphleteer, felt that

> The man, who supposes that a nation can emerge from a long state of slavery with all the order, regularity and stability, which may be expected: in a well regulated government, is a maniac himself. Whenever a revolution is attempted it must of necessity produce convulsions, ravages and bloody carnage.[91]

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[90]Ezra Stiles, A History of the Three Judges of Charles I (Hartford: 1794), p. 70.

[91]James Sullivan, An Impartial Review of the Causes and Principles of the French Revolution (Boston: 1798), p. 83.

The problem, as Sullivan saw it, was analogous to surgery. The body had to be operated on to save it from its disease and in the process some violence would be done to the whole body. But he asks, should we not try the operation and let the patient die? He concluded that the French must endure the pain of removing monarchy and false religion and that the pain was the product of despotism fighting to maintain its hold.[92]

Perhaps, however, the most important reaction to the growing sense of disapproval over the events in France was the development of a conspiratorial frame of mind. Before 1793, approval of the French had been nearly automatic so when some began to turn away from it, there were expressions of distrust and suspicion. The idea of a conspiracy took hold. A writer to the National Gazette saw a conspiracy against France in the Washington administration. He saw the handling of Genêt and neutrality as marked by "a mysterious darkness, an assuming conduct, intrique and chicane . . . ." He sensed that the government had turned against the principles of republicanism and that "arbitrary measures, intriquing conduct and dark policy are totally inconsistent with the generous

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[92] Ibid., pp. 84-86.

sentiments and undissembling meanners that should characterize a republic." Most ominously, he claimed that behind all this deviousness aristocracy was making rapid strides in the United States.[93]

The Norfolk and Portsmouth Republican Society in Virginia also expressed this tendency to see a conspiracy against the expansion of liberty. In a circular they argued that apathy, aided by the wiles of tyrants, would lead to the destruction of freedom in America. For the moment, they claimed, France was the major target of "the tyrants of the world combined" but there was no guarantee that America would be spared. The fear of aristocracy was based on the belief "that in the bosom of our own country we have men whose principles and sentiments are opposed to all free governments and such are just objects of suspicion."[94]

Thus in response to growing criticism of the French Revolution and radical developments at home the tone of debate changed. Before 1793, there was isolated but important anti-revolutionary sentiment, but starting with Genêt and moving through a series

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[93] National Gazette, July 15, 1793. Reprinted in Massachusetts Mercury, July 26, 1793.

[94] Virginia Chronicle, June 8, 1793. Quoted in Link, p. 9.

of both foreign and domestic events disapproval and reaction began to grow. There was some resistance to this criticism but by 1795 pro-French sentiment was clearly waning. Those who spoke out against the revolution in Europe had considerable material to work with; the French, to American eyes did seem to be transgressing sacred traditions and mores. To challenge the structure of marriage, the family and all religion seemed to indicate that the French had lost their senses.

An important part of the reaction against the French Revolution was the appearance of a group of men in New England who used the sermon and oration with effectivness, and who sought to show that France had let loose ideas and movements counter to the eternal laws of morality. They also sought to warn their listeners to the threat these ideas posed to America. The subject of the next chapter deals with the attempts of these men to perserve America from the French Revolution.

CHAPTER IV

WATCHMEN ON THE WALLS OF ZION

> When formidable innovations and convulsions in Europe threaten destruction to morals and religion; when scenes of devastation and bloodshed, unexampled in the history of modern nations, have convulsed the world; and when our country is threatened with similar calamities, insensibility in us would be stupidity, silence would be criminal. The watchmen on Zion's walls are bound by their commission to sound a general alarm . . . . We are filled with deep concern and an awful dread, whilst we announce it as our real conviction, that the eternal God has a controversy with our nation, and is about to visit us in his sore displeasure.
>
> Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, May 17, 1798

George Santayana knew that high culture in America was not entirely detached from the general culture. He observed that at important ceremonies the American people produced their writers, poets and thinkers so that they may bless the occasion. Such figures, however, have a more important role to play, according to Santayana. They give speeches - orations - and in them "the impulses of the community can be brought to expression; consecrated maxims

could be reapplied; the whole latent manliness and shrewdness of the nation could be mobilised."[1] Thus, at public meetings, in the pulpit and the press the oration and its shadow (the printed speech) serve as a narrow conduit for the passage of ideas from a nation's thinkers to the people.

In the 1790's the oration played a vital role in the formulation of collective opinion. No group issued more sermons and orations than the clergy and thus they were often at the center of controversy. The large public role for the clergy was rooted in a long New England tradition. Since the early settlements the New England divine had spoken out on public issues and his congregation had listened and had often been swayed. So when the clergy spoke out on the French Revolution and related matters they were not taking on a new role, only carrying on the tradition.

The function of this chapter is to examine some of these sermons and to interpret what they say and to estimate what influence they might have had on those who heard them. The sermons could have been the reaction to new startling developments in the

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[1]George Santayana, Character and Opinion in the United States (New York: W. W. Norton, 1967), pp. 2-3.

in the United States such as the growth of political opposition to authority, the rise of deism or the general decline in religious fervor. To some extent they were reactions to these things but a careful reading of them suggests an even more interesting view.

In the largest sense, these clerics were reacting to a staggering series of events which included not only those listed above but also the American and French Revolutions with all their implications. Perhaps they were responding most of all to that great vague movement of thought called the Enlightenment. In the 1790's there was little historical understanding of this movement, only a cloudy sense that great changes had taken place and it was more than a little frightening. At the bottom, such fear was rooted in a growing vision of a world without supreme authority. Another way to put this would be to see their fear as the fear of a world without "fathers" populated by "sons" who would be cursed to constantly battle to fill the authority vacuum left by the departed father. In the symbolic world of the unconscious, the father took the form of any notion of transcendence - any idea, concept or institution above man that ordered the world, that gave it security,

stability and absolute moral law. Thus, religion, in its most generalized form, was seen as a surrogate father, as was government and the concept of the nation or national interest. Many Americans believed that all government originated in the family and it was the image of the family with an absolute head (father) and subordinate parts (mother, sons, daughters) that appeared to be under attack in the 1790's. The New England clergy responded strongly to this attack and shared their worry with those who heard and read their sermons.

One of the first clerics to find a significant audience for anti-French sentiments was David Osgood. In 1794, Osgood, from his pulpit in Medford, Massachusetts issued a scathing attack on the French Revolution and its influence in the United States. At the core of his sermon was the idea that all good flows from obedience to the father, in the form of God or government. He contended that all of man's troubles stem from "not regarding the work of the Lord, nor considering the operation of his hands." In Osgood's view the duty of man in the present crisis was to learn God's will and follow it exactly. America was specially blessed because God was especially fond of them and had given them the blessings of the true Gospel and

a republican political system. To ignore his will was to risk these precious gifts and His special concern.[2]

If effect, Osgood assumed the existence of an American family with God as the heavenly father and constituted government as His agent on earth. Constitutional government, in Osgood's view, had saved the United States from anarchy and ruin under the Articles of Confederation. Osgood, however, saw a threat to this form of rule in the French Revolution as represented in American by Citizen Genêt. Genêt, armed with revolutionary doctrines, had appealed to those "who envy the abilities of their superiors, and covet their stations." Genêt was also supported by those "who can have pleasure in tumult and confusion" and those who hope to advance to a better position during a revolution in the government. To Osgood, Genêt was a stranger amid the family encouraging the weaker members to seek higher, more powerful roles. He turned the sons against the father.[3]

The true evidence of this, Osgood said, was the democratic societies spawned by Genêt. The troublesome minister from France had been recalled but his

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[2]David Osgood, A Sermon Delivered on the Day of Annual Thanksgiving, November 20, 1794 (Boston: 1795), pp. 5-8.

[3]Ibid., pp. 11-14.

offspring, the societies, remained to challenge the government. Such political clubs were clear evidence of the rise of faction and Osgood pointed to France to show its influence. The French, he claimed, had always abhorred violence but faction had destroyed this abhorrance. If the factions had not arisen in France, the leaders of the early part of the revolution would "never have been guilty of those excesses and cruelties which chill all humane minds with horror." So, in France, it was an ambitous group of sons who banded together to challenge the father and this led to the excesses and horror during the Reign of Terror. Osgood stated that the American societies were founded "on the same principles with those in France. . . and should they become numerous here as they are there, they will infallibly have a similar effect."[4]

Not only did Osgood see a threat to the government arising from France, he believed that there was also a fundamental threat to traditional religion. Quoting from the work of "Rev. Dr. Smith of Princeton" he argued that a group of "political empirics" have "sprung up" and seek to cast religion from the state

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[4]Ibid., pp. 15-17.

"as they have cast it from their hearts." What upset both Smith and Osgood was the elevation of "false and misguided reason" and the purposed destruction of the living God. They were upset because with reason as God "each man carried his ridiculous deity in his own brain." Therefore, there was no transcendence, no common God, no moral law coming from that God to which all must subscribe. When each man invented his own deity there could be no order, only isolated atoms with no nucleus, no family.[5]

Osgood's sermon did not go unanswered. James Sullivan, writing under the name, "Citoyen De Novion", tried to defend the French Revolution from this pulpit attack. To a great extent, Sullivan put forth what was the common defense of the Revolution and the domestic events related to it. The excesses and violence, he claimed, were not the natural outgrowth of faction but rather were the result of frightened monarchs who refused to allow France to settle its own problems. As for the so-called French inspired societies in the United States, Sullivan defended them on constitutional grounds; claiming they were legal under the right of the people to assemble. He argued that the existence of such societies did not indicate

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[5] Ibid., pp. 23-24.

a general disaffection among the people, only "a few men chiefly English, Irish and Scotch people of low education . . ." were in rebellion against the laws, the great bulk of people supported the government.[6] Significantly, Sullivan believed that Osgood was trying to create the myth of a disaffected people in order to create the atmosphere for the establishment of a monarchy. Furthermore, Sullivan saw criticism of the French Revolution as part of the same conspiracy.[7]

Of the greatest interest, however, was Sullivan's view of government and the differences and similarities between his position and Osgood's. Osgood saw government as acting in the role of father to a political unit analogous to the family. Sullivan, on the other hand, believed government was "the public opinion, collected to a system, on certain general principles and rules."[8] In that statement, he expressed the fundamental problem that the pro-revolutionary segment had in justifying their position. The phrase "on

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[6]James Sullivan (Citoyen de Novion), The Altar of Baal Thrown Down; or, the French Nation Defended Against the Pulpit Slander of David Osgood, A.M.: A Sermon (Boston: 1795), pp. 10-12.

[7]Ibid., p. 7, 30.

[8]Ibid., p. 10.

general principles and rules" was never defined and was really the equal of the phrase "self-evident truths" that had been crucial to the development of a revolutionary ideology. Sullivan was appealing to that ideology while Osgood was appealing to a deeper, more traditional sentiment with his subtle allusions to the necessity of a society and government modeled on the family. The significant point was the need both men felt to seek higher justification for their conceptions of proper government.[9]

Early in 1795, David Tappan, Professor of Divinity at Harvard College spoke out against the French. Tappan had delivered his first anti-French sermon in 1793.[10] Perhaps encouraged by the success of Osgood, he took the national day of Thanksgiving as an excuse to again attack the French Revolution. In this sermon he emphasized the central role of God and argued that man should be as submissive children to Him. Tappan claimed that "the thankful christian" as he exalts God "proportionably abases himself." More importantly, the Harvard divine poured scorn on

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[9]Russell Nye, The Cultural Life of the New Nation, 1776-1830 (New York: Harpers, 1960), pp. 25-26, 32-33.

[10]David Tappan, A Sermon . . . On Occasion of the Annual Fast . . . (Boston: 1793).

those who "proudly imagine themselves important and meritious beings . . ." while the good citizen feels his "unspeakable littleness and ill desert" and "ascribes all enjoyments and hopes to the pure benevolence of the Deity . . . ."[11]

Tappan was truly angry about those people who would not submit to God's will. He called such a person "a little atom" and "a creature so polluted and offensive" and "so provoking a rebel." He asked "what name then shall we give to the man, who is unthankful to his God?" and he answered he shall be called "a contradiction to, and a kind of outcast from all nature; he has no parallel in the universe, except in the abodes of perfect malignity and despair." For Tappan, submission to God and submission to the father were linked and the purpose of submission to both was "to make us habitually contented and happy, lowly and kind, virtuous and useful."[12]

While Tappan was critical of French innovations clearly he was most concerned with the future of the United States. Again the centrality of God was invoked as the key to the future happiness of the nation.

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[11]David Tappan, Christian Thankfulness Explained and Enforced . . . . February 19, 1795 (Boston: 1795), p. 8.

[12]Ibid., pp. 8-9, 13.

Americans must thank God for his great bounty and must "fervently beseech the kind Author of our distinguished national priviledges . . . to save us from that restless, discontented and murmuring spirit, which is ever ready to depreciate or censure the most beneficent and prosperous course of affairs." We must also, according to God's wish, avoid "disdaining the idea of dependence and obligation" and avoid "pursuing the splendid phantom of an undefined romantic liberty and equality which would at once clash with social order, moral justice and the present frame and condition of man." The chaos in France, Tappan stated, should convince us of the effect of such a "splendid phantom."[13]

An important part of Tappan's sermon was a dual definition of liberty. Without the sanction of "eternal moral laws" liberty becomes licentiousness so he created a refined version which was termed "equal liberty". Pure liberty in his view was prey to "its own excesses or abuse" and it was the role of civil government and religion to insure that the laws of morality were invoked to restrain the passions of man in intoxicated by his freedom. Thus, the government, God, and God's agent on earth, the church, stand in relation to the citizen precisely as the

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[13] Ibid., p. 21.

father does to the subordinate members of his family. Tappan was simply applying the most common pattern of order, the family, to the confused political and religious situation of the day.[14]

Logically, Tappan attempted to emphasize the education and care of children. This he did by urging his audience to "give our children an enlightened, virtuous, and pious education, and thus establish in their bosoms such principles and habits as may render them future pillars of American order, freedom and glory." Education should not only create a certain kind of child but it should "guard their minds . . . against the contagion of modern infidelity, dissipation and vice; against a spirit of base ingratitude and complaint . . . ." Furthermore, education should keep children from developing "suspicions and censures of that Constitution of government, and of those public men and measures, to which, under God, we owe our confirmed tranquility and happiness."[15] Thus, for Tappan, behind government and religion was the deferential family pattern of the unchallenged father to whose benevolence and power subordinate

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[14] Ibid., p. 22.

[15] Ibid., p. 24.

members owed their security and well-being. Tappan's concern for education showed that he was worried about the future of the patriarchal model and that he sought to instill in his audience the awareness of the need to train children to accept this deferential system. Such early training took on added importance given the existence of a serious challenge to that pattern. To Tappan, the French Revolution symbolized that challenge.

So, in the sermons of Tappan and Osgood there was a similar theme. The theme had two parts. The first point was to announce the existence of a growing threat to both civil and religious authority. At the deepest level this threat was, to Tappan, and Osgood, a threat to the images of fatherhood. To them, the deity, the deity's agents (the church) and governmental leaders all were symbolic fathers who controlled and structured the existence of their families, i.e. the community. To challenge their right to rule was the cause of great anxiety for if society was divested of its fathers the outcome would certainly be the fragmentation of the community into isolated individuals ruled by their passions. The second part of the theme was the insistence that the threat to authority had sailed from France on the ships that carried Genêt and the works of Thomas Paine. The evidence was clear;

the democratic societies were copies of the Jacobin Club; the opposition to government was the beginning of the factionalism that had ruined France and the rising spirit of irreligion was traceable to French atheistic thinkers. In this vein, Nathan Strong spoke for all those who saw America threatened

> The dark omens are to be found at home. In our hearts, in our homes, in our practice, and in a licentious spirit disposed to breakdown civil and religious order. In affecting to depend on reason in the things of religion, more than the word of God; so as to reject all evangelical Holiness, faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and the ministrations of the spirit in the heart. In substituting anarchy and licentiousness, in the room of rational and just liberty. In supposing that freedom consists in men doing what is right in their own eyes; even though their eyes look through the mist of wicked ambition and lust. Here is our real danger, these are the omens the augur ill to us.[16]

It was really an old, old story. Strong, as well as Tappan and Osgood, were giving expression to the collective guilt of the American people. In the thirty years prior to Strong's statement the entire drift of events in America had been characterized by the theme of father-killing. In other words, Americans had sought to reject those earthly manifestations of the eternal father. There had been a rejection of

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[16]Nathan Strong, A Sermon, Preached on the State Fast, April 6, 1798 . . ., p. 14.

God as evidenced by the declining interest in churches and the disestablishment movements. The American Revolution was an obvious rejection of paternal authority and this tendency had continued after independence in the constant criticism and suspicion directed at their new rulers. The French Revolution was the culmination and most obvious instance of this rebellion against the most traditional and ingrained symbol of authority. Furthermore, Americans had seen the French revolt as a continuation of the American Revolution and had approved it with shouts of joy. When it became clear that the spirit of the French Revolution was present in America, the growing sense of guilt became apparent. Thus, men such as Webster, Osgood, Tappan and Strong gave expression to this guilt and the anxiety it caused.

They sought to project this guilt on to the French people and their revolution. The tendency to project guilt feelings served to revive the belief that Europe, and especially France, was hopelessly corrupt and beyond regeneration. But to project completely the accumulated guilt it was necessary to sever the ties between the French and American Revolutions. To do so it was necessary to destroy the notion that there was a close ideological and historical connection between the two events. In order to achieve

this there developed a broad-based belief that the French Revolution was the product of an insidous conspiracy against all government and all religion. At the center of this conspiracy was the shadowy organization called the Bavarian Illuminati. If the French Revolution was the product of evil men acting secretly, then psychologically Americans were absolved and also gained an elusive, but tangible, object on which they could project their guilt. It also provided a real threat that served to promote solidarity among the American people because a key part of the perceived conspiracy included the United States as the next target of the Illuminati. The invention of this fearsome menace from Europe was a key part of the contribution made by the watchmen on the walls of Zion.

In America, the prime mover of the Illuminati conspiracy theory was Jedidiah Morse, but he had help. Often conspiracy theories have been the creations of individuals on the fringe of society but Morse was not such a man. Born in Woodstock, Connecticut in 1761, he graduated from Yale College in 1783 and served as a Congregational minister in Charlestown, Massachusetts. Beyond this, he wrote the first American geography and gazetter and must be considered one of the early promoters

of national awareness by prompting an interest in American geography. He was also the father of Samuel F. B. Morse, inventor of the Morse code and developer of the telegraph. Morse did not produce the Illuminati out of a hat, he was aided greatly by the arrival in America of a book by John Robison, a professor of Natural Philosophy at Edinburgh and Secretary to the Royal Society there. Morse came upon this work in the spring of 1798 and probably read it in April or May of that year.

It was one of those books that dot American intellectual history. They seem to appear as if called to serve an urgent purpose. Robison gave to Morse the "real" causes behind the French Revolution and Morse gave them to America. According to Robison, the French Revolution was only part of a gigantic plan to root out true religion and government. He claimed that "AN ASSOCIATION HAS BEEN FORMED for the express purpose of ROOTING OUT ALL THE RELIGIOUS ESTABLISHMENTS, AND OVERTURNING ALL EXISTING GOVERNMENTS OF EUROPE. Members of this association had not only promoted and controlled the course of the French Revolution but had also infiltrated England and the United States and were "endeavoring to propagate their detestable doctrines . . ." in those nations.[17]

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[17]John Robison, Proofs of Conspiracy . . . (Edinburgh: 1797), p. 10. Cited hereafter as Proofs.

The association was an offshoot of the Order of Masons which had been outlawed in Barvaria and had subsequently become a secret organization somewhat separate from Masonery. The most interesting aspect of the Illuminati, as Robison conceived them, was their ideology and program. First of all, the "express aim of this Order was to abolish Christianity, and overturn all civil government." They sought to do this by undermining the basic morality which held society together. As Robison put it

> Sensual pleasures were restored to the rank they held in Epicurean philosophy . . . death was declared eternal sleep; patriotism and loyality were called narrow-minded prejudices, and incompatible with universal benevolence, continually were liberty and equality seen as unaleinable rights of man.[18]

To insure this change in morality the Illuminati sought "to break the bonds of domestic life, by destroying the veneration for the marriage vows, and by taking the education of children out of the hands of the parents." Robison held "this was all that the Illuminati could teach and THIS WAS PRECISELY WHAT FRANCE HAS DONE."[19]

Apparently, Robison was responding to the same fears and anxieties as Tappan and Osgood.[20] In essence,

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[18] Ibid., pp. 106-7.

[19] Ibid., p. 375.

[20] Charles I. Foster, An Errand of Mercy (Chapel Hill: The U. of N. Carolina Press, 1960). Especially "Common Problems of Great Britain and America", pp. 3-11.

he created the Illuminati as the secret brotherhood behind the broad based challenge to all forms of paternal authority. He saw the structure of patriarchal society under seige but he was also particularly concerned by the changed role for women in the Illuminati plan. Working through the National Convention of France, the Illuminati had it decreed that "there is nothing criminal in the promiscous commerce of the sexes." This was, in Robison's opinion, an attempt to remove women from their traditional roles as "the depository of all domestic satisfaction." Also, he asked what would happen to the future of the family if man, in order to obtain a woman, no longer had to enlist in the ranks of the married.[21] Robison also saw the workings of the Illuminati in the increased participation of women in the affairs of the state and society.

> There is nothing in the whole constitution of the Illuminati that strikes me with more horror than the proposal of Hercules and Minos [members of the order] to enlist women in this shocking warfare with all that is good, and pure and lovely, and of good report.[22]

This passage illustrated a real fear of the power women might have if unleashed from the duties of

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[21] Proofs, p. 437.

[22] Ibid., p. 243.

family life. Robison saw and condemned the evidence of this power in the French Revolution

> See Madame Tallien come into the public theatre accompanied by other beautiful women (I was about to have misnamed them Ladies) laying aside all modesty,and presenting themselves to the public view, with bared limbs, a la Sauvage, as the alluring objects of desire . . . . Was not their abombinable force in the church of Nortre Dame a bait of the same kind.[23] [A reference to the Goddess of Reason]

When women were forced to play such a role in society it was evidence of their true humiliation because, in Robison's mind, to be removed from your eternal part in the family structure was to lose your true role and this was degradation.

Robison's book strongly appealed to Morse and others and it was not long until the conspiracy theory began to spread. President John Adams had declared May 9, 1798 a day on which Americans should fast, pray and feel "solemn humiliation", and Jedidiah Morse, armed with new knowledge gained from Robison, took the occasion to lay out the facts to the American people. Actually, he took the occasion twice, once in the morning at Boston's New North Church and again at his own church at Charlestown in the afternoon.

In essence, the sermon he delivered two times that day was not remarkable except for the inclusion

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[23] Ibid., pp. 51-2.

of the Illuminati plot. He took as his Biblical text, "This day of trouble, and of rebuke, (or reviling) and blasphemy. Wherefore lift up thy prayer for the remnant that are left" (2 kings 14:3,4). The text was in keeping with the sermons of Tappan and Osgood and summed up, Biblically, the sense of fear and anxiety common at the time. Morse claimed that the United States was facing "a day of trouble" for several reasons. First, he noted the hostile actions of France as a primary cause. He was strongly influenced by the recently exposed XYZ Affair but his accusing finger pointed at France was a sign of a general abhorrance of things French. Second, the trouble was also a product of divisions among Americans and especially the French inspired alienation of the people from their government. He foreshadowed his later announcement concerning the Illuminati by noting that the domestic divisions were the result of "a subtle and secretly operating foreign influence among us . . . ." Third, according to Morse, the "day of trouble" was made even worse by "the astonishing increase of irreligion."[24] He supported his charge of irreligion with the familar refrain

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[24]Jeddidiah Morse, A Sermon . . . May 9th, 1798 (Boston: 1798), pp. 12-13. Cited hereafter as May 9th, 1798.

> Kings, princes, and rulers in all governments: government itself . . . preists and ministers of religion of all denominations; and the institutions of Christianity of all kinds are reviled and abused . . . . The existence of God is boldly denied. Atheism and materialism are systematically professed. Reason and Nature are defied and adored.[25]

Thus, this watchman of Zion saw the United States troubled by France, internal division and irreligion and asked for the salvation of "the remnant." To this point, Morse's sermon was commonplace, but he went further and asked "what can be the design and tendency of all these things? Have we not reason to suspect that there is some secret plan in operation . . . ." Such a statement probably stirred the drowsy in the back pews but he woke everyone when he announced that the "secret plan" had been unveiled by John Robison. He called Robison's book the best he had read on the French Revolution. The French revolt, he recounted, was the product of a secret society called the Illuminati and that Thomas Paine was an agent of the society and that the group had expanded secretly to America.[26]

Of even greater interest, however, was Morse's characterization of the Illuminati program. He claimed that the mysterious group sought to abolish Christianity

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[25] Ibid., p. 18.

[26] Ibid., pp. 21-24.

and overturn all civil government. Thus he transfered part of the blame for "the day of trouble" from his audience's shoulders to the willing (and defenseless) shoulders of a secret Bavarian branch of the Masonic Order. Next, the Illuminati planned to justify suicide, establish "Epicurean sensuality" as the ruling morality and destroy the idea of private property. Again he transfered repressed wishes and desires and the resulting guilt. Further, the Illuminati "decried marriage, and advocated a promiscuous intercourse among the sexes. . . ." and, last, they argued that evil means are justified to gain a good end.[27]

This last item was a clear indication of the guilt felt by Morse and all those who had applauded the French attack on Catholicism. Early in the decade and continuing until as late as 1795 Morse and the great majority of New England clergy had seen the French Revolution as the means chosen by God to destroy Catholicism.[28] Gradually their desire to see

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[27] Ibid., p. 21.

[28] Jedidiah Morse, The Present Situation of Other Nations of the World Contrasted with Our Own . . . Feb. 19, 1795 (Boston: 1795). This sermon by Morse was a good example of the clergy's continued approval of the French Revolution even as late as 1795. However, Tappan's early criticism, Osgood's efforts late in 1794, and some notes of warning in the Morse sermon of 1795 indicate that the reaction had begun.

Catholicism fall and their anxiety about the violent and novel means being used to achieve that end in France came in conflict and created an psychologically intolerable situation. Thus, in 1798, Morse had to resolve this situation and he did so by falling back on a blind faith in the will of God the father. He argued that the Illuminati and the rise of irreligion were temporary means employed by God "to overthrow popery and despotism," but he was quick to note that we should not allow ourselves to become involved in these evil means even if the end was justified.[29] On the issue of means and ends Morse showed clearly the intense conflicts and anxieties that arose out of the French Revolution. At the same time he projected the guilt for supporting certain means on to a secret organization he also attributed the existence of those means to the will of God. It seems that history has occasionally produced situations that force men into psychological corners. Morse was in such a corner.

Finally, Morse concluded his sermon with three recommendations to his audience. Of prime importance was the reestablishment of conformity and solidarity

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[29] _May 9th, 1798_, pp. 25-26.

among the American people. He argued that Americans should ignore the slander of their government and "as citizens, we ought with one heart to cleave to, and support, our own government." Further, in order to insure religious and moral conformity the people should rally to the support of the established church and shun new religious opinions. Last, Morse asked his audience to examine the social order and themselves and to "repent of, and correct, what one finds amiss."[30] The call for solidarity was rooted in the sense of guilt over the revolutionary activity or the transgressions against traditional authority. A sense of common shared guilt promoted the frequent calls for conformity (Morse's was only one of many such calls) and helped to create some basis for a cohesive state in the wake of the revolutionary period.[31]

Morse's exposure of the Illuminati did not produce a great deal of reaction at first but slowly during the remainder of 1798 and into the next year

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[30] Ibid., pp. 27-29.

[31] The idea that social cohesion is, at least partily, the product of guilt arising from some common crime has been discussed by several scholars. See Norman O Brown, Loves Body (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), p. 16; Franz Neuman, The Democratic and the Authoritarian State (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1957), pp. 290-292. Both owe a debt to Sigmund Freud, Totem and Taboo (New York: Vintage Books, 1918), pp. 180-207.

acceptance of his position grew. One of the first to praise Morse's efforts was John Thayer a Catholic priest in Boston. Given Morse's anti-Catholic bias Thayer's approval must be seen as one of those historical oddities that make life interesting. Morse felt that, in general, his effort had achieved good results. He was proud that there had been no opposition to his sermon "even in Charlestown, whose citizens, many of them have been the most violently opposed to the measures of the government and the most enthusiatic in favor of France."[32]

It was not long until others took up the conspiracy theory and made it part of their orations and sermons. On June 19, 1798, David Tappan addressed the graduating class of Harvard and warned them that the world outside the college walls was full of temptation and error. He also pointed out that there was "a more recent system" which sought to bring about the rebirth of an oppressed world and create a system of equal liberty. This system was being promoted by the

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[32]John Thayer, A Discourse, Delivered at the Roman Catholic Church in Boston on the 9th of May . . . (Boston: 1798); Jedidiah Morse to Oliver Wolcott, May 21, 1798, quoted in Vernon Stauffer, New England and the Bavarian Illuminati (New York: Columbia University Press, 1918), p. 240. Cited hereafter as Stauffer.

Order of the Illuminati. He sketched the history of the Illuminati and maintained that they had promoted the French Revolution and represented a "most alarming plan of hostility against the dearest interests of man."[33] John C. Smith, took the Fourth of July as the occasion to tell the people of Sharon, Massachusetts that the French Revolution was caused by "a combination long since founded in Europe, by Infidels and Atheists, to root out and effectually destroy Religion and Civil Government . . . ."[34]

Morse, however, received his greatest endorsement from the Saint George of infidelity fighters, Timothy Dwight. If the watchmen of Zion had a leader it was Dwight. He had become president of Yale College in 1795, and by 1798 he had turned it from a den of infidelity into the bulwark of orthrodox religion. On the Fourth of July, the citizens of New Haven requested that he speak to them and he obliged them with one of the truly significant orations in American history.

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[33]David Tappan, A Discourse . . . June 19, 1798, Occasioned by the Approaching Departure of the Senior Class from the University (Boston: 1798, pp. 4-8.

[34]John C. Smith, An Oration . . . 4th of July, 1798 (Litchfield: (n.d.)), pp. 6-7.

The structure and content of the sermon can be partly deduced from the title and Biblical text. The title was "THE DUTY OF AMERICANS AT THE PRESENT CRISIS . . ." which indicated a continuity with Morse's, Tappan's and Osgood's concern that America was threatened and with their desire to advise their audiences on the proper path to take. The Biblical text was "Behold I come as a thief: Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame" (Rev. 16:15). The choice of this verse indicated a concern with sin and uncleaness that was rooted in the guilt and anxiety connected to the sense of having disobeyed eternal moral law. Also the context of this verse was interesting. In effect, the selection was part of the story of the seven vials and the part Dwight chose was the advice given upon the pouring of the sixth vial which he interpretated as the epoch that produced a great antichrist movement. He saw the sixteenth chapter of Revelations as an historical prediction that had come true. Was not antichrist obviously at work in the World? And what should one do - one should "watcheth, and keepth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame."

The rest of the sermon spins out from this beginning. He personified the spirit of antichrist by making the Illuminati its concrete agent on earth.

His conception of the order's program was nearly identical to that put forth by Morse and, of course, he saw them as the formentors of the French Revolution "and all its dreadful appendages . . . ." This dreaded group, according to Dwight, had established several societies in America prior to 1786 but their major victory had been the complete triumph of their program in France. They had reduced death to eternal sleep; marriage had been degraded to a farce; atheism was taught in the schools and "the community, by the law of divorce, invited to universal prostitution."[35]

The content of the sermon, up to this point, was common stuff, and when he turned to his suggestions for what his audience should do in response to the rise of antichrist his theme was much the same as Tappan or Morse. But, when he turned from outlining the Illuminati program he launched into a unique and personal emotional appeal to resist the influx of new ideas and new morality.

> I am a father, I feel the usual parental tenderness for my children . . . . But from cool conviction I declare in this solemn place, I would far rather follow them one by one to an untimely grave, than to behold them, however prosperous, the victims of philosophism.[36]

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[35]Timothy Dwight, The Duty of Americans at the Present Crisis . . . Fourth of July, 1798 (New Haven: 1798), pp. 11-12.

[36]Ibid., p. 25.

In the face of these new ideas and the new freedom America's duty was clear. First, we must affect a complete separation from those who promote these ideas, in other words, from Europe generally and France especially. He asked "for what end shall we be connected, of whom this is the character and conduct"? Is it that "our churches may become temples of reason . . . our psalms Marseillois hymns . . . that we may behold a strumpet personating a Goddess on the alters of Jevovah." Or perhaps we seek union with France so that "we may see our wives and daughters the victims of legal prostitution; soberly dishonoured; speciously polluted; the outcasts of delicacy and virtue, and the loathing of God and man."[37] In these statements Dwight was giving voice to the pycho-sexual fears that have contributed so much to the American hatred of Europe and to isolationist sentiment. He was drawing on the old American fear of Europe as corrupt and beyond regeneration. It was historical irony of the first order that Dwight should find in the French Revolution, which changed the face of Europe, the evidence that Europe had not changed at all.

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[37] Ibid., p. 20.

Second, in addition to isolation from the source of evil ideas Americans should endeavor to make their personal lives the most virtuous possible. In this time of trial "private, personal obedience and reformation of life; personal piety, righteousness and temperance" were called for by God's injunction. To Dwight, personal virtue was the only foundation for a good nation:

> But it may be necessary to remind you, that personal obedience and reformation is foundation, and the sum, of all national worth and prosperity. If each man conducts himself aright, the community cannot be conducted wrong. If the private life be unblamable, the public state must be commendable and happy.[38]

This notion had the didactic sound of the Puritan conception from which it drew its inspiration. Also, it was directly connected to the idea that a virtuous people were a religious church-going people. Thus Dwight urged his audience to return to the church and religion with a new zeal for

> Where religion prevails, Illuminati cannot make disciples, a French directory cannot govern, a nation cannot be made slaves, nor villians, nor atheists, nor beasts. To destroy us . . . our enemies must first destroy our Sabbath, and seduce us from the house of God.[39]

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[38] Ibid., p. 16.

[39] Ibid., p. 18.

Thus, at a time when individual conscience and reason were coming to the fore; when the boundaries of individual freedom were being expanded, Dwight called for a return to a sense of common virtue rooted in the absolute precepts of the church. Also, he was not above seeing the future of the nation as dependent on the existence of this shared morality.

Clearly, Dwight appealed to the anxiety of those in his audience. The world was full of sin, it seemed to be everywhere, the enemies of Christ were growing and

> the sins of these enemies of Christ, and Christians are of numbers and degrees which mock account and description. All that the malice and atheism of the Dragon, the cruelity and rapacity of the Beast, and the fraud and deceit of the false prophet, can generate or accomplish, swell the list. No personal or national interest of man has been uninvaded; no impious sentiment, or action against God, and his religion, has been unattempted . . . . Chastity and decency have alike been turned out of doors; and shame and polution called out of their dens to the hall of distinction and chair of state . . . . For what end shall we be connected with men of whom this is the character and conduct? Is it that we may assume the same character, and pursue the same conduct? . . . Is it that we may see the Bible cast into a bonfire . . . and our children, either weedled or terrified, united in the mob, chanting mockeries against God . . . Shall we, my bretheren, become partakers of these sins? Shall we introduce them into our government, our schools, our families? Shall our sons become the disciples of Voltaire, and dragoons of Marat; or our daughters the concubines of the Illuminati?[40]

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[40] Ibid., pp. 20-21.

Dwight, I submit, was possessed by a demon. In the passage above the indefinite nature of the demon was clear. He tried repeatedly to give shape to his tormentor, first it was "these enemies of Christ" but they "mock account and description". Next, it became "the Dragon", "the Beast" and "the false prophet," later he personified it by evoking Voltaire, Marat and the Illuminati.

What was it that so disturbed Timothy Dwight? In part, it was history. His lifetime (1752-1817) had produced sweeping historical changes symbolized by the American and French Revolutions but beyond them there had been great shifts in belief. By 1798 the notion that man should be freed from the restraints of a divinely ordained structure was common currency and was being put into practice. At the highest level of generalization, man was struggling to be free of the family in its individual, social and political forms. Man was rejecting the father. By 1798, there were indications that a reaction to this prolonged period of rebellion was setting in and the reaction was largely psychological. Dwight was also reacting to this psychological change. When man has struggled to be free it seems that there has been an inevitable accumulation of guilt and anxiety resulting from that struggle. Dwight was giving vent to those

feelings and was also seeking to project them out on to an external object. The object took several forms, but by far the most interesting and significant was the Illuminati. The program of this secret society was the mirror image of all those impulses which Dwight and others sought to expel. Nothing provided a clearer indication of this than the repeated emphasis on those parts of the Illumanati program, such as sexual liberty, easy divorce and the separation of children from parents, which struck at the role of the family as the touchstone of order in the world.

In any event, this passionate sermon by the Yale president was welcome support to Jedidiah Morse. Another Dwight, Timothy's brother Theodore, picked up Morse's conspiracy theory and on that same Fourth of July in 1798 informed the good people in Hartford of the danger that confronted them. He told them that the French Revolution was the product of a group of men who aimed to destroy all religion and government. France was, he stated, being run by men trained and controlled by the Illumanati. In one significant passage, Dwight claimed, that at the beginning Americans rightfully approved the revolution in France but when the king was overthrown and killed this was the point where Americans had stopped to "reflect coolly on the

situation." In the wake of the king's death the ingenuity of the French "has been exhausted in the discovery of new species of wickedness." France was "not satisfied with guilt of a common dye . . . ." the Jacobin "delights in murdering the wife of his bosom, in destroying the life of a sinking infant, in plunging a dagger into a parent's heart."[41] It was only six years earlier that Theodore Dwight had praised the French Revolution in another oration, but that was before the Revolution had changed, and had not those changes been the product of a secret society? A society which sought anarchy and chaos and Theodore Dwight had never wanted those things.

In addition to the Dwight brothers, Morse had others who spoke on his side. But he also quickly drew a round of sharp criticism. A writer who called himself "Censor" wrote to a Boston newspaper and asked for an examination of Morse's sources. He argued, with some obvious hostility, that Robison was three thousand miles away and that Americans had no real hint as to his character and truthfulness.[42] Morse answered these charges in subsequent issues of the

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[41]Theodore Dwight, An Oration Spoken at Hartford . . . July 4th., 1798 (Hartford: 1798), p. 6, 24.

[42]Massachusetts Mercury, July 27, 1798.

same paper. These articles were confusing and to some extent inconclusive. The major thrust was to defend Robison because of the vast scholarly trappings attached to his book. Americans should also believe the book because of the high positions Robison was known to hold in great Britain. Surely, argued Morse, a man who was Secretary of the Royal Society of Edinburgh and a professor at that great university was to be believed. In a further attempt to support Robison, Morse cited the conclusion of the British Critic that Robison's work and the new work of Barruel, Memoirs of Jacobinism, were in substantial agreement. Morse also pointed to the great men of New England such as Tappan and the Dwight brothers who had pronounced the book authentic and valuable.[43]

One of Morse's thorniest problems was the anger of the Masons who resented his insinuations that their order was the basis of the Illuminati infiltration of America. In his May 9th sermon Morse had attached a long note to the printed edition explaining that the Illuminati were not really Masons but a perversion of the order which Morse sought to portray as good and pure.[44] In the newspapers, however, Morse found

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[43] Ibid., August 3, 10, 17, 21, 28, 31, 1798.

[44] May 9th, 1798, pp. 21-22.

insidous meaning in the criticism coming from the Masons. He contended that since the Free Masons were so angry with Robison "it must be because he has touched and exposed their secret friends."[45] Statements such as this clearly indicated the non-political nature of Morse's crusade. If he was attempting to aid the Federalist party he must have forgotten that the highest Mason in the land was George Washington.

Gradually, it became apparent that Morse would have to make another extended statement on the subject to defend his views. When the governor of Massachusetts, Increase Sumner, appointed Thanksgiving Day as a special day to thank God for his mercies, Morse had his occasion. When he stepped into his pulpit at Charlestown he was slightly more emboldened by the support given his cause and also aroused by the opposition to it. The basic message was much the same as in his sermon in May. America was faced with great troubles which he listed as moral laxity, materialism, atheism, "increase of luxury", "a spirit of insubordination to civil authority" and, most important, "foreign intrigue". He saw this last threat as our "greatest peril" since France has systematically

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[45] Massachusetts Mercury, Sept. 14, 1798.

destroyed true liberty in Europe she was to be feared if evidences of her presence were detected in America. Of course, such evidence was clearly present to Morse - the Illuminati were in America.[46]

In order to substantiate this charge, Morse attached an extremely long appendix to the printed edition. The appendix was a clear indication of the fact that Morse's crusade was no longer a local movement and that the printed edition was conceived of as more important than the spoken sermon. In the appendix, he tried to prove that foreign intrigue was operating against the United States. He summed up with the following statement:

> The intrigue, and consequent influence of France, in this country, I conceive, have corrupted, to an incalculable extent, all the sources of our true happiness. Our political divisions and embarrassments, and much of that Atheistical infidelity and irreligion, which, during the last twenty years, have made such alarming progress among us, are probably but the poisonous fruits of our alliance and intimate intercourse with the French nation.[47]

The details of this "intimate intercourse" were by then, widely known, but Morse ran through them again. He pointed to the similarity between the democratic societies and the Jacobin clubs, finding

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[46] Jedidiah Morse, A Sermon . . . November 29, 1798 (Boston: 1798), pp. 11-16.

[47] Ibid., pp. 30-31.

them to be essentially the same. He saw the coming of men such as Volney to the United States and the warm reception given Paine's work as laying out the welcome mat for the devil.[48] In effect, Morse was painting a picture that showed pure and virtuous America infiltrated by the agents of evil. No agent was more feared than the Illuminati. In May 1798, he had asserted that they were among us and by November he had gathered some further proof. Using a sermon by Joseph Lathop as the basis of his charge Morse claimed that in the northern part of Massachusetts there was

> a company of beings who discard the principles of religion, and the obligations of morality, trample on the bonds of matrimony, the separate rights of property, and the civil laws of society, spend the sabbath in labour and diversion [sic] as fancy dicates; and the nights in riotous excess and promiscuous concubinage, as lust impels . . . . That a society of this description, which would disgrace the natives of Caffraria, should be formed in this land of civilization and Gospel light, is an evidence that the devil is at this time gone forth, having great influence, as well as great wrath.[49]

Beyond this claim of a real Illuminati cell in Massachusetts Morse attempted to connect the democratic clubs with the Illuminati movement. Because

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[48] Ibid., pp. 67-68.

[49] Ibid., p. 22. The sermon used by Morse was Joseph Lathrop, A Sermon on the Dangers of the Times . . . delivered . . . at Springfield (Springfield: 1798).

the societies had spread the program of Illuminism and had sought to spread ideas in opposition to Christianity Morse felt justified to claim they were "apostles of Illuminism". Since the government and the people frowned on their open activities they ceased to act publicly. Thus, Morse claimed they had followed the pattern established by the European order and abandoned their public form only to reappear as the American Society of United Irishmen.[50] There was such a group founded in Ireland in 1791, to some extent, the product of the revolutionary spirit spreading from France. The English government repressed the group and many of them came to the United States and, later, more came after the Irish Rebellion of 1798. They exhibited such violent revolutionary ardor that their presence was alarming but there was no reason to connect them to the democratic societies.

Aside from these further details the sermon adds little to the general conception of conspiracy Morse sought to convey. It does offer an insight into the total reaction Morse had to the entire span of the French Revolution. In what amounts to a confession, he admitted that in the beginning he had felt

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[50] Ibid., p. 67.

graditude to France for her aid to America during the American Revolution and that he had totally approved the initial stages of the French Revolution. However, he continued "this graditude and joy were the offspring of ignorance" and he had now seen the light and recanted.[51]

In this same context he added a most interesting statement. He claimed that "judging from the fruits of the French Revolution, it must have had an impure origin."[52] The implications of this passage are meaningful. For one thing, it implied a certain methodology in the judgement of historical events. By "the fruits of the French Revolution" he must mean generally the Terror and he finds the cause of this in the impurity of the original thrust of the revolt. Such a view was consistent with the absolutist tenor of his thought and illustrated the strength of moral law in his thinking. To him there were certain immutable principles and the French had begun their revolution without regard to these principles and the outcome had been continually increasing perversity in the working out of the Revolution. At a deeper level the short passage illustrated the root of Morse's harsh rejection of the French try for freedom. He, consciously

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[51] Ibid., p. 31.

[52] Ibid., p. 32.

or unconsciously, felt guilt over his early support of a revolt rooted in such impure principles. The harshness and irrationality of his rejection was a direct result of this early support and part of his personal attempt to expiate himself for his earlier approval. The creation of a secret society as the motive force behind the revolution was a perfect device to insure this expiation because Morse could attribute to this secret group the earlier beneficent nature of the Revolution which hid the "impure origins." If everything had been open and above board Morse, told himself, he would have seen the evil from the beginning.

In addition to Morse's sermon there were a goodly number of similar efforts by other New England clergy. In sum, they all resemble Morse's point of view and added up to a complete airing of the subject in New England. While New England was flooded with rhetoric on conspiracy and the threat to the United States the rest of the Union certainly was not spared. The sermons of Morse and others were printed and widely distributed outside the New England states. William Cobbett, in Philadelphia, became a conduit for the ideas of the New England clergy and spread the conspiracy alarm to the nation in the pages of his Porcupine's Gazette.[53]

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[53] Porcupines Gazette, April 12, 13, 1798; Feb. 25, 1799.

Certainly the conspiracy view of the French Revolution did not go unopposed. Benjamin Franklin Bache, in the pages of the Aurora labeled Robison's book an "absurd collection of stories" and "contemptible mummery." He also implied that Morse's affection for Robison's efforts was rooted in the fact that both men had earned their doctor's degrees from Scotish universities. Perhaps this goes some distance toward proving that some disputes are eternal.[54]

Confronted with some formidable support and equally formidable hostility, Morse was not about to halt his efforts to inform the people of the menace in their midst. When President Adams declared April 25, 1799 a national day of fasting and prayer, Morse took advantage of the event to deliver his last major address on the conspiracy threatening the nation. After reading the sermon one has the impression that Morse attempted to deliver the final blow in favor of his theory, that he wanted to prove to everyone that a tremendous peril confronted them.

To begin, he chose a Biblical text that summed up his concern. To him, "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the rightous do?" - (Psalm 11:3) was a clear statement of the problem. This text lead him to a

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[54]Aurora, Aug. 3, 1798.

statement of his purpose; he was "an honest and faithful watchman" who sought to alert those who would listen to the dangers menacing the religious and political foundations of the country. He felt that "subtil and secret assailants" were gathering for prolonged attack and he believed that it would be "criminal" for him to remain silent.[55]

The source of this hostile design was France. Morse saw this clearly: the French had made war on our commerce and treated captured Americans with savage and cruel inhumanity. Plus, the French Directory had plotted to invade the southern states from St. Domingo employing an army of blacks. The army also had the goal of inciting the blacks of America to revolt against their masters. This was a reflection and endorsement of a common fear early in 1799 and illustrated that a fear of black revolt stemming from the French Revolution was not solely a southern concern.[56]

These opening remarks were only prologue to the heart of the sermon. Morse's main purpose was to prove that secret societies, inspired by the French, existed in America. In a remarkable statement, Morse claimed

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[55]Jedidiah Morse, A Sermon, Exhibiting the Present Dangers, and Consequent Duties of the Citizens of the United States . . . April 25, 1799 (Charlestown: 1799), pp. 9-10.

[56]Ibid., p. 14.

> 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 brothren, an official, authenticated list of names, ages, places of nativity, professions . . . of the officers and members of Society of Illuminati . . . consisting of one hundred members, instituted in Virginia, by the Grand Orient of FRANCE.[57]

He continued that he also had evidence of a similar society in New York and that the New York group had spawned fourteen additional such societies.

Next, Morse listed "the fruits" of these societies. He saw them as the cause of the political divisions which unsettled the nation, the abuse of "our wise and faithful rulers, the opposition to laws and "the measures of the Supreme Executive," the Whiskey Rebellion, the existence of "baneful and corrupting books," the spread of infidelity and immorality and the attempts to destroy the influence and existence of the clergy.[58] He had ascribed to a shadowy secret organization almost all of the historical changes of the preceeding thirty years. Thus, he and his audience might deny responsibility for these broad transformations.

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[57] Ibid., p. 14.

[58] Ibid., p. 17.

After laying out the proof for his charges, he followed his previous pattern and turned to the subject of the citizen's duty given this grave menace. First, he extorted his listeners to return to that sense of God's will governs all and that God punishes and rewards according to your righteousness.

> Our pious ancestors saw the hand of God in everything, more especially in all signal events, such as pestilence, famine, earthquakes, war and other calamities. It has been fashionable of late, to ascribe these things to the uncontrolled operations of natural causes and to keep out of view the Divine agency.[59]

Morse advised that his audience return to the practices of "our pious ancestors" and see natural events as divine warnings. Specifically, he asked them to see the cholera epidemics of the 1790's as God's punishment for the sin of allowing infidelity and immorality to reside in their nation. He warned that the epidemics would not stop "until we acknowledge the righteous hand of God in it, and are truly humble for our sins and reform our lives."[60]

The desire to submit to the judgment of God in all things was more than a return to the past. It was a symptom of the desire to escape the opportunities and responsibilities of the new freedom

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[59] Ibid., p. 28.

[60] Ibid., p. 29.

which had blossomed in the revolutionary era. The desire to totally subject oneself to God's will has psychological as well as religious roots. Submitting totally to God's will frees the individual from all responsibility created by the new freedom.

After the Fast Day sermon, Morse's fortunes waned. He was bitterly attacked by the Republican press. The story came out that Morse had received a letter for a Professor Ebeling in Germany stating that, in Europe, Robison and his book were given no credence and that Robison's character was believed to be unsavory. This thrust against Morse had considerable influence and gradually Morse and his theory lost standing in the public eye.[61]

While Morse seems to have lost public support it would be wrong to assume that the idea of a secret sect of subversives died a quick and quiet death. The concepts and terms used in the Illuminati scare entered the public's mind through the poetry and prose of the age. Clearly, poets and novelists realized that the subject of illuminism was common coin and used it without explanation or a sense that it was disbelieved. For instance, Thomas Green Fessenden found that

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[61] Stauffer, pp. 315-320.

. . . democrates and Illuminees.
Are birds obscene, and of feather,
Should therefore all be class'ed together.

They all object to the propriety
Of law and order in society,
Think reason will supply restraints,
And make mankind a set of saints.[62]

In American novels around the turn of the century the concept of a secret society received its widest exposure. In 1800, Sally Sayward Barrell Keating published Julia and the Illuminated Baron in which the Illuminati are portrayed not as political schemers but as promoters of atheism and corrupters of youth (especially women). Keating claimed to hate "female politicians" and denied that she was writing a political novel.[63] More important, however, than Keating's novel was the work of Charles Brockden Brown. One literary historian has concluded that Brown's villians "resemble the leaders of the secret society of Illuminati, or at least they resemble the popular idea of these leaders."[64] The most interesting of these villians was Carwin who first appeared

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[62]Quoted in Merle Curti, Growth of American Thought (3rd. edition) New York: Harpers, 1963), p. 185.

[63]Lillie D. Loshe, The Early American Novel (New York: Columbia University Press, 1907), p. 52.

[64]Ibid., p. 41. This judgment is shared by Harry Warfel, Charles Brocken Brown: American Gothic Novelist (Gainesville, Florida: U. of Florida Press, 1949), p. 113; David Lee Clark, Charles Brocken Brown: Pioneer Voice of America (Durham, N.C.: Duke U. Press, 1952), p. 174.

in Wieland, or the Transformation (1798) as a mysterious figure with roots in Spain and England and an amazing talent for ventriloquism. Brown promised in Wieland further revelations about Carwin if he should excite any public interest. Eventually, Brown produced Carwin the Biloguist which appeared in the Literary Magazine in installments between 1803 and 1805. In this story, that Brown never really finished, the young Carwin comes under the influence of a rich Irishman named Ludloe. Ludloe took Carwin from America to Europe and gradaully reveled that Carwin was being considered for membership in an international secret society. At Ludloe's expense, Carwin received the leisure to study and think and was even sent to Spain to learn the influence of superstition, the means of consoling skeptics into certainly, and how to "annihilate the scruples of a tender female."[65] After his stay in Spain he returned to Ludloe and learned more about the society. For example, Ludloe taught that the evils that infest society should be blamed on "errors of opinion" and that "man is the creature of circumstances . . . capable of endless

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[65]Charles Brocken Brown, Wieland, or the Transformation, together with Memoirs of Carwin the Biloquist (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1926), p. 306.

improvement: that his progress had been stopped by the artifical impediment of government: that by the removal of this, the fondest dreams of the imagination will be realized."[66]

Clearly, the figure of Ludloe and his teachings were modeled after the Illuminati. Also, it seems apparent that the secret society was an important topic among Brown and his friends. William Dunlap, for example, after reading the first draft of Carwin the Biloquist wrote in his diary "read C. B. Brown's beginning for the life of Carwin; as far as he has gone he has done well; he has taken up the schemes of the Illuminati." What this all proves is difficult to say but this fact is evident - the idea of illuminism was not restricted entirely to a group of New England clerics who used it to attack the French Revolution. Brown may have used the concept of a secret society to help sell his work or he may have been truly intrigued by the idea of a society based on super-rationalism but, in any event, he helped spread the idea throughout the United States.

In conclusion, the sermons and orators of Morse, Osgood, Tappan and the Dwights represent a significant element in the general reaction against

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[66] Ibid., pp. 310-311.

the French Revolution on the later half of the 1790's. They illustrate, first, that the French Revolution can not be isolated from the rest of the revolutionary era. These men drew no sharp lines between the French revolt and the general loosening of restraints on man which took place independent of the events in France. However, the French Revolution provided a focus for the reaction and served as a symbol for the general tendencies about which they were so anxious.

Second, these sermons show that, at the deepest level, the reaction was rooted in guilt and anxiety that arose from a collective sense of having repudiated the father. These men all insisted that representations of the father, in religion, in politics and society had been rejected and reviled. They dwelled on the French innovations which attacked the family and those institutions which took their pattern from the family. Thus, the regicide was an example, concentrated and more horrible, of the deeper revolt against the most traditional standard of authority known to man. These New England clergymen were experiencing a sense of guilt as old as Adam, but not Adam's guilt, they felt their own sense of remorse in response to their own sins.

Third, a central part of the reaction was a sense that Americans must act. The clergymen sought

to instill in the audience that heard or read their sermons the feeling that, as a nation, we must put aside wild notions of French liberty and accept the traditional restraints of the past. This must be done actively, they argued, by supporting elected officials, shunning foreign influences and returning to an orthrodox Christian religion. In most of the sermons there was a fear of a flying apart or fragmentation of society and the nation, and this was one implication of the French Revolution. To counter this fragmentation they dwelled on the sinfulness of the previous decades and insisted that pentence be paid by everyone in the form of surrendering individual autonomy to a greater national or religious purpose. In short, there was a vague but highly potent fear of freedom - freedom from which they sought escape.

CHAPTER V

MOMENTUM OF REACTION

> We have grown so wise of late years as to reject the maxims of Moses, Lycurgus and the patriarch -- we have by our Own constitutions of Govt and the preposterous use made of the doctrines of equality, stripped old men of their dignity and wise men of their influence and long, long are we to feel the mischievous effects of our modern policy.
>
> Noah Webster to Benjamin Rush
> Dec. 15, 1800

The French Revolution stirred up strong emotions in America. Before 1793 Americans tended to see the events in France as a great advance for all mankind, but after 1793, equal, if not stronger emotions arose to condemn the French and these emotions formed the basis of a strong counter-revolutionary movement. Was this movement solely a response to the French Revolution or was it a continuation of the conservative drift in the late 1780's? There can be no real answer to that question. The French rebellion intervened between the rising conservative movement that led to the Constitution in 1787 and the strong shift to the right in the late 1790's. Perhaps one should look at the conservatism of 1796 to 1800 as a response to the

general revolutionary tenor of the age and not a single revolution. Thus, revolutions and reactions both have momentum and their courses were not fluid and constant but halting and irregular producing a complex picture of expanding and contracting freedom.

One thing is clear, however: the counter-revolution of the late 1790's saw the French Revolution as the object of its wrath and used the news from France as a tool to shape a generally more conservative frame of mind in America. To begin with, the response to the French revolt tended to consolidate the notion that America was unique and the repository of mankind's hopes, while Europe was a hopelessly corrupt civilization offering nothing of value for the future. This produced a desire to bar outsiders if possible and Americanize those who were allowed to enter. Closely connected to this fear of outsiders was a growing desire to preserve what many Americans saw as a distinctive American community. The French Revolution had let loose in the world ideas that cast doubt on all the traditional absolutes of life. It had challenged the idea of absolute authority in government, society, religion, and, in the end, it seemed to threaten the very idea of order. It became for Americans a monster spreading its tendrils over the earth disrupting traditional patterns and mores. In response many Americans

sought ways to strengthen old forms of belief and maintain traditional ways of living. Obviously the fear of foreign influence and the desire to perserve the American family are closely related. Both derive their power from a growing fear that man had broken too many restraints and that real anarchy was a possibility unless controls and checks were placed on man's desire for freedom.

The notion that a community should carefully screen newcomers was hardly novel in American society. The Puritans had rigid laws on the selection of those who might settle in their communities. They believed that the New World offered mankind a new chance to build the perfect community and they saw that inclusion into this noble experiment should be limited to the worthy. The era of the French Revolution tended to reinforce and reinvigorate this belief. From the American point of view, the French revolt was further proof that Europe was declining and that America should isolate itself from the infection of the Old World's terminal illness. The evidence of this belief, at times, was amusing. The slightest indication of foreign influence was enough to cause some Americans to see grand plots and insidous design in the most innocent things. The fear of strangers and of the new, however, was profoundly important in the course of American

because it established, for the first time, in the new nation's history, the precedent for future legislation to suppress the protester and the person who refused to conform to community standards.

One of the amusing incidents that illustrated the desire to protect American shores from outsiders was the so-called Tub Plot. In February, 1799 the authorities at the port of Charleston, South Carolina arrested five people off the ship Minerva after finding papers hidden in the false bottoms of tubs. The five, "two French men, two men of color and a woman" were held in Fort Pinckney. The two blacks were put in irons "in separate apartments" and one of the French was rumored to be a Mr. Soloman "a member of the late Convention of France." Soon all the leading Federalist papers picked up the story and spread the alarm. There was wild speculation about the aim of these five strangers. Their mission was portrayed as part of the French plan to excite the southern slaves and there was a rumor that the plan had included the burning of Charleston. Most reports of the incident indicated that French emigres already in the United States were part of the plot. About three weeks after the story first appeared the real facts became known. There was no plot, no papers hidden in a tub, no agents of the Directory and

no plan for a black revolt. After their confinement the five were released and sailed, happily no doubt, for Guadelupe.[1]

Part of this strange incident was a desire by those in the Federal government to support their claim that America needed laws to protect itself against foreign intrique.[2] Whether the plot was a complete hoax or not was unimportant. The significance rested on the perceived nature of the plan, whether the perception was based on fact or not. The existence of two Frenchmen, two blacks and a woman entering the country with secret documents coincided with deep fears of Frenchmen, blacks and women. Perhaps nothing created fear more easily than the mere hint of a black insurrection. Closely linked to this worry was the dread of arson and fire generally. It is easy to make too much out of this fear of fire and arson. At the level of images and symbols, however, fire and flame served in the early part of the 1790's as a basic image to describe the spread of freedom throughtout the world but by the end of the decade fire had become a central fear. In addition to the Tub Plot, Philadelphia had also been swept by the rumor of a French plan to burn

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[1]Charles Warren, Odd Byways in American History (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U. Press, 1942), pp. 117-126.

[2]Lisle A. Rose, Prologue to Democracy: The Federalist in the South, 1789-1800 (Lexington, Ky.: U. of Kentucky Press, 1968), pp. 211-12.

down the city.[3] Fire was, of course, a more alarming thing in that day than in modern times but it was interesting that some Americans saw fire as one weapon the French might use against them.

Another example of the deep distrust Americans came to feel for foreigners was provided by Stephen Higginson, a descendent of Reverend Francis Higginson, the Puritan minister. Higginson was an important figure in Massachusetts politics; he had been elected to Congress in 1783, and was a director of the Massachusetts Bank. During the 1790's he was associated with Alexander Hamilton and actively supported the Federalist cause with his considerable wealth. In the summer of 1798 Higginson began to suspect that Frenchmen were plotting to take over the United States. His suspicion settled on a Mr. Lee whom Higginson saw as an agent of the Directory sent to America to further the invasion plan. As in the Tub Plot, secret documents were believed to be part of the plan. After Lee became aware that Higginson suspected him, he informed Higginson that the government had all his papers and had cleared him.

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[3]Stewart Mitchell, ed., New Letters of Abigail Adams: 1788-1801 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1947), to her sister, May 10, 1798, pp. 170-72. Cited hereafter as New Letters.

Later Lee even called on Higginson but his explanations were brushed aside.[4]

In itself, the suspicions of Stephen Higginson were trivial but the motive force behind them was not. He wanted a war against France to reunit the nation and expel the French influence.

> there can be no safety for us but in open and deadly war with France; without this the feelings and views of our people can not be extended to the point necessary to repel the poison of their principles already operating in our country,[5] which will operate our ruin if it be not expelled.

Higginson's desire for unity was a classic case. He wanted to stop any foreign influence from polluting America. To do this he placed great emphasis on a strong leader. The divided and in decisive Congress threatened the nation and what the country needed was

> an imposing firm leader to direct their measures, and to whip in the stragglers from party and duty. It is weakness and folly . . . to talk of acting independently of party, of judging for oneself etc. . . . nothing but an open war can save us, and more inverterate [sic] and deadly it shall be, the better will be our chance for security in future.[6]

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[4]George Gibbs, Memoir of the Administrations of Washington and John Adams, edited from the Papers of Oliver Wolcott, Secretary of the Treasury, vol. II (New York: 1846), Higginson to Oliver Wolcott Jr., June 29, 1798, pp. 68-69. Cited hereafter as Gibbs.

[5]J. Franklin Jameson, ed., "Letters of Stephen Higginson 1783-1804" in Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1896, vol. I (Washington: 1897), to Timothy Pickering, June 25, 1798, p. 813.

[6]Gibbs, Higginson to Oliver Wolcott Jr., July 11, 1798, p. 813.

The above passage illustrated the desire to surrender one's autonomy to a strong leader and experience the thrilling unity caused by war against a hated enemy. This desire was at the core of Higginson's nearly hysterical fear of newcomers.

While the Tub Plot and Stephen Higginson's antics may appear to be oddities of American history the Alien and Sedition Laws definitely were not. These laws were the result of a complex series of events but, in large part, they were the product of a deep desire to limit the freedom of Americans and prevent the infusion of foreign influences into American life. The spirit of these laws was rooted in the anxiety resulting from the nearly three decades of vast changes in American life. Before the passage of these laws in the summer of 1798 there had been a growing sense that something had to be done about the criticism of public figures and the increasing power of foreign elements. William Cobbett, the Englishmen, spoke as an American when he wrote "Surely we need a sedition law to keep our own rogues from cutting our throats, and an alien law to prevent the invasion by a host of foreign rogues to assist them."[7] Noah Webster, as early

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[7]Gazette of U.S., Nov. 23, 1798.

as 1795, pointed to the newspapers as a source of unrest. He felt that the democratic societies had used the newspapers to further their cause and that "well conducted gazettes" should not print news about them.[8] By 1798, he had concluded that

> It is obvious that the falsehoods and calummy propogated by means of public papers have been the direct and principal means of all civil dissensions which distract this country and have threatened it with civil war. This is a well ascertained fact.[9]

He felt that every time the papers had inflamed the public mind against the measures of the government the government had been proven right. This he found was "decisive proof that there must be something wrong in principle in opposition."[10]

Webster's belief that protest was wrong in principle was at the heart of the spirit that led to the Alien and Sedition Laws. The French Revolution had played a large role in creating this abhorrance toward dissent and protest. The legal attempts to silence criticism and protect public figures were

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[8]Harry R. Warfel, ed., Letters of Noah Webster (New York: Library Publishers, 1953), Webster to Samuel Williams, Mar. 24, 1795, p. 128. Cited hereafter as Letters.

[9]Ibid., to The Public, May 1, 1796, pp. 134-5.

[10]Ibid.

aimed at the shadowy figure of the French Revolution and all it had come to mean. The protest against neutrality, the Jay Treaty and the whiskey tax in the middle of the decade all were seen as direct products of French influence. The influence of the French revolt went even deeper than that. It was above all else a challenge to authority of any kind. The message it carried for Americans evoked an image of a world without the peace and stability of unquestioned authority. The laws against sedition and unruly aliens were, more than anything else, an effort to regain a world in which authority was respected and obeyed.

The attempts to enforce these laws show that their purpose went far beyond any attempt to gain political advantage or protect the national security of the United States. The Liberty Pole Cases in Dedham, Massachusetts offer a good example of an instance in which no real threat to security or illegal protest was involved. In October, 1798 an itinerant preacher named David Brown came to Dedham and aroused the people with charges that the government was handling public lands in a less than ethical way. This appeal to the people frightened the Adam's administration and a warrant was issued for Brown on a sedition charge. Meanwhile, Brown's followers erected a liberty pole in a section of Dedham called Clapboardtree Parish.

The pole was labeled a rallying point for insurrection and civil war and Judge John Lowell ordered it cut off. Before this could be done, a mob of Dedhamites entered Clapboardtree Parish and destroyed the pole. In the brawl which ensued a young invader of the parish was captured and forced to pay twenty dollars for his freedom.[11]

A Boston paper put the issue into focus by reminding its readers that during the American Revolution the beleagued revolutionary government had cherished such Liberty Poles and that the British had cut them off as symbols of rebellion. It was odd, the paper noted, that in 1775 the British were tyrants for cutting the poles but in 1798 "the American Federal Government did the same, but they were not tyrants for doing it, because the Sedition Law forbids our calling them so."[12] This was the heart of the matter. In the years between 1775 and 1798 the revolutionary ardor had cooled, largely because of the French Revolution, and the spirit of 1775 was not to be tolerated.

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[11] James M. Smith, Freedom's Fetters: The Alien and Sedition Laws and American Civil Liberties (Ithaca N.Y.: Cornell U. Press, 1956), pp. 257-60. Cited hereafter as Freedom's Fetters.

[12] Independent Chronicle, Jan. 17, 1799.

There was, however, much more to the matter. Why was the liberty pole so feared? The answer was rooted in the nature of the gesture and the fear it aroused. A Liberty Pole was clearly a phallic symbol. A sexual image in the broadest sense which carried a threatening message. The erection of such poles implied that the people refused to repress or inhibit their sense of individual independence and potency. In effect, the pole served as a threat to the leaders of the nation because it indicated the presence of the will to life, independence and pleasure that they feared not only in others but in themselves.

In response to the Dedham incident, Fisher Ames wrote, "What are we to do? The devil of sedition is immortal, and we, the saints, have an endless struggle to maintain with him."[13] Ames was absolutely right; the spirit of sedition was immortal not only in the Dedham protest but also in Ames himself. It was the impulse to freedom that all men have, either in some repressed or incompletely expressed form. Because Ames "felt" the impulse in himself he was led to refer to himself and his friends as "the Saints" in an attempt to bolster the sense of his own personal

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[13]Quoted in Freedom's Fretters, Ames to Jeremiah Smith, Nov. 22, 1798, p. 261.

virtue. The long battle with the monster of sedition was also a comforting thought - to battle one's own weakness was to deny it.

In reality Fisher Ames' "devil" was the true object of the Alien and Sedition Laws. This devil took the form of Benjamin Franklin Bache, John Daly Burk, Matthew Lyon and others but it was always the same - an individual who insisted on his right to freedom and autonomy. These insistent individuals were a basic cause of the anti-revolutionary reaction for they reminded everyone that freedom had meant a great deal to them too. Erik Erickson wrote "historical dialectics refuses to acknowledge the principle that a great revolutionary's psyche may also harbor a great reactionary; but psychological dialectics must assume it to be possible, and even probable."[14] The converse of this statement was true in the Federalist Period; the great reactionaries of that time harbored in their souls the impulses to revolution. Further, these impulses, or the fear of them drove their reactionary efforts with power and completeness.

It has been too easy to see the Alien and Sedition Laws as a temporary aberration in response to the actions of France in the XYZ Affair and the

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[14]Erik Erikson, Young Man Luther (New York: W. W. Norton, 1958), p. 231.

quasi-war. In fact, the laws were an attempt to turn back the tide of revolution both in America and France. They were one response to a growing sense that some "devil" was abroad in the land and that it could be crushed if it could be silenced or sent back to where it came from. To crush, silence or expel an external danger was one thing but to scour it from one's own mind was more difficult. Thus, "the Saints" found their enemy to be immortal and the battle endless.

Beyond the legal attempts to destroy sedition and foreign influence there were more informal proceedings against the revolutionary spirit. When the spirit reached sizable proportions the pressure and responsibility of the newly won freedoms produced a high level of anxiety and this created a keen need to conform to standards and force this conformity on others. Perhaps the best illustration of this tendency was the constant mini-war over cockades. Early in the 1790's the French tri-color cockade ruled as the badge of commitment to the French Revolution. As the reaction against the Revolution grew the anti-French produced their own cockade. It was an austere item usually composed of black ribbon with a white snap or button. Both William Cobbett and Benjamin Russell, editor of the Columbian Centinel, promoted

the black cockade and Russell indicated that wearing such an item was a sign of one's submission to the nation.

> It has been repeatedly recomminded that our citizens wear in their hats on the Day of Independence the American cockade, which is a rose composed of black ribbon with a white button or fastening, this symbol of their attachment to the Government which cherishs [sic] and protects them. The measure is innocent; but the effect will be important. It will add cement to the Union, which so generally and so happily exists.[15]

The key phrase in the passage was "symbol of their attachment." It indicated that there was a need for a display of allegiance to the government, but more importantly it showed that there was a strong desire for some gesture of uniformity. Symbolic actions were important because they gave an outward sign of your fellow man's conformity to your own beliefs. In periods of transition, especially transition as great as implied in the French Revolution, such signs as a common piece of wearing apparel offered some sense of assurance that others shared your beliefs.

The issue of cockades provoked verbal and actual violence seemingly far out of proportion to their significance. The Massachusetts Mercury urged everyone

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[15]July 4, 1798.

to wear the black cockade in order to intimidate "those lying dogs, the Jacobins, who have dared to assert that we are a divided people."[16] In Roxbury, Massachusetts a man wore a cockade of cow-dung in parody of the black cockade but, subsequently a more violent parody was written about him for wearing it.[17] One writer who signed himself "A Hater of Treason" suggested that those who refused to wear the cockade be listed in the press and

> it is expected that every such miscreant will be avoided by all Federalists as if infected with the leprosy or plague, that they will neither buy, sell, or have dealings whatever with them; but will treat them with utmost abhorrance as wretches unfit for society - as Arnolds or Randolfs who would sell their country for gold - bloody heroes who rip its very vitals.[18]

Apparently even women got into the act. John C. Wright, a congressman from Ohio, remembered the late 1790's as "the time when party spirit . . . ran so high that even ladies wore different cockades as badges of party attachment." He recalled that it was common for such ladies to "meet at the church door and violently pluck the badges from another's bosom."[19]

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[16] July 10, 1798.

[17] Columbian Centinel, July 14, 21, 1798.

[18] Massachusetts Mercury, July 13, 1798.

[19] U.S. Congress, House, Feb. 28, 1828, Congressional Debates, 20th. Congress, 1st Sess., p. 1447.

The battle over these cockades was a remarkable sign of things to come. One of the characteristics of the post-French Revolution world has been the rise of short symbolic expressions and actions as a common feature of modern life. Gradually, reasoned discourse has given way to the pamphlet; the pamphlet has given way to the news story; the news story has given way to the one minute television ad; the television ad has given way to the lapel button and finally, the bumper sticker. Opinion is now expressed in short bursts of words on a protest sign or in a style of dress. Perhaps people sense that the content of opinions has declined in importance and the simple expression of them has increased. No longer can a person link his beliefs with some transcendent justification so he is forced to gain support from his fellow man. Thus, those brief symbolic expressions serve the vital function of assuring people they are not alone in their values.[20] A man who sees a bumper sticker identical to the one on his own car does not necessarily agree (what is there to agree with?) - no longer alienated and alone he feels better. Apparently that has become very important.

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[20]The ultimate example of this trend is the bumper sticker "Honk if you know Jesus". Which implies that religious belief is secondary to the desire to know others agree with you.

The desire to force comformity went far beyond cockades, however. Politically, the Federalists sought not only to defeat their opponents but also to convert or silence them completely. It often seemed that the main goal was the banishment of dissent and immorality from their sight. Abigail Adams wrote that "the Present state of the world exhibits in the Revolution of France one of the most astonishing spectacles ever acted upon the stage to scourge the Nations of the Earth." Confronted with this revolution, America must be forced to avoid the alluring doctrines of the Gallic uprising. The French had caused the United States to sink "into a state of Langour, of Supineness, of Effinanancy [sic] and Luxury" and her countrymen must be given "severe and repeated scourging to arouse us to a sense of Danger, and to compell us to rise in defence of our Religion, our Liberties, and independence." She was also upset by the division which existed in Congress. Her hope was that the XYZ Affair would force dissenting Congressmen to give up their love of the French and support traditional American values.[21]

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[21] New Letters, to her sister, May 7, 1798, pp. 168-69.

Noah Webster expressed much the same feeling about opposition. The anti-French candidates had swept the 1798 elections in Connecticut, and there had been an increase in voter turnout. This was not the real source of his joy, however.

> It is with pleasure I can say not a whisper of opposition is heard in public in this State; and in private the voice of objection and censure is nearly silent. I rejoice also that every man of reputable character in this state appears well informed on the subject of the ultimate views of France. People appear to have correct ideas of the intentions of the French government and the tendency of their principles to destroy all the pillars of public peace and private safety. It is further the unanimous determination of the body of our citizens to put into office no man who is not known to be firmly attached to the religious, moral and political institutions from which we have hither to derived our private blessings and political prosperity. To be suspected of disaffection will now throw any man in this State into obscurity.[22]

The passage above should act as a corrective to the notion that American politics was, and is, solely the realm of power and money. Clearly Webster's interest in political victory has little to do with amoral power and economic gain. However, it did have a lot to do with the promotion of a broad moral creed and the destruction of disaffected elements. He gave expression to the often overlooked negative function of American politics. The political process has served to excise

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[22] Letters, Webster to Timothy Perkering, May 12, 1798, pp. 180-1.

disturbing factions and assure the anxious that such groups are of no account and that there existed a vast powerful center of common belief, into which all Americans might merge. Webster's statement must be viewed as a manifestation of his great need to destroy the pluralism and fragmentation that held sway in the first shaky years of the republic. The desire to enforce conformity would become a common feature in later eras of stress and anxiety.

The attempt to create conformity was central to the movement to consolidate the notion of America as unique and Europe as corrupt. Today it is easy to take the existence of the United States for granted, but in 1798 such a feeling was not possible. The United States was an experiment in republican government in a world largely ruled by enemies of that experiment. Being a weak nation in a world of giants added to the anxiety which arose from the increased sense of freedom the revolutionary years had created and produced the desire to solidify the American identity and to reject all contrary ideas. While the fear of foreign influence was a negative reaction, many Americans sought to confront their time with positive steps which, together, constituted an attempt to preserve the American family.

At times the devotion to a sense of family took an ironic twist. The need to create a stable community led to developments that were divisive if considered in the context of the nation as a whole. The basic illustration of this was the growth of localism in New England. In response to republican experiments in France many in New England came to believe there was a basic difference between freedom in Europe and freedom in New England. As early as 1793 Oliver Wolcott, Sr. felt that "New England is the only truly republican country on earth, and the final success of the republican system depends upon their firmness, moderation and virtue."[23] At the same time Noah Webster felt that New England was "a phenomenon in civil and political establishments" and that "young gentlemen" should come from the other states and "from every quarter of the globe" to New England and "acquire our habits of thinking and living." He was convinced that a "half dozen legislators or even scholars bred in New England and dispersed through the different countries of Europe every year would in half an age change the political face of affairs in the Old World." By 1799

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[23] Gibbs, vol. I, to Oliver Wolcott Jr., June 11, 1793, p. 101. Note that he refers to New England as a country.

[24] Letters, to Oliver Wolcott Jr., May 25, 1793, pp. 110-11.

Webster's faith in New England had increased to where he believed that its political institutions actually "had a most sensible effect in prolonging human life." Webster attributed the longer life span to the fact that the form of government in the New England states offered "ample means of subsistence to the mass of people" and because the religious institutions restrained the vices of the masses. Webster claimed that he had documents to prove his assertations.[25]

A growing sense of superiority led New Englanders to reject the newcomers from Europe and the style of life in the South. One paper wrote

> We are one people [New Englanders] more unmixed in our blood, more constant and unchanged in our original and discriminating principles, more faithful to our first institutions, than is now existing in the European world.[26]

Such sentiment showed the clear connection between localism and the French Revolution. The upheaval in Europe and its influence in America had promoted a tendency to return to the tried and true "first institutions" of one's local heritage. Further, it caused New Englanders to lash out at the South. They charged that the southern states did not control their foreign element, and if the United States failed it

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[25] Ibid., to Charles Holt, June 3, 1799, p. 199.

[26] Newhampshire and Vermont Journal, March 7, 1797.

would be "from the hands of southern strangers." Northerners generally found foreigners in the South "impatient of all restraint, mistaking uncontrolled licentiousness for true liberty" and thus felt that the foreign-born were easy targets for demagogues. Finally New Englanders harkened back to the Old Puritan policy of excluding foreigners from the community and suggested that such a policy should be reinstated.[27]

These expressions of local attachments and fear of outsiders were part of an attempt to create a stable environment in an essentially volatile period. Between 1789 and 1793 Americans had become entranced by the idea of revolution and liberty spreading to all parts of the world. By 1800 the reaction to the French Revolution had broken the trance and produced a return to the older idea of America as the true and only bastion of freedom. At least in New England, thoughts of world-wide regeneration by revolution were put aside and emphasis was placed on the idea of limited freedom and construction of restraints on the passions. Basic to protecting these gains was the existence of stable and homogeneous

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[27] Ibid.

communities and the exclusion of outsiders who did not share the beliefs which existed in their new home.

The South was not immune from these feelings. The institution of slavery, however, gave localism in the South a different appearance than it had in the North. While both areas sought to create stable communities they sought to construct them on different foundations. In the North the idea of limited freedom and religious restraint on the passions served as a controlling idea while in the South the need to perserve white domination and black submission was the force behind the growth of local consciousness. The variation was a function of cultural differences between the two areas and actually both localities were reacting to the same fear. The emphasis in New England on limited freedom was a reaction to the image of the unlimited freedom they believed they saw illustrated by the French Revolution. The situation was much the same in the South when the French supported equality for blacks. The situation in Santo Domingo served as the focus for these anxieties.

It became apparent that the contagion of French equalitarian thought had spread to the United States when black revolts shook the South near the turn of the

century. The response was to tighten the traditional community structure and eliminate all the idle talk of freedom and equality for when the slave and free black grasped desperately at freedom too, he was acting out one of America's great expectations as well as one of America's greatest fears.[28] Writing in response to the Gabriel revolt, a southern newspaper saw it as a conspiracy originated by "some vile French Jacobins" and promoted by "some of our own profligate and abandoned democrats." But the real target was neither Jacobinism nor domestic democracy

> Liberty and equality have brought the evil upon us. A doctrine which, however, intelligible and admissible, in a land of freeman, is not only unintelligible and inadmissable, but dangerous and extremely wicked in this country, where every white man is a master, and every black man is a slave. This doctrine, in this country, and in every country like this (as the horrors of St. Domingo have already proven) cannot fail of producing either a general insurrection, or a general emancipation. It has been most impudently propagated at many of our tables, while our servants have been standing behind our chairs. . . .[29]

Thus, the South, as a definable community, found itself under attack by an idea much like a family that

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[28]Winthrop D. Jordan, White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro 1550-1812 (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1969), p. 391.

[29]Frederickburg Herald (Virginia), Sept. 23, 1800.

found some evil outsider attempting to infect a neglected son with the notion of revolt against his parents. One of the unique characteristics of the South became the obsessive and continuing attempts to protect this black son from these thoughts of freedom. More than one hundred years later W. E. B. DuBois gave evidence to the deep impression the French Revolution had made on the South when he wrote these words for one of his white characters

> "Heah that John is livenin' things up at the darky school," volunteered the postmaster, after a pause.
> "What now"? asked the Judge, sharply.
> "Oh nothin' in particulah, - just his almighty air and uppish ways. B'lieve I did heah somethin' about his givin' talks on the French Revolution, equality, and such like. He's what I call a dangerous Nigger.[30]

DuBois gave some idea of how importantly Americans, in all parts of the country, have viewed education. They have seen schools and all other aspects of education as vital forces in blocking the spread of revolutionary ideas and in creating an attachment to the established institutions. While the use of schools as a tool of control was as old as man, the revolutionary era 1776-1800 produced a new sense that education must function to stablize the

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[30]W. E. B. DuBois, "The Coming of John" in Souls of Black Folk (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett, 1961), p. 177.

American nation. Even before the French Revolution broke out, Noah Webster wrote,

> Our constitutions of civil government are not yet firmly established; our national character is not yet formed; and it is an object of vast magnitude that systems of education should be adopted and pursued which implant in the minds of the American youth the principles of virtue and of liberty and inspire them with just and liberal attachment to their country.[31]

When American saw the multiple terrors caused by the French Revolution the desire to protect their young was increased. The feeling was given greater urgency because it was widely believed that the French were making "a truly diabolical effort to corrupt the minds of the Rising Generation, to make them imbibe, with their very milk, as it were, the poison of atheism and disaffection."[32] The result was a movement to protect young Americans from foreign ideas. Thus, Webster admitted that his work in education had "the express design of detaching the children of the United States from their dependence on foreign countries for books and ideas, and informing them early with a knowledge and love of their own republican government."[33]

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[31]Noah Webster, "Education of Youth" in Frederick Rudolf, ed., Essays on Education in the Early Republic (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U. Press, 1965), p. 45. This important essay by Webster first appeared in six installments in the American Magazine (1787-88) and later in N. Webster, A Collection of Essays . . . (Boston: 1790).

[32]Gazette of the U.S., June 4, 1800.

[33]Letters, to the Public, July 19, 1796, p. 138.

Webster later sought to allay even greater fears than those caused by foreign ideas. The revolutions he had seen created an idea of individual self-sufficiency. Man no longer accepted the dictates of traditional morality and religion unless he saw fit to do so. This lack of moral cohesion was, for Webster, one of the disturbing products of the French Revolution. To counteract this moral revolution he sought to use education to create in the young a sense of subordination to higher law. In a letter to David McClure, who had asked Webster's advice on educational philosophy, Webster wrote that "the Christian religion is the most important and one of the first things in which all children, under a free government, ought to be instructed." Man, from Webster's point of view, could not live in society guided only by the precepts of human reason; the Christian religion must provide divine law in order to restrain man's passions. Thus, "the most efficient support of human laws is the full belief that the subjects of such laws are accountable to higher authority than human tribunals." The place to inculcate this subordination to higher law was in the family and the school

> The foundation of all free government and of all social order must be laid in families and in the discipline of youth . . . [the young] must be accustomed to subordination and subjected to the

> authority and influence of good principles . . . the pupil must believe himself to be accountable for his actions to the Supreme Being as well as human laws. . . .[34]

The schools, however, served another function in relation to the French Revolution. Through textbooks they taught nineteenth-century American school children that the French revolt was not to be admired and that it had little or no connection to the American Revolution. In effect, these books painted a portrait of the French Revolution using the violent disapproval of the late 1790's as a model.

Textbooks almost totally ignored the causes of the revolution in France and dwelled on the later violent period. They constantly emphasized the role of atheism and implied that it was a major cause of the excesses and that it was the state religion for many years. Many texts even warned that there was still a danger of infidelity spreading from its home in France to other countries.

The attitude toward the Revolution caused France, as a nation, to be seen as a source and center of sin. One 1814 geography text claimed that

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[34] Letters, Oct. 25, 1836, p. 456.

> Even during the horrors of the Revolution, Paris continued to be the center of dissipation; and while in one part of the city, the revolutionary axe was immolating its numerous victims, in another, the theatres were crowded and everything wore the aspect of joyous festivity.[35]

Paris was almost always portrayed as a gay, superficial and sinful city in opposition to drab but moral London. The texts portrayed education in France as failing to educate its lower classes, French higher education was seen as leading to loose morals. The books acknowledged the universal use of French but English was seen as the superior language. Thus, the nineteenth-century American was taught that France and her Revolution were to be avoided.

By far, however, the most interesting aspect of those schoolbooks was their handling of the comparison between the American Revolution and the French Revolution. The texts could not avoid the fact that the American Revolution had inspired the French but this was always qualified by the insistence that the spirit of freedom had been perverted in transit.

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[35]Quoted in Ruth Miller Elson, Guardians of Tradition: American Schoolbooks of the Nineteenth-Cenutry (Lincoln, Neb.: U. of Nebraska Press, 1964), p. 134. My discussion of the French Revolution as it appeared in schoolbooks is based on Elson's exhaustive research and conclusions.

Daniel Webster's Bunker Hill Monument Address in 1825 contained the best example of the idea that the French changed the American Revolution into something terrible. Webster's oration was widely reprinted in schoolbooks.

> The great wheel of political revolution began to move in America. Here its rotation was guarded, regular and safe. Transferred to the other continent, from unfortunate but natural causes, it received an irregular and violent impulse; it whirled along with fearful celerity; til at length, like the charrot wheels in races of antiquity, it took fire from the rapidity of its own motion, and blazed onward, spreading conflagration and terror around.[36]

In general, the texts sought as Daniel Webster had, to separate the two revolutions. In no instance was France given credit for her aid during the American Revolutionary War. But more important there was no sense that the two revolutions were alike in anyway. The texts never conceded that both shared similar injustices as partial causes for the revolts, nor that the two uprisings shared a similar intellectual and political spirit. In short, the description of the French Revolution and its amputation from the American revolt "supports the idea that the American Revolution was bloodless, conservative and unique among revolutions."[37]

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[36]Quoted in Ibid., pp. 139-40.

[37]Ibid., p. 140.

The inclination to portray the American revolutionary experience as different from the French was also present outside the schools. Perhaps the most important and revealing illustration of this tendency was John Quincy Adams' promotion in America of a little book he had discovered in Germany. The book was The French and American Revolutions Compared by Freidrich Gentz, a one time student of Immanuel Kant, and a friend of many leading intellectual lights of Europe and later the secretary to the Congress of Vienna. Adams read Gentz at the age of thirty-three while he was the American Minister to Prussia, he translated the long essay and arranged to have it published in Philadelphia in 1800.[38] In his preface to the American edition Adams made clear his position on the issue. He called Gentz "one of the most distinguished political writers in Germany" and recommended the essay

> because it rescues that revolution [the American] from the disgraceful imputation of having proceeded from the same principles as that of France. This error has no where been more frequently repeated, no where of more pernicious tendency than in America itself.[39]

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[38]Worthington C. Ford, The Writings of John Quincy Adams, vol. II, (New York: MacMillan, 1913), JQA to Friedrich Gentz, June 16, 1800, pp. 463-64.

[39]Friedrich Gentz, The French and American Revolutions Compared, trans, by John Quincy Adams in Stefan Possony, ed., Three Revolutions (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1959), p. 3.

Adams also revealed that his attitude toward the late events in France had not changed significantly since his "Publicola Letters" earlier in the decade. For him, the distinction between the revolutions was essentially moral. In 1800, he was still fighting moral confusion and defending absolutes in the form of "the plain sense of mankind"

> A modern philosopher may contend that the sheriff, who executes a criminal, and the highwayman, who murders a traveller, act upon the same principles; the plain sense of mankind will see the same difference between them, that is here proved between the American and French Revolutions. - The difference between right and wrong.[40]

The essay itself was predicated on this distinction between right and wrong. The American Revolution was rooted in principles "of which the right was evident, partly upon such, as it was at least very questionable, whether they were not right and from beginning to end upon no one that was clearly and decidedly wrong. . . ." The French Revolution, on the other hand, "was an uninterrupted series of steps, the wrong of which could not, upon rigorous principles, for a moment be doubted." Gentz claimed that "the word 'right' would have vanished from the French language . . ." if the revolutionaries had not produced "an imaginary right

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[40] Ibid., p. 4.

of the nation, to do whatever they, or their representatives should please. . . ." This right of the people Gentz dismissed as "a chimerical principle." The idea that absolute principles had given way to some "right of the nation" caused the French to carry out their revolt with "absolute and total indefiniteness" that led to the point where every opinion carried the same weight.[41] Gentz was, in effect, putting into words the deepest fears Americans had about revolution - that there would never again be any absolutes, any unity to life or any authority in the world on which one could rely.

If the French Revolution had destroyed all these things then was not the American Revolution at least an accomplice in the crime? No, Gentz argued, because the American revolt was essentially "defensive" while the French was "offensive." He found this distinction "essential and decisive." The British had constantly forced the issue on the Americans who opposed the mother country only in exact relation to the attack made upon them. Gentz characterized the American Revolution as "a model of moderation in defence" against the tyranny of George III and parliament. The French, on the other hand, had "displayed

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[41] Ibid., pp. 35, 48-9, 81.

an unparalleled example of violence and inexorable fury in attack." While the American revolt measured its responses to the nature of the British crimes, the French Revolution "became more and more violent and terrible, the more cause it had to grow milder." Gentz, in this regard used an argument about Louis XVI that was common in America. He asserted that if Louis had been more intolerant the Revolution would have retreated in the face of his strength. Instead the French snapped "the last thread by which they still held together with a lawful existence" and in a frenzy "murdered justice herself, in the person of the most conscientious and upright monarch who had ever adorned a throne."[42]

The publication of Gentz's book in America was a significant event. It illustrated the growing movement to separate the American Revolution from the unacceptable vision of Revolution in the Old World. The desire on Adams' part to moderate the portrait of the American revolt was based on his perception of the violent stage of the European Revolution. In America, the French Revolution had tended to revitalize the revolutionary spirit of 1776 and that revitalization threatened the stabilization attained by the Constitution

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[42] Ibid., pp. 63, 52.

and the passage of time. Feeling a desire to protect this stabilization, conservatives like Adams found it necessary to sever the apparent ties between the American and French Revolution. On the surface this may appear as a matter of political expediency - the Jeffersonians were closely connected, in public mind, with the French and to discredit the French was to discredit Jefferson. The movement to moderate the American Revolution, however, also had very basic psychological motives. By 1800, the memory of 1776 was beginning to fade slightly, but it still caused an evocation of wonderful disorder and a sense of freedom. The revolt in France had rekindled these feelings but it also evoked, at the same time, a greater need to repress and limit the spirit of freedom. The French Revolution could be repudiated as insane terror or the product of an insidous conspiracy, but to repress the American Revolution was more difficult. Americans still felt immense pride in their own revolt and thus the only choice was to change 1776 from a violent overthrow of a king to a moderate defensive action against a tyrant.

In effect, conservatives were confronted with an educational task. In order to repress revolution in themselves and in society, they set out to repudiate the French uprising and to moderate the vision of the

American Revolution. It is common wisdom to see that education during the early years of the republic "was shoved into the background, as it has always been in periods of crisis."[43] The opposite was probably true. The crisis of rapidly expanding freedom and dissolving restraints provoked men to great educational efforts. By these efforts they helped shape two myths - one was the myth of the French Revolution, the other was the myth of the American struggle for independence.

These mythological constructions were necessary for the growth and future stability of the American family. A revolutionary tradition would have run counter to a sense of unity and common purpose. In the aftermath of the actual event, revolution could have become a state of mind which accepted fluidity, change and pluralism. The presence of this philosophy invoked a counter state of mind aimed at cohesion and homeostasis. The counter-revolutionary mentality took as its model the family in the broadest sense and tried to force society to re-accept the restrictions and patterns of family existence. Both American and French revolts had eclipsed the national fathers and damaged the sense of family. In response to this

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[43]Raymond E. Callahan, Introduction to Education (New York: Knopf, 1960), p. 121.

feeling Americans sought surrogate fathers and, as if called by fate, George Washington appeared to play the role as the Father of His Country.

He was ideally suited for the job. His role as military chief during the war of independence gave him the reputation as a leader of men. Later, when he assumed the Presidency, the nation was in turmoil with state pitted against state, and section against section, the new office of President seemed to promise stability and authority to the nation. The history of his two administrations was the story of a father attempting to stand above a gaggle of quarreling sons and a divided population. The neutrality crisis, the Jay Treaty and the Whiskey Rebellion were only illustrations of the basic problems he faced, in this sense there was really only one issue - the spirit of revolution. Washington filled the role of the father that the age of revolt had tried to obliterate and, in that role, he gave the new nation a sense of cohesion and perhaps most importantly, a feeling of security in a time of great anxiety. Royal Tyler, for example, felt that "WASHINGTON like the fabled god of the Ocean, raised his majestic head amidst the political storm, and stilled the madness of the people."[44]

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[44]Royal Tyler, Oration on the Death of George Washington, Feb. 22, 1800 in Marius Peladeau, the Prose of Royal Tyler (Rutland, Ver.: Vermont Historical Society, 1972), p. 275.

The essence of Washington's special place in American History came in his Farwell Address in 1796. The document, which Tyler called "a precious relic"[45] distilled into one short speech Washington's desires for his country and clearly these desires also reflected the needs of the people who read the address in their newspapers. The old general spoke like an elderly father giving his last bit of advice to his sons. Significantly, he expressed the hope that his remarks might help insure "the permanency of our felicity as a People."[46] This hope was the point of the address and everything that followed was calculated to help the consolidation and cohesion of the infant republic. For example, he urged his audience to cherish "the Unity of Government which constitutes you one people." Even sectional differences should not weaken the attachment to the central government. The important thing was

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[45] Ibid. Tyler's term "relic" was well chosen. The Farewell Address has had an immense influence on American policy, both foreign and domestic.

[46] John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. XXXV, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Printing Office, 1940), p. 218.

> The name of American, which belongs to you, in your national capacity, must always exalt the just pride of Patriotism, more than any appellation derived from local discriminations. With slight shades of difference, you have the same Religeon [sic], Manners, Habits and political Principles. You have in a common cause fought and triumphed together. The independence and liberty you possess are the work of joint councils and joint efforts; of common dangers, sufferings and successes.[47]

With this image of a united nation as the focus of his speech, Washington set out to expose possible threats to unity. First, he warned against the influence of aliens who sought to spread disaffection in the western part of the country. Second, he warned against the influence of faction in a republican system. To Washington, factions might, on occasion, "answer popular ends", but in the long run they "become potent engines, by which cunning, ambitious and unprincipled men will be enabled to subvert the Power of the People, and to usurp for themselves the reins of Government; destroying afterwards the very engines which have lifted them to unjust domination." Third, Washington warned against "the spirit of innovation." He maintained "that experience is the surest standard" and that a strong government, free from inhibiting alterations, was necessary for the security of liberty. Fourth, religion and morality, he wrote, are vital

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[47] Ibid., pp. 219-20.

to the existence of the nation and its "political prosperity." In order to insure this general morality Washington advised that "institutions for the general diffusion of knowledge" be promoted so that "public opinion should be enlightened." Fifth, he made his famous warning against undue affection for one foreign nation over another. In a time of instability, such favoritism might led to war - something the new, relatively weak America could ill afford. In addition, attachment to a foreign nation might led to too much influence for the favored country. Thus, "the Great Rule" was to limit political ties with foreign powers as much as possible while promoting commercial relations.[48]

Thus did Washington lay down the rules of orderly family life. The first twenty years of national existence had produced turmoil, anarchy and insecurity. Washington's political life and finally, his Farewell Address were the major factors opposing the disorder of the revolutionary age.

After his death in 1799 this role become even clearer. The outpouring of genuine grief and high flown rhetoric at his death and later during the hundred birthday celebration illustrated the important place

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[48] Ibid., pp. 221-34.

Washington occupied in the lives of many Americans. In the orations and eulogies that engulfed the country speakers strained to find the image that captured Washington's true meaning. Taken together these images clearly show that Washington filled the role of stern father in a time of uncertainty and anxiety. The following were only a few of the phrases used to describe Washington, "the first of men" (Jedidiah Morse 1800), "the Sun" (Isaac Bates 1832), "their pilot in storm" (Robert Collier 1832), "Our Political Father" (George Minot 1800), "Father of his People", "Controlling Genuis", and "the political magnet in the center of discord" (Thomas Paine A.M. 1800).[49] Such images were the order of the day. Washington had done for the American people something that many future presidents would be called upon to do. He excused them from the task of acting as free men and

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[49]Sources for the attitude toward Washington after his death are nearly infinite. Two good ones are Memory of Washington: A Sketch of Life . . . National Testimonials of Respect . . . A Collection of Eulogies and Orations (Newport, R.I.: 1800) and Handbook of the George Washington Appreciation Course for the Two Hundredth Anniversay Celebration of the Birth of George Washington (Washington, D.C.: U.S. G. Washington Bicentennial Commission, 1932). The citations from Morse (p. 14), Minot (p. 122) and Paine (p. 108, 109, 114) are from Memory . . . and the Bates (1832, pp. 13-14) and Colliers (1832, p. 125) are from the Handbook. . . .

gave the nation a center of gravity by forcing conflicting groups to subdue their passions for the common good.

Particularly in the months after Washington's death the country continued to define the old General's true meaning. His memory was invoked in order to curb division and disorder.

> Shall it be said, that the works of his hands whom we this day almost adore; that the hope which he held out to the nations of the earth shall be frustrated by our divisions? To the honor of our country, not a man but answers, No: All when rightly informed, wave their particular prejudices in support of the great pillar of our national union.[50]

Thus, even in the grave, Washington continued to serve his country as a source of unity.

All this may seem to have little to do with the French Revolution. Symbolically, the French Revolution was the antithesis of Washington. The revolution in Europe had produced, world wide, a sense of impending new freedoms and the belief that old restrictions were melting away. Washington stood in opposition to this feeling, he was living proof that freedom must have limits and society must have authority. Fisher Ames, the Massachusetts Federalist, asked his audience

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[50]George R. Minot, Eulogy on George Washington . . . (Boston: 1800), Printed in Memory . . ., p. 138.

to remember the days when the American people were firm advocates of the Gallic revolt. He remembered that

> Jacobinism had become here, as in France, rather a sect than a party; inspiring a fanaticism that was equally intolerant and contagious. The delusion was general enough to be thought the voice of the people, therefore claiming authority without proof; and jealous enough to exact acquiescence without a murmur of contradiction. . . . the citizens had alienated their affections to their foreign corrupter.[51]

When this attraction to French liberty pushed the United States nearer and nearer to a war with England, it was, Ames contended, Washington who issued the Neutrality Proclamation and "arrested the passions of his countrymen." Ames believed that "this act of firmness, at the hazard of his reputation and peace, entitles him to the name of the first of Patriots" because it allowed Americans "to recover their virtue and good sense . . . the crisis was passed, and America was saved." Washington turned Americans from the violence and licentiousness of French liberty to true "American liberty" which "calms and restrains the licentious passions like an angel that says to the winds and troubled seas, be still."[52]

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[51] Fisher Ames, An Oration on the Sublime Virtues of General George Washington . . . Feb. 8, 1800. Printed in Memory . . ., p. 190.

[52] Ibid., pp. 189-90.

The elevation of Washington to the role of national father was a significant part of a highly diffuse reaction against the spirit of freedom. The French Revolution had reignited the revolutionary fires of 1776 but starting about 1793 the forces of reaction had begun a counterattack. The counteroffensive against revolution led to a fear of outsiders and a desire to Americanize the various elements of the new nation. The Alien and Sedition Laws were the legislative symbol of a broad-based attempt to insure conformity and submission to authority. The reaction also promoted the formation of distinctive local mentalities which stood in contrast to the international spirit of the French Revolution. There was an attempt to use education as a means to discredit the French revolt and to portray the American Revolution as a unique, conservative event, unconnected with happenings in France. Lastly, George Washington and the office of the President were used to give stability and cohesion to the new nation. The responsibilities of freedom had produced a high level of anxiety and Washington served as one device whereby Americans could rid themselves of their new liberty. They could be members of a whole family again; they could feel the warm security of a more stable American community. Confronted with freedom they sought escape.

CHAPTER VI

ADAMS, JEFFERSON AND THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

> Have I not been employed in mischief all my days? Did not the American Revolution produce the French Revolution? And did not the French Revolution produce all the calamities and desolations to the human race and the whole globe ever since?
>
> John Adams to Benjamin Rush, August 28, 1811

The figures John Adams and Thomas Jefferson have been missing from the account thus far. Their response to the French Revolution was so important and representive they deserve a separate chapter.

Their lives were hectic and so full of changes that it would be easy to dismiss the French Revolution as only a detail in their lives. In 1789 Adams began his term as Vice President under Washington while Jefferson returned from his post as minister to France to assume the duties of Secretary of State. Jefferson had a brief rest from public life after retirement in December of 1793. He enjoyed life at Montecello while Adams served as Vice President until 1796 when he and Jefferson fought for the office vacated by Washington. There was little interchange between the two aging

revolutionaries in the period 1796 to 1800. Jefferson, as Vice President, was involved in the development of a party strong enough to challenge the Federalist control of the central government, while Adams was serving a stormy term as President. Bitterness during these four years was generated by the XYZ Affair, the quasi-war with France, the Alien and Sedition Laws and the Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions. In 1801 Jefferson took over from Adams and the latter received his chance at peace and rest while Jefferson was thrown into the storms of politics and international crisis. By 1809 both men were out of office and mellowed more than a little by age and experience. With the aid of Benjamin Rush, the differences of the 1790's were put aside and the two ex-presidents began a long and fruitful correspondence. The flow of letters was ended by an historical miracle - on July 4, 1826, fifty years after the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson died at noon, Adams several hours later.

During these years (1789-1826) the French Revolution was mentioned in their letters and writings with some frequency. Even after 1812, they returned to the subject and tried to sort our their differences. It would be easy to subordinate their continuing debate on the events in France to the domestic political situation. An attempt, however, to portray Jefferson

and Adams as solely political animals would be inaccurate. They were both philosophers more than politicians and certainly they were subject to psychological tensions which transcended politics. The French Revolution gave both men an opportunity to define their feelings about their own revolutionary experience and what the American Revolution should mean for the future of the new nation. In the process of forming these definitions Adams and Jefferson pulled back from the spirit of 1776 and sought a solid basis for the continued existence and "progress" of the United States.

There were marked similarities and differences in the way the two men dealt with the Revolution. Adams, almost from the beginning of the French revolt, saw it as a threat to stable authority in politics, society and religious belief. What he said about the French Revolutionary activity strongly indicated that he believed revolution must progress from a solid base of continuing authority either political or philosophical or both. Jefferson, on the other hand, vacillated between two visions. In the early years of the Revolution (1788-89) he maintained only mild hopes for the French and often expressed his opinion that sufficient continuing authority and restraint did not exist in France for the making of a revolution

modeled after the American example. Later, in the period 1791 to the middle 1790's, Jefferson became enamored with the vision of world revolution. His writings became more high-flown and emotional - he was seized for a moment by the image of expanding freedom. By 1800, however, the more cautious Jefferson re-emerged and his imagery changed to include visions of order, stability and a unique American family. In the end, neither man was capable of squarely confronting the logical implications of the revolutionary age. The idea of a world ruled by the concept of individual autonomy and self-sufficiency was unacceptable to both of them and they retreated to various beliefs that seemed to promise stability and order.

As the French Revolution started Adams and Jefferson expressed modest hopes for an increase of liberty in France. In 1787 Adams wrote Lafayette and listed his hopes for the French, he wanted "a little more liberality in religion, in commerce, in letters, and in politics. . . ." Such gains, he felt, "would not only augment the felicity of France but be a good example to the rest of Europe."[1] While

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[1]To Lafayette, Jan. 12, 1787 quoted in Edward Handler, America and Europe in the Political Thought of John Adams (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U. Press, 1964), pp. 117-118. Cited hereafter as Handler.

he had these hopes he also feared that the nature of the French people would inhibit any possible advances of freedom. Adams had come to feel that the United States had successfully revolted because America had no mobs. The germ of Adam's fear of the French Revolution was contained in the comparison he made between the common people of America and Europe

> What would have become of American liberty, if there had not been more faith, honor and justice in the minds of their common citizens, than are found in the common people of Europe.[2]

Adams saw the hope of France neither in revolution nor in any sweeping changes but rather in gradual means and "by improvements in general education, and by informing the public mind."[3]

Jefferson shared much the same attitude in the earliest stages of the Revolution. He, like Adams, had only modest hopes. In March of 1789 he wrote that "this nation [France] will in the course of the present year, have as full a portion of liberty dealt out to them, as the nation can bear at present, considering how uninformed the mass of their people

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[2]Charles Francis Adams, ed., The Works of John Adams (Boston: Little, Brown, 1853), vol. VIII, pp. 454-55. Cited hereafter as Adams Works.

[3]Adams Works, IX, p. 297.

is."[4] Jefferson could not find in the French the seriousness or restraint necessary for a revolution

> I pronounce that a good punster would disarm the whole nation were they ever so seriously determined to revolt. Indeed . . . they are gone when a measure so capable of doing good as the calling of the Notables is treated with so much ridicule; we conclude the nation desparate and in charity pray that heaven may send them good kings.[5]

While Jefferson seemed to share with Adams a pessimistic attitude about the French he, at least, was sensitive to the poverty and pain of the common people in France. He concluded from his own observations that "the people are ground to powder by the vices of the form of government" and that out of the twenty million people in France, nineteen million are "more wretched, more accursed in every circumstance of human existence than the most conspicuously wretched individual in the whole United States."[6] Adams, on the other hand, never expressed a similar sympathy for the plight of French peasants and lower classes.

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[4]Andrew A. Lipscomb, ed., The Writings of Thomas Jefferson (Washington D.C.: 1904), vol. VII, to Col. Humphreys, March 18, 1789, p. 321. Cited hereafter as Writings.

[5]Paul Leicester Ford, ed., The Writings of Thomas Jefferson (New York: Putnams, 1894), vol. IV to Mrs. John Adams, Feb. 22, 1787, pp. 370-71.

[6]Writings, VII, to Mrs. Trist, Aug. 18, 1785, p. 81.

At times, Adams seemed to feel that European despotic governments were as good as European people deserved and the contrast between America and Europe, for him, emerged as one of elect and damned.[7]

In the years after 1789 and Jefferson's return from Europe, Adams turned violently against the revolution. Jefferson, however, gradually lost his reservations and became perhaps the biggest drummer in the large band of Americans who shouted their approval of the events in France. There was such a clear break between them at this point that Adams wrote Jefferson twenty-three years later that "the first time that you and I differed in opinion on any material question, was after your arrival from Europe, and that point was the French Revolution."[8]

To begin with, Adams began to see the French Revolution as a revolt against all authority. He could not approve a radical revolution in a nation without the built-in restraints of a humbling religion. This reluctance was reflected in his famous statement to Richard Price - "I own to you, I know not what to make of a republic of thirty million

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[7] Handler, p. 81.

[8] Lester J. Cappon, ed., The Adams - Jefferson Letters, (Chapel Hill, N.C.: U. of N. Carolina Press, 1959), vol. II, July 13, 1813, pp. 354-55. Cited hereafter as Cappon.

atheists."[9] Later in his Discourses on Davila he crystallized all his fears into one, he warned that the implications of the French revolt were "that government of nations may fall into the hands of men who teach the most disconsolate of all creeds, that men are but fire flies, that this all is without father."[10] In this haunting statement Adams gave expression to a fear that was central to the counter-revolutionary mind. He was not promoting a Portestant "father", nor a Catholic "father"; the fear was of complete fatherlessness or the sense of being alone and disconnected in the universe. Adams almost always took the stance of the objective observer and his fear that men might become "but fire flies" took the form of a warning to his readers but, in reality, it was also dreadful to Adams himself.

Motivated by this fear, Adams sought to define the ways in which man could retain the father and keep structure and stability in society. At times he argued for the dominance of the wisest

> I know by experience that in revolutions the most fiery spirits and flighty geniuses frequently obtain more influence than men of sense and judgment, and the weakest men may

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[9] Adams Works, IX, Apr. 19, 1790, p. 564.

[10] Ibid., VI, p. 281.

> carry foolish measures in opposition to wise ones proposed by the ablest. France is in great danger from this quarter.[11]

At other times he maintained that "religion and virtue [were] the only foundations not only of republicanism and of all free governments, but of social felicity under all governments and in all the combinations of human society."[12] Both the primacy of the wisest and the emphasis on religion as control were rooted in the same desire to place above man some transcendent notion that would counter the idea that "this all is without father."

Adams advocated measures for the maintainance of stability largely because he had a vision of the world without order. He warned the French that government was created to control the passions and interests and that without government life would be dominated by the violent and selfish side of man. The following is a clear statement of the fear of chaos and love of order in Adams' mind.

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[11] Ibid., IX, to Alexander Jardine, June 1, 1790, p. 568.

[12] Ibid., IX, to Benjamin Rush, Aug. 28, 1811, p. 636.

> If all decorum, discipline, and subordination are to be destroyed and universal Pyrrhonism, anarchy, and insecurity of property are to be introduced, nations will soon wish their books in ashes, seek for darkness and ignorance, superstition and fanaticism. . . .[13]

Jefferson, upon his return to the United States, exhibited none of the fears that haunted Adams. Instead of becoming alarmed at the lack of restraint in France, Jefferson was shocked by the counter-revolutionary strides that were being made in America. He came to see the French and American Revolutions as interdependent. In 1791 he expressed some anxiety over the flight of the king, but wrote

> I still hope the French Revolution will issue happily. I feel that the permanence of our own leans in some degree on that; and that a failure there would be a powerful argument to prove there must be a failure here.[14]

By 1792, his tone had changed to include more violent images. For example he wrote Lafayette, "While you are exterminating the monster Aristocracy, and pulling out the teeth and fangs of its associate, Monarchy, a contrary tendency is discovered in some here."[15]

In effect, Jefferson had been chilled by the advances of post-revolutionary conservatism in the

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[13] Ibid., VI, pp. 274-75.

[14] Writings, VIII, to Edward Rutledge, Aug. 25, 1791, p. 234.

[15] Ibid., vol. VIII, p. 380.

United States. He tended to see it as a plot to reinstitute monarchy and turn back the advances of liberty made in 1776.[16] Yet, he was also gripped by sentiments that transcended domestic political considerations. The French Revolution instilled in him the vision of world revolution - the idea that the spirit of the American Revolution could live not only in France but over the entire earth. He felt that the rage for liberty in France will "kindle the wrath of the people of Europe . . . and bring at length, kings, nobles, and priests to the scaffolds which they have been so long deluging with human blood."[17] In a 1793 letter to William Short, Jefferson clearly expressed his deep commitment to world revolution. He felt the elimination of the king "was of absolute necessity" and continued

> The liberty of the whole earth was depending on the issue of the contest and was ever such a prize won with so little innocent blood? My own affections have been deeply wounded by some of the martyrs to this cause, but rather than it should have failed, I would have seen half the earth desolated. Were there but an Adam and Eve left in every country, and left free, it would be better than it now is.[18]

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[16] See the famous letter to Phillip Mazzei (Apr. 24, 1796) in Writings, IX, pp. 335-37.

[17] Ibid., IX, to Tench Cox, May 1, 1794, pp. 284-85.

[18] Ibid., IX, Jan. 3, 1793, p. 10.

This statement represented the height of Jefferson's revolutionary ardor. Unlike so many Americans Jefferson did not become alarmed when France began to invade other countries. M. d'Ivernois from Geneva wrote Jefferson and suggested that the University of Geneva move to Virginia to escape the French Army. Jefferson advised that d'Ivernois take a long range view. The present age, he wrote, was one of large scale experiments in freedom and that it was unfortunate "that the efforts of mankind to recover the freedom of which they have been so long deprived, will be accompanied with violence, with errors, and even crimes. But while we weep over the means, we must pray for the ends."[19] Thus, Jefferson by 1793 had largely abandoned his earlier fears and was for a moment, at least, a true friend of the French Revolution.

When the expanding French Revolution began to touch America it put Jefferson in a difficult position. Caught between his commitment to world revolution and his allegiance to American national sovereignty, Jefferson faced a most difficult situation. Genêt, of course, was the focus of the problem. At first, Jefferson warmly welcomed him and took part in the general spirit of revolutionary brotherhood

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[19] Ibid., IX, Feb. 6, 1795, pp. 299-300.

that Genêt helped create in the United States. As Genêt became more intemperate in his opposition to the Neutrality Proclamation (which Jefferson had approved) the basic conflict between expanding revolution and national interest came to a head. Confronted with this dilemma Jefferson turned his back on Genêt. In the place of warm revolutionary regard, Jefferson began to refer to "the intermeddling by a foreigner" and to claim that "his object was evidently contrary to his professions, to force us into war."[20] The Genêt incident was important in Jefferson's ultimate response to the French revolt; the antics of the French minister illustrated to Jefferson that warm relations with sister revolutionary republics would be difficult. More than that, Genêt served to inhibit the budding internationalist tnedency in Jefferson's thought - in the years after 1793 the idea of distinct national differences in regards to revolutionary capability re-emerged in Jefferson's mind. For several years Jefferson's strong anti-European bias had taken a backseat to his hopes for increased freedom around the world, but, after Genêt, the view of a corrupt Europe capable of only gradual reform began to return.

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[20] Ibid., IX, to James Madison, Aug. 25, 1793, p. 211.

The change did not take place over night. While the Federalists were condemning the democratic societies as French-inspired and the offspring of Genêt, Jefferson stoutly defended them. He also saw the attack on the clubs as part of the general counter-revolutionary movement. The assault on the societies was, he felt, "one of the extraordinary acts of boldness of which we have seen so manyfrom the faction of monocrats." Jefferson was also alarmed that Washington permitted himself to be the organ of such an attack on the freedom of discussion, the freedom of writing, printing and publishing."[21]

Jefferson was caught in an intellectual and emotional bind. The impulse to freedom was of great importance to him, while at the same time order and authority beckoned as necessary for the maintenance of the nation he had done so much to create. Between 1793 and 1796 Jefferson withdrew from the political arena and enjoyed the agrarian peace at Monticello. In 1795 he wrote Adams that "tranquility becomes daily more and more the object of my life, and of this I certainly find more in my present pursuits than in those of any other part of my life."[22]

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[21] Ibid., IX to James Madison, Dec. 28, 1794, pp. 293-94.

[22] Cappon, I, Feb. 6, 1795, p. 257.

Something beyond the external tensions and aggravations of political life made Jefferson seek out the solitude of Monticello. Caught between a deep commitment to his revolutionary experience and a European revolution about which he had grave doubts, Jefferson sought to dissolve the problem by retreating from it.

While the balance between freedom and authority was precarious for Jefferson, Adams came down firmly on the side of control and order. During the Neutrality Crisis Adams saw more of the violent public reaction against neutrality and was frightened by it. In 1813, Adams wrote Jefferson

> You certainly never felt the terrorism excited by Genêt, in 1793, when ten thousand people in the streets of Philadelphia, day after day, threatened to drag Washington out of his house, and effect a revolution in the government, or compel it to declare war in favor of the French Revolution, and against England.[23]

To some extent, this statement was inflated by the rhetoric of old age, but it indicated real fear of the popular protest incited by the difference between popular opinion and the government's position on neutrality.

After the departure of Genêt, Adams continued as one of the leading critics of the French Revolution. He sought to do two things: continue and expand his

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[23] Cappon, II, June 30, 1813, pp. 246-47.

critique of the Revolution and insulate the United States from its influence. To those who had hopes that the French would regenerate Europe he answered "it has regenerated poor Geneva and poor Holland, and like to have regenerated America."[24] To those who sought to portray the excesses of the Revolution as the violent death spasms of expiring despotism (a common argument in the United States) he responded

> Ay! cast all upon despotism and superstition. Are the cruelities of savages owing to despotism and superstition? Allow the truth that all men are ferocious monsters when their passions are unrestrainted. Prepare bridles for them.[25]

In general, he continued his earlier criticism of the French but this time with the violence of the Terror to back up his fears. The situation in the later 1790's was different in that the French Revolution had made a marked impression on the United States. In response to this Adams attempted to limit or eradicate its influence. The effort took place on many different levels but, in all cases Adams urged his fellow citizens toward subordination, passivity and order.

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[24]Quoted Zoltan Haraszti, John Adams and the Prophets of Progress (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1964), p. 215. Cited hereafter as Prophets.

[25]Ibid., p. 198.

In the face of French innovations Adams pleaded for a deeper respect for the past and tradition. In 1794 Adams responded to Jefferson's belief that each generation will no longer depend "on the paper tractions of another." Adams contended that "the Social Compact and the Laws must be reduced to Writing. Obedience to them becomes a national Habit . . ." broken only by costly revolutions.[26] In 1798, he offered the youngmen of Philadelphia a predication

> that, after the most industrious and impartial researches, the longest liver of you all will find no principles, institutions or systems of education more fit, in general, to be transmitted to your posterity, than those you have received from your ancestors.[27]

In addition to a respect for the past Adams encouraged a general movement toward conformity and exclusion of foreign elements from the United States. The split in American opinion over the French Revolution both in Congress and among the people worried Adams. So in 1798 when Congress, and the people formed a united front against France, Adams encouraged the signs of unity.

> At the return of harmony in Congress, the heart of every true friend of American exults; the people who in great numbers before, alarmingly separated in affection and confidence from their own government, and rendered

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[26] Cappon, I, May 11, 1794, p. 255.

[27] Adams Works, IX, p. 188.

> jealous of the first characters of their own election, convinced of the snares spread for their country by foreign intrigue are now crowding to the standard and consecrating their fortunes and lives for its defence. So signed a providence for the detection of fraud, and the coalition of a people divided and consequently sinking into inevitable destruction, is perhaps a novelty in the annals of nations.[28]

The idea of foreign influence was repugnant to Adams. In his retirement he tried to deny any responsibility for the Alien and Sedition Laws but clearly he did nothing to stop their passage and enjoyed the protection from criticism they gave his administration. He felt that republics would always have groups with different opinions and that these divisions were "generally harmless, often salutory and seldom very hurtful." The trouble arose when foreign nations interferred "and by their arts and agents excite and ferment" simple differences of opinion into factions and parties. Adams insisted that such interference should be stopped or it would "cause our total destruction as a republican government and independent power."[29]

Most important of all Adams made a continuing effort to promote God and the family as powers superior to man and to which man owned obedience and respect.

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[28] Ibid., IX, p. 197.

[29] Ibid., IX, pp. 186-87.

He expressed this idea most clearly in his National Fast Day Proclamations in 1798 and 1799.

> As the safety and prosperity of nations ultimately and essentially depend on the protection and blessing of Almighty God; and the national acknowledgement of the truth is not only an indispensable duty, which the people owe to him, but a duty whose national influence is favorable to the promotion of that morality and piety, without which social happiness cannot exist, nor the blessings of free government be enjoyed . . . [1798]
>
> No truth is so clearly taught . . . than that a deep sense and due acknowledgement of the governing providence of a Supreme Being, and of the accountableness of men to Him as the searcher of hearts and the righteous distributor of rewards and punishments, are conducive equally to the happiness and rectitude of individuals, and to the well being of communities. [1799] [30]

The idea of the family as a source of stability also played a part in Adam's attempt to insulate America from the French Revolution. In an address to the youngmen of New York, Adams showed that he had been influenced by the French legislation that attacked the family. He told these youths that

> the respect you acknowlege to your parents, is one of the best of symptoms. The ties of father son, and brother, the scared bonds of marriage, without which those connections would be no longer dear and venerable, call on you and all your youth to beware of contaminating your country with the foul abominations of the French Revolution.[31]

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[30] Ibid., IX, p. 169 [1798]; p. 172 [1799].

[31] Ibid., IX, p. 199.

Adams also employed education as a means to protect America from the dangerous ideas coming from Europe. As President, he refused to issue passports for a group of French scientists who wanted to pass through the United States to do scientific work in Spanish territory. He reasoned, "we have had too many French philosophers already, I really begin to think . . . that learned academies not under the immediate inspection and control of government, have disorganized the world, and are incompatible with social order."[32] Later in a Fast Day Proclamation he asked God to "smile on our colleges, academies, schools, and seminaries of learning, and make them nurseries of sound science, morals and religion."[33] Thus, he was willing to use education as part of the battle against French revolutionary ideas. Education for social order joined respect for the past, conformity, and exclusion of the foreign, and God and family as the tools Adams hoped to use against the disorganizing tendencies from abroad.

While Adams was President, Jefferson fought him politically, on almost every issue - especially the Alien and Sedition Laws. For most Federalists,

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[32] Ibid., VIII, to Timothy Pickering, Sept. 4, 1797, p. 596.

[33] Ibid., IX, p. 173.

Jefferson represented all they feared in the French Revolution. He was denounced as an atheist, an "intellectual voluptuary," the Goddess of Reason was reputed to be the sole deity at Monticello. More than anything Jefferson represented opposition and faction. To the absolutist mind of 1800 if two individuals contested for the same office one was right, the other wrong. The individual who was wrong was thus a threat, not only politically, but morally, philosophically and psychologically. Nothing put this point in clearer perspective than a Federalist campaign slogan

GOD - AND A RELIGIOUS PRESIDENT:
or impiously declare for
JEFFERSON - AND NO GOD[34]

The victory of Jefferson in 1800 produced more irony than any historian can deal with. Jefferson, for some the symbol of disunity, won because the Federalist could not unite. Hamilton, unable to tolerate Adams, worked against him and tried to secure the presidency for Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, the Vice Presidential candidate. The slander and bitterness which passed between Federalists almost equaled

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[34]John C. Miller, The Federalist Era (New York: Harpers 1960), p. 265.

that directed at Jefferson. The ultimate irony was Jefferson himself. As he took office he proved that, in the preceding ten years, he had become more like John Adams than anyone could have guessed from the campaign. During the 1790's Jefferson had changed from a prophet of world revolution and a baiter of monocrates to a man bent on union, peace and stability.

The best evidence of Jefferson's transformation was his First Inaugural Address. He acknowledged the bitterness of the election but quickly assumed that "all will, of course, arrange themselves under the will of law, and unite in common efforts for the common good." Significantly, the first issue to appear in the address was "the throes and convulsions of the acient world." The bitterness of the last ten years had disappeared and Jefferson became the apostle of unity.

> During the throes and convulsions of the acient world, during the spasms of infuriated men, seeking through blood and slaughter his long lost liberty, it was not wonderful that the agitations of the billows should reach even this distant and peaceful shore; that this should divide opinion as to measures of safety. But every difference of opinion is not a difference of principle. We have called by different names brethren of the same principle. We are all republicans - we are all federalists.[35]

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[35] Writings, III, p. 319.

Thus, Jefferson tacitly capitulated to the idea that unity and peace were more valuable than harsh, perhaps violent, settlement of basic issues. The revolutionary era had left both Adams and Jefferson anxious about the ultimate outcome of so much debate, hostility and violence. Man's instinctive need for calm, for security and certainty had done its work first on Adams and ultimately on Jefferson. They desired only to get on with America's own business "kindly separated by nature and a wide ocean from the exterminating havoc of one quarter of the globe. . . ."[36]

Jefferson was not the only individual who sought to separate America from the havoc of European revolution. Sam Adams, who had led the riotous Boston celebrations of French sucesses in 1793 had changed dramatically by 1802. In 1801 he wrote and offered his congratulations to Jefferson for his victory over the Federalists. Adams expressed the hope that the Republican victory would restore harmony "after so severe and long a storm." In Europe he saw that the "sentiments of mankind" were changing and he asked that "Heaven grant the principles of liberty and virtue, truth and justice, may prevade

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[36] Ibid. III, p. 320.

the whole earth."[37] While this statement by Adams tends to indicate a survival of the internationalist sentiment of 1793 there exists further evidence that Adams sought to protect America from, at least, the religious influences of the revolutionary period. Writing in 1802, Adams urged Thomas Paine not to return to the United States. Adams was appalled by what he called Paine's "defence of infidelity." In Adam's mind "the people of New England . . . are fast returning to their first love. Will you excite among them the spirit of angry controversy at a time when they are hastening to amity and peace"? In the end, Adams sought to dissuade Paine from returning to the United States because "neither religion or liberty can long subsist in the tumult of altercation, and amidst the noise and violence of faction."[38] Thus, Sam Adams like his relative John and Jefferson, old revolutionaries all, had grown tired of tumult and sought the quiet of order and stability.

As the years passed, and Jefferson left office, he and John Adams gradually put aside their bitterness and again the wonderful letters began to pass between Virginia and Massachusetts. With more than a little

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[37]William V. Wells, The Life and Public Services of Samuel Adams, vol. III, Apr. 24, 1801, p. 371.

[38]Ibid., III, Nov. 30, 1802, pp. 372-73.

nostalgia they rehashed old issues and remembered old friends. Jefferson made it clear that he had been wrong about the French Revolution and that Adams had been right. In the early 1790's both had made predictions about the future of the French to Richard Price and in 1816 Jefferson admitted "your prophecies to Dr. Price proved truer than mine . . . but altho your prophecy has proven true so far, I hope it does not preclude a better final result." The old belief in European inadequacies returned and for Jefferson the world was again split in two between a virtuous America and a Europe in need of education and morals before they could receive their liberty, he felt that

> before the establishment of the American States, nothing was known to history but the man of the old world, crowded within limits either small or overcharged, and steeped in the vices which that situation generates. A government adapted to such men would be one thing; but a very different one, that for the man of these states. . . . Every one, by his property, or by his satisfactory situation, is interested in the support of law and order. And such men may safely and advantageously reserve to themselves a wholesome control over their public affairs, and a degree of freedom, which in the hands of the canaille of the cities of Europe, would be instantly perverted to the demolition and destruction of everything public and private. The history of the last twenty-five years of France, and of the last forty years in America, nay of its last two hundred years proves the truth of both parts of this observation.[39]

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[39] Cappon, II, Jan. 11, 1816, p. 460.

Jefferson, however, did not give up hope for Europe. He claimed that science and "the American example" had planted ideas and "kindled feelings of right in the people." The mobs of the city had prevented the sucess of the French Revolution but "Science is progressive" and perhaps Europe might yet be free - "This . . . we have no right to meddle with."

Adams was not as hopeful as Jefferson. He recalled the millennial hopes of the early 1790's and asked Jefferson "Where are now in 1813 the perfection and perfectability of human nature? . . . Where is the amelioration of society? Where the augmentations of human comforts? Where the diminutions of human pains and miseries"?[40] For Adams, the French had tried the impossible; a "free constitution" for France was beyond their capabilities. He said that three hundred years might be necessary to secure "so great a blessing, but I doubt whether it will be accomplished in three thousand. . . . I thought so in 1785. . . . I thought so in all the intermediate time, and I think so in 1812."[41]

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[40] Ibid., II, July 15, 1813, p. 358.

[41] Haraszti, pp. 221-22.

They had come a long way together. The ordinary life pales alongside the twisting eventful existence of Jefferson and Adams. In the fifty years after the Declaration of Independence they sought, like all Americans, to adjust to the revolutionary era. History went whizzing by and one had to hurry to keep up. The French Revolution offered a chance to define the meaning of their own revolutionary experience. Was the American Revolution exportable? Was it the product of a unique American character? What did freedom mean? In the end they both answered no to the first question. Jefferson, for a brief moment was caught up in the millennialism provoked by the French revolt. Adams never strayed from his belief that only America could have an American Revolution. In the end a deep belief in the virtue and special circumstances of the American people served as the idea that separated the United States from the rest of the world. Clearly, however, the meaning of freedom proved the most difficult question. The horrors of the French Revolution led both men to seek higher authority for the control of men. Adams found it in the Supreme Being, the family, and a strong leader as balance to popular passions. Jefferson found the source of national allegiance in agrarian happiness and the desire to protect the

material advances in America. In both cases, some overriding value was created to preserve the status quo.

The creation of these checks on the passions and the revolutionary tradition left one irreducible contradiction. Had not America thrown over a similar set of absolute values in her revolution? Thus, all future absolutes lost some of their power because of the acts of 1776. In their own revolution the Americans had destroyed, for a moment, the idea of order as an absolute. In the ruins of that old system of order they created a new system, with new absolutes, but the memory of the revolt did not die. The French Revolution began at a time when Americans were trying to obliterate this memory, for a while it appeared that the French had revitalized the revolutionary spirit but finally, as Jefferson and Adams illustrate, the idea of a revolutionary society proved untenable and order was restored.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

To earth, this weary earth, ye bring us
To guilt ye let us needless go,
Then leave repentance fierce to wring us:
A moment's guilt, an age of woe!

Goethe, Wilhelm Meister (1829)

A nation, like a person, has both an emotional and a political-economic life. Historians of the American experience have largely overlooked the realm of emotions, feelings and desires and have emphasized the political and economic aspects of American life. The tendency to over-value the political has been rooted in a conception of man as rational, progressive and mentally healthy. The history written about the Federalist period clearly illustrates the dominance of politics and this view of man. The Federalist era was an age of great political events and the important works on the period portray these phenomena as the product of men operating rationally in pursuit of consciously preconceived goals. The American reaction to the French Revolution offers a corrective to this view. In most cases, historians have seen the French

Revolution as a vital factor in the birth of the party system and as an element in the political rhetoric of the age. Clearly, the news from France produced deep emotional responses that transcended politics and have had a profound influence on life in the United States. The French Revolution came to symbolize the rebelliousness of man against traditional restraints. In response, Americans of all political persuasions began to seek order, peace and dependency because they had an unconscious, instinctual need to do so.

To talk of unconscious instinctual needs as primary runs counter to the way most historians deal with human experience. In developing terms to describe specific periods historians have neglected social, intellectual and psychological changes that dominated a period. Instead the American past has been periodized using almost exclusively political or economic concepts. The Critical Period, the Federalist Period, the New Republic, the Progressive Period and the New Deal Era are all widely used to denote certain time spans in American history. Also, historians have used the name of political figures, such as Jefferson, Jackson and the Roosevelts to denote eras in the American past. Furthermore, the growth of democratic political institutions rules as the theme that ties these periods

together. Democracy, as a topic in the writing of American history, has been such an overriding concern that one might conclude that American history has been little more than the gradual, glorious triumph of majority rule.

To a great extent this emphasis on the political has been rooted in the liberal tradition. The emphasis on the externals of life such as political and economic behavior was an ideological consequence of liberalism which has sought to maintain the distinction between man's mind and his actions. While liberalism's tendency to deal only with external actions has let to religious toleration and some freedom of thought, it has also unduly restricted the scope of scholarly research. Too often researchers miss the essence of a person or an event because they neglect to dive deeper than the public or external facts. The tendency to neglect motivation seems to have led to a reliance on the outcome or effects of any event. More importantly, however, historians have come to accept at face value the public reasons and rationalizations historical figures have given for their actions. Furthermore, American society as a whole also exhibits this tendency to over value externals and the result is a "one dimensional public language, a language oriented to

the description of external aspects of behavior, weak in overtones."[1]

One good example of this bias in favor of externals has been the work done by historians on the Federalist Period. In one way or another politics and also economics have ruled as the central issues in the major works on this period. For instance, a great deal of energy has been expended trying to clarify the nature of the Federalist Party. Overwhelmingly this effort has focused on political matters and excluded the emotional nature of Federalism. John S. Bassett, in 1906, set the tone for the future when he portrayed the Federalists as a party that gave strength and leadership to the republic in its time of trouble but who had outlived its usefulness by 1800 when they were washed aside by the rising democratic tide led by Jefferson.[2] In recent years historians have disagreed with Bassett but have not shifted from the basic emphasis - the political nature

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[1]Margaret Mead, Keep Your Powder Dry (New York: William Murrow, 1942), p. 89. The idea of liberalism's attitude toward motivation and human behavior is discussed in, Paul Roazen, Freud: Political and Social Thought (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), pp. 57-59.

[2]John S. Bassett, The Federalist System: 1789-1801 (New York: Cooper Square, 1906, 1968), pp. 295-296.

of Federalism. For example, Lisle Rose in a study of Southern Federalists concluded that they "only slightly less than their Republican opponents, nurtured the seed of a slowly ripening democratic temperament in the American South during the 1790's."[3] In other words, she came to a different conclusion but maintained the same focus.

The discussion of the Federalists has been overshadowed by the mass of work done on the general growth of parties in this period. In the twentieth century, historians have moved away from the notion that parties grew out of the conflict over the ratification of the Constitution.[4] The dominant view today holds that the two parties sprang up in response to the French Revolution, related domestic issues, and Hamilton's financial policies. R. R. Palmer, for example, concluded that the debate over the Jay Treaty caused the infant democratic movement to consolidate into the Republican party and forced the Federalist faction to close ranks

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[3]Lisle A. Rose, Prologue to Democracy: The Federalists in the South, 1789-1800 (Lexington, Ky.: U. of Kentucky Press, 1968), p. xvii. There have been other defenses of the Federalists. Clinton Rossiter, Conservatism in America: The Thankless Persuasion, (2 nd. edition), (New York: Vintage Books, 1962) pp. 107-118; and Louis Hartz, The Liberal Tradition in America (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1955), pp. 79-80.

[4]An example of the view that parties arose out of the conflict over the Constitution is Charles Beard, Economic Origins of Jeffersonian Democracy (New York: MacMillan, 1927).

into a party to defend the treaty. William N. Chambers concluded that the general furor about the French Revolution "completed the great transition from Federalist faction to Federalist party." J. R. Pole found that the French Revolution "made more dramatic and intense" the basic political cleavages that existed over domestic issues. The late Richard Hofstadter added his voice to those who found only political meaning in the French Revolution when he wrote that the Revolution and ensuing war "intensified all the differences that separated Federalists from Jeffersonians: differences over what the character of the new society should be, over economic policies, over interpretation of the Constitution, over foreign policy, clashing section issues, and republican ideology."[5]

None of the historians quoted above was able to explain why the French Revolution had such a massive influence on domestic affairs in the United States.

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[5]R. R. Palmer, Age of Democratic Revolution, vol. II, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton U. Press, 1964), p. 533, cited hereafter as Palmer; William N. Chambers, Political Parties in a New Nation: The American Experience (New York: Oxford U. Press, 1963), p. 43, cited hereafter as Chambers; J. R. Pole, Foundations of American Independence, 1763-1815 (Indianapolis, Ind.: Bobbs-Merrill, 1972), p. 204; Richard Hofstadter, The Idea of a Party System (Berkely, Cal.: U. of California Press, 1972), p. xi.

Nor did any attempt to explain why Americans, in their view, responded in solely political terms to an event with considerable emotional dimensions. The overriding concern with political development precluded any consideration of psychological questions about the American response to the events in Europe. One might answer that Hofstadter and the others were writing about politics and not the emotional state of mind of the American people. Clearly, politics was their major concern but their neglect of irrational, unconcscious feelings distorts their conclusions even on political matters. Moreover, historians, as noted earlier, often expand conclusions about American politics to the point where they tend to encompass all the dimensions of a certain period. Thus, 1789-1801 is known as the Federalist Period simply because that party dominated politically. Futhermore, to neglect the emotions creates the impression that major actors in the development of parties acted calmly and rationally in response to an emotionally charged, ambiguous situation.

The point is if one looks away from political life for a moment a different picture of the so-called Federalist Period emerges. At least two earlier historians found new perspectives by avoiding a totally political view. Merle Curti in The Growth of American Thought (1943) suggested that Jefferson's election in

1800 was not a total victory for democracy. He found that the influence of a conservative reaction or counter-attack against the American Enlightment and revolutionary enthusiasm was of equal or greater impact that Jefferson's political victory. Curti believed that conservatives in the late 1790's launched, in his terms both a "positive" and "negative" attack against revolutionary thinking. On the positive side a case was made for institutionalism, aristocracy, restriction of suffrage and revealed religion. On the negative side conservatives struck out at the French Revolution and evidences of Jacobinism in the United States. The result of this attack was that the intellectual and religious life of the new nation was left firmly in the hands of conservatives.[6] In 1958, Marshall Smelser put forth the suggestion that the Federalist Period was "an Age of Passion." He refused to accept the idea that the major figures of the period operated according to rationality and logic. On the contrary, Smelser argued that

> the Federalist period of American history can thus be presented as a span of twelve years in

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[6]Merle Curti, Growth of American Thought, (3rd. edition), (New York: Harper and Row, 1943, 1963), pp. 178-179.

> which every great public decision, every national political act was somehow governed by fierce passions, by hatred, fear and anger.[7]

The passion and hatred Smelser wrote about focused, to a great degree, on the French Revolution and its repercussions in America. In the concrete world of politics and money the French revolt appeared as only a foreign event that heightened domestic clevages. In the irrational, highly symbolic world of passions and emotions the French Revolution tended to represent for Americans the American Revolution, the Enlightenment and the shift from traditional authority patterns to a world with more individual autonomy. Most importantly, it came to symbolize the individual rebellion against the restraints of culture or civilization. Americans were both repelled and attracted by the spirit of rebellion. But finally the continuing psychological pressure of expanding freedom produced tensions and anxieties that caused a clear reaction against revolutionary enthusiasm. The reaction produced, as Curti has shown, a situation in which conservatives were able to establish strong institutions and traditions that stood in opposition to the growth of individual freedom. Thus, the Federalist period

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[7]Marshall Smelser, "The Federalist Period as an Age of Passion," American Quarterly, X (1958) p. 419.

can be seen as an age in which Americans pulled back from the psychological, social and intellectual implications of newly won freedoms and established stability and control over the individual as important American values.

One of the problems with this view is the nature of the American Revolution. If the American revolt was not a radical repudiation of traditional authority then it becomes difficult to see the necessity of a reaction in the 1790's. Certainly the American Revolution was different than the French or Russian because there was the issue of colonial status involved. But one can not avoid the fact that Americans violently overthrew a monarchical form of rule and replaced it with a system that spread authority among the people. This fact was important, psychologically, since it created a situation in which the development of guilt and anxiety was possible. Indeed, the American Revolution was very similar to the situation Freud hypothesized in Totem and Taboo and Civilization and its Discontents - a revolt of the sons against the father (external authority) and development of guilt and anxiety in the aftermath.[8]

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[8]In a recent article Winthrop Jordan, using Freud's work, explored the idea that the American Revolution was the product of unconscious motivation. By using Thomas Paine's pamphlet, Common Sense, as a focus Jordan concluded that "Paine's pamphlet helped meet

The key to revolutionary and counter-revolutionary psychology is the ambivalence individuals feel toward their fathers and by the process of identification all external authority figures. Individuals both hate and fear and love and respect their fathers and this primordial ambivalence is important in the workings of history. The hatred of father figures often provoked attacks on them and revolutions are one important historical form of this attack. The love and respect for fathers in all forms has been important in the creation of remorse or guilt in response to the acts of agression against the father. Freud hypothesized that

> remorse was the result of primordial ambivalence of feelings towards the father. His sons hated him, but they loved him, too. After their hatred had been satisfied by their act of agression, their love came to the fore in their remorse for the deed. It set up the super-ego by identification with the father; it gave that agency the father's power, as though as a punishment for the deed of agression they had carried out against him, and it created the restrictions which were intended to prevent a repetitionof the deed.[9]

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the need of Americans - a need of which they were not fully aware - to deny their king as their soverign father." See Winthrop D. Jordan, "Familial Politics: Thomas Paine and the Killing of the King, 1776," Journal of American History, LX (1973), p. 301.

[9]Sigmund Freud, Civilization and its Discontents, trans. by James Strachey, (New York: Norton, 1961), p. 79.

While Freud emphasized hatred and love as the twin poles of the attitude toward authority figures, one need not follow his hypothesis blindly. The key element of his view which helps explain the historical facts so well is the cyclical process of the attack on authority followed by remorse, guilt and the ascendency of the super-ego. Perhaps the terms freedom and dependency might serve as substitutes for hatred and fear. In the context of American revolutionary history the revolt against George III was caused by a collective need for freedom from the tyrant but in the ensuing years the need for dependency and the protection of someone stronger grew and served as the motivation for the repudiation of the earlier act of rebellion.

The French Revolution played a vital role in the shift of American attitudes about authority. Prior to 1789 the movement toward dependency had clearly begun but there were still strong currents seeking even greater freedoms especially in the areas of religion and race, but not altogether absent from other aspects of American life. When the news of the French revolt began to arrive in America it was greeted with almost total approval. The spirit of freedom arising from America's own revolt served as the basis for this approval. Newspapers and individuals were quick to see the French Revolution as the continuation

of the American revolt. While most Americans were caught up in the enthusiasm for the French the spirit of reaction was not completely silent. John Adams and his son, along with Governeur Morris and a few others kept alive the anti-revolutionary impulse that had blossomed between 1783 and 1789. As the French pushed their revolution toward more radical measures and the European revolution seemed to visit America in the form of Genêt, the democratic societies, mob action against the Whiskey tax and public criticism of Jay's Treaty. Americans, in large numbers, began to retreat from the vision of individual autonomy and the destruction of traditional authority.

Thus, the French Revolution served America as a symbol for all forms of human revolt. Americans, therefore, did not have to completely repudiate their own revolution, they could project the guilt they felt on to the French and, to some extent, Europe generally. Between 1793 and 1801 there was a pronounced turn toward the right in America. Much of this reaction was openly declared to be in response to theFrench Revolution and its influence in the United States. Consciously, the French Revolution may have instigated the reaction but unconsciously the growing conservatism of the late 1790's was generated by anxiety and guilt stemming from America's own involvement in the revolutionary

age. The anxiety and guilt was increased by the awareness of America's early approval of the French Revolution.

In its general form the reaction of the late nineties was an escape from freedom. This concept, popularized by Erich Fromm, may seem too much like World War II armchair psychology and hand wringing about the rise of the Nazis, but it goes too far toward explaining human behavior to be totally rejected. The Federalists and, to some extent, all Americans sought ways to avoid the implications of the new freedom created by the continuing attack on authority. In essence, Fromm's idea that anxiety and guilt over the new freedom triggered a human need to reestablish the old forms of dependence links up neatly with Freud's concept of a revolt of the sons against the father as a fundamental aspect of human life. Fromm is more convincing and complete in his description of the methods people might use to escape the new liberty and resulting anxiety produced by the act of revolution.

Between 1793 and 1801 Americans clearly sought to create secondary bonds to replace the primary bonds they felt they had broken over the last twenty years and which they saw as under attack in France. In many areas of American life this process of creating new

dependencies and controls was evident. In politics, for example, the creation and growth of the presidency and the popularity of Washington was clearly motivated by the desire to form an authority-dependency pattern or bond similar to that which had existed under the monarchy. In religion, the revitalization of religious belief had many causes, but clearly one of them was the human need to reaffirm one's dependency to a greater power and allow that greater power (God) to take the responsibility for events. It was remarkable how similar the revival of religious belief was to a revival of fatalism. It was more comfortable to give over one's life to God or Fate and let one or the other be responsible for what happened. In addition, people such as Noah Webster sought to make education a tool in the fight against freedom. Learning and reflection might have become a source of human liberation, but in the minds of men like Webster schools and education should be dedicated to inhibiting youth and teaching certain socially approved values. Such values often took the form of inclucating some higher authority (God, the state, or the nation) as superior to individual needs and inclinations.

Race relations, and especially the attitude toward slavery, provides a clear look at the movement

to reestablish old authority relationships. The American Revolution, and the Enlightenment generally, had produced the beginnings of a movement that saw blacks not as some inferior type of men but rather a race unjustly enslaved by the erroneous and superstitous thinking of whites.[10] When the French Revolution attempted to act on this new belief and began the process of freeing the blacks the reaction was violent. Near the end of the eighteenth century there was a marked attempt to rebuff the movement to free the blacks and to maintain the old pattern of white domination. R. R. Palmer in his The Age of Democratic Revolution, convinced that there was no real rightist reaction against the French Revolution in the United States, explained away the terrorism visited upon rebellious blacks. He did this in a most significant way:

> In the United States no one was executed under the Sedition Act of 1798, and in that respect the politics of the United States exhibited a certain moderation. The hanging of numerous rebel slaves was regarded as a police action, of no political consequences; just as the desire of slaves for liberty, having nothing to do with American politics, was not even to be dignified by the epithet of Jacobinism.[11]

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[10] Winthrop D. Jordan, White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812 (Baltimore, Maryland: Penguin Books, 1968), pp. 309-310.

[11] Palmer, p. 518.

In the statement by Palmer one can see clearly the difference between a political and an emotional view of history. Palmer wanted to disprove the notion that America had a reaction of sizable proportions to the age of revolution. With his almost totally political point of view he was able to do this by banishing as unimportant events that were not directly political but had a direct bearing on the "state of mind" generally in the United States. The relationship of black and white populations was of profound importance to the future of the nation, yet Palmer dismissed the repression of black rebellions because they had "nothing to do with American politics."

The treatment Palmer gave the race question and its relation to the French Revolution is indictive of the distortion an emphasis on political matters can create. The same distortion occurs in the analysis of political developments. Many historians in the last twenty years have marveled at the formation of political parties in the Federalist era. Palmer found it paradoxical that the ideological differences aroused in the United States by the French Revolution contributed to the creation of national parties which were a great aid in furthering the cause of union, constitutionalism "and survival of the republic."[12] Chambers

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[12] Palmer, p. 522.

believed that the coming of political parties "uncovered viable democratic ways to conduct the conflict of politics and manage government within national unity."[13] If one admitted that Americans in 1795 were seriously disturbed by what seemed to be the uncontrolled influence of secret clubs, mobs burning a treaty and challenging a government proclamation, then the political parties that developed out of this pluralism and violence were more than viable means of conducting the nations business. They can be considered the devices whereby the tensions and anxieties of true public participation, issue by issue, in government can be reduced if not eliminated. Between 1792 and 1795 Americans saw the implications of individual freedom illustrated by the influence of democratic societies and spontaneous criticism of the Jay Treaty and Neutrality Proclamation. These things coupled with Genet's antics and the rising radicalism in France (the regicide especially) created an emotional situation that called for some suppression of individual autonomy; political parties were part of the answer. Parties were not only a democratic means of preserving the union, they were a way to suppress the pluralistic and sometimes violent expressions of the people. In turn, political parties gave a person a larger unit of

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[13] Chambers, p. 14.

organization in which to submerge himself and a stable ideology to follow in the confusing flux of history.

To conclude, in this dissertation I have attempted to look at history from a less than traditional viewpoint. Strongly influenced by Freud and others, I have tried to find the emotional, psychological dimension of the American response to the French Revolution. Without the convenient but misleading labels of party affiliation and economic interest, I had to deal with evidence in new ways. If one believes that man has been driven to act in history by desires that he was not conscious of and that "states of mind" often are vague and fuzzy then the writing of history becomes a markedly different enterprise than it has been in the past. First, chronology becomes less important. In the unconscious mind events often are alligned by importance rather than by dates. Also, events blend into one another as often the French and American Revolutions seemed to do. Another example of this blending of events took place between 1793 and 1795 when, psychologically, the public criticism of neutrality, the Jay Treaty, Genêt's antics, the Whiskey Rebellion and events in France melted into a single impression in the minds of many Americans. Next, symbols take on an importance, at least, equal to concrete reality. Americans in

1793 saw symbolic meaning in most everything from the yellow fever epidemics to the victory of Jefferson in 1800. Such symbols had great significance and strongly influenced behavior. Furthermore, evidence, beyond symbols, has to be treated differently. In the realm of psychological reality a man such as Jefferson who said or wrote so many contradictory things was not paradoxical, he was the product of several psychological forces, some of them in oppositions. Moreover, any attempt to describe psychological reality forces an historian to give up the view of man as healthy and rational. Man, in a collective sense, may indeed be neurotic; a creature victimized by nature and forced by the essence of his being to rebel, repent and rebel again.

Finally, the emphasis on psychological, social and intellectural factors opens the way for a fuller investigation of the impact foreign events have had on America. In the context of diplomatic, economic and political history the French Revolution has remained only a footnote to the course of events in the United States. But viewed from a psychological perspective one can begin to see that foreign events have a direct, discernible influence on American life. Arthur M. Schlesinger Sr., contended that "civilization

in America has risen out of the interaction of three factors: the original introduction of Western European customs and institutions, the impact of the New World on the transplanted ways, and the continuing influence of the Old World."[14] He felt, correctly I think, that historians have given ample consideration to the first factor, "somewhat less to the second and very little to the third." Hopefully, this work might serve as a small step toward correcting that imbalance.

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[14]Arthur M. Schlesinger, Paths to the Present (New York: MacMillan, 1949), p. 169.

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