Introduction to The Penal Times

The period of Roman Catholic history in Britain that is most misunderstood and shrouded in mystery is that of the late eighteenth century. Despite the work of Eamon Duffy in 1992 and the late John Bossy's piece de resistance The English Catholic Community 1558-1850 (1975), it is still the case that many students or lovers of history fail to move beyond the idea that Roman Catholicism in Britain was in its death throes until the Irish famines of the eighteen- forties brought to the mainland of Britain huge numbers of Irish Catholic migrants who saved the Church from extinction. There are two major reasons for this lack of movement in ideas. The image presented of the eighteenth century has been dominated by one particular form of historical method and interpretation of history. Termed the Whig interpretation of history it is triumphalist and retrospective, seeing a pattern of everything in the past gradually leading towards a present order of things by a law of natural progress and the union of order and freedom. [1] The Whig's closest ally was Protestantism, their religious equivalent as the party of progress and this governed the view of Catholicism that was presented as a dark secretive religion and a bar to progress. Although this Whig Protestant view has been challenged in more recent scholarship,[2] one element has not changed, and that is the picture of exclusion and supposed demise of the Catholic community during that century.[3] Moreover, it is a picture that seems to be reinforced by State and Parliamentary papers that confirm the political and social isolation of the Roman Catholic minority.

This picture of the Catholic community in decline almost to the point of extinction has also been reinforced by Catholics themselves starting in the nineteenth century. One of its most famous exponents was Blessed John Henry Newman in what has become known as the 'Second Spring' sermon preached at the first Provincial Synod of the restored English Hierarchy in 1851 when he moved the new bishops to tears with a description of what he thought Catholic life had become by 1800:

> *nay, no longer, I may say, a Catholic community; —but a few adherents of the Old Religion, moving silently and sorrowfully about, as memorials of what had been...Here a set of poor Irishmen, coming and going at harvest time, or a colony of them lodged in a miserable quarter of the vast metropolis... An old-fashioned house of gloomy appearance, closed in with high walls... and the report attaching to it that "Roman Catholics" lived there; but who they were, or what they did, or what was meant by calling them Roman Catholics, no one could tell; —though it had an unpleasant sound, and told of form and superstition*[4]

Despite the fact that the Georgian religion of the late eighteenth century provided the foundations for the expansion of the Victorian Church, the ideas underpinning Newman's sermon became widely held and as Mullet puts it eighteenth-century Catholicism was regarded by those in the nineteenth century as 'rationalistic, lukewarm, and timid, in decline and retreat.'[5] The reason that Newman put forward such a gloomy picture and that it was not challenged lies in Church politics of the time. As the leading convert of his time Newman needed to justify the position of converts

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[1] Perhaps the clearest expression of this is by Thomas Babington Macaulay, *A History of England from the Accession of James II Vol 1 (1848)*

[2] For an overview and further reading see Gabriel Glickmann, *The English Catholic Community, 1688-1745: Politics, Culture and Ideology (Woodbridge, 2009)* 1-2

[3] Owens, *The Eighteenth Century* 45

[4] John Henry Newman, *Sermon 10* (Preached July 13, 1852, in St. Mary's, Oscott, in the first Provincial Synod of Westminster) http://www.newmanreader.org/works/occasions/sermon10.html accessed 02.02.15.

[5] Michael Mullet, *Catholics in Britain and Ireland 1558-1829,* (London, 1998) 138-9.

as leaders of change and growth in the Church. For their part the new bishops led by Cardinal Wiseman were anxious to promote the new Ultramontane Catholicism that was being encouraged by the Holy See in Rome. As a result, the eighteenth-century church became characterised as the desert between the glory and martyrdom of the Reformation Age and the colourful flamboyant Catholicism of converts, immigrants and devotional ritual of the Victorian Church with such views continuing to be voiced into the twentieth century. However, both Eamon Duffy and John Bossy have shown that while the heart of medieval Catholic practice was in effect destroyed by the Reformation, it was replaced by a faith that was based on the Tridentine principles of the Counter-Reformation.[6] It was brought to Britain by the seminary-trained priests of colleges such as Douai, and helped also by a growing corpus of devotional literature the most notable of which was The Garden of the Soul compiled by Bishop Richard Challoner in 1741.[7] Bossy described it as achieving for the English Catholic a 'comprehensive devotional structure which maintained the continuity of tradition while it renewed and adapted its data into forms appropriate to the situation'[8]. Following the work of Duffy and Bossy, and helped by the Catholic Record Society, (hereafter CRS) local Catholic historians have begun to research the papers and letters of the Recusant families, and gradually a completely different picture of Catholic life on the cusp of Relief is starting to be painted. [9]

The basis for much of the mistrust that surrounded Roman Catholicism in Britain during the early modern period can be found within the meaning of the term 'Recusant'; a term often found in relation to Catholic families of the time. Derived from the Latin verb 'recusare' (to refuse to swear an oath), in England and Wales it referred to those priests who refused to swear an oath of allegiance to the monarch as required by the Act of Supremacy of 1559 and the laity who disregarded the laws regarding worship as laid down in the Act of Uniformity of the same year ((1. Eliz.1.c2). matters were further complicated by the Papal Bull *Regnans in Excelsis* issued in February 1570 by Pope Pius V that excommunicated Queen Elizabeth I on the grounds of heresy thereby absolving her Catholic subjects from any allegiance to her and her laws. As a result, Catholics were portrayed as disloyal subjects and governed by a foreign power supported by Spain. This was used further by Protestant propagandists in events such as the publication of Foxe's Book of Martyrs (1563); the threatened invasion of England by the Spanish Armada (1577): and the Gunpowder Plot (1605), to provide a dramatic and patriotic narrative of deliverance from Rome and a sign of God's favour upon Protestant England. Laws were enacted that were initially designed to eradicate Roman Catholicism in England and Wales by outlawing its priests and making the Mass illegal. Under James 1 they were extended to deny Catholics any part in the public life of the country. In practice, the laws did not achieve their intention, and Britain was unique amongst the Northern European states who embraced Protestantism in retaining a Catholic religious minority that included a number of aristocratic and landed gentry families. It could be argued that in fact it was beneficial to the crown to ensure the survival of the English Catholic Community as a religious minority, for as Michael Mullet has pointed out the crown had a pecuniary interest in pursuing the collection of the various recusancy fines that provided a considerable proportion of its income.[10] Throughout the era of the Commonwealth and the reign of Charles II, Parliament continued to harass the Catholic and also Protestant Dissenters by the

[6]Eamon Duffy, *Ecclesiastical Democracy Detected* Eamon Duffy (ed*), Challoner and his Church, A Catholic Bishop in Georgian England*, (1981, London); John Bossy, *The English Catholic Community 1558-1850* (1975, London).
[7] Richard Challoner, *The Garden of the Soul* (London, 1741).
[8] Bossy, *English Catholic Community*, 364.
[9] Much of this research has been published by the CRS in its various publications including its journal *Recusant History.* This was renamed in 2015 as *British Catholic History* and published by Cambridge University Press. Some volumes of *Recusant History* are available online from the same source.
[10] Michael Mullet, *Catholics in Britain* (London, 1998) 26

introduction of Test Acts, which effectively barred non-Anglicans from playing any role in the government of England, but still provided the state with a sizeable income through fines.
After the Revolution of 1688 that deposed James II, the thrust of the anti-Catholic penal laws was changed by William and Mary to further 'prevent the growth of Popery', and by George I in order to deprive Catholic gentry of the socio-economic means of survival and thereby prevent them financing and supporting the Catholic mission. There were two major, but related reasons for this; the fragility of the claims to the English throne by William and Mary, and later by the new royal House of Hanover all of whom Parliament had invited to take the English crown in order to preserve the Protestant nature of both the monarchy and the state from the Catholic Stuart line particularly in the light of the two Jacobite Rebellions of 1715 and 1745 respectively.[11] Secondly, there remained a persistent rationalist dislike of Catholicism, which was perceived as the epitome of supernatural religion and conservatism that needed to be suppressed.
Although the Test Acts meant that the world of politics and patronage especially Royal patronage was closed to Catholics, they were no longer persecuted for their religious beliefs and the wealthy could maintain chaplains to say Mass for them and other Catholics in the neighbourhood. Some subterfuge was necessary in this regard, for the Mass was still illegal, but by referring to it as Prayers and celebrating it behind locked doors on their estates, Catholics found that the authorities tended to leave them in peace. There was a decline in the number of Catholic landed families in Britain during the century; some, such as the Scottish Duke of Melfort had followed James II/VII into exile in France, some decided to conform in order to benefit their estates and ambitions, other families such as the Fairfax family of Gilling in North Yorkshire died out and yet others were inconsistent in their allegiance with one generation conforming and the next returning the family to Catholicism. However, there were still a considerable body of peers and baronets as well as a number of wealthy untitled Catholics who would have probably been awarded peerages in an earlier age, such as the Constable family in Yorkshire, the Blundell family in Lancashire and the Riddell family in Northumberland.[12] These three counties were in many ways the heart of the English Catholic community in terms of the Catholic gentry, and their patronage locally made it possible for the faith to spread.
Despite the financial penalties many Catholic aristocrats and gentry managed to remain comparatively wealthy, and several rebuilt or remodelled their great houses. Outstanding in this respect was Wardour Castle in Wiltshire rebuilt by the eighth Lord Arundell of Wardour during the years 1770-1776. Built in the Palladian style it had a lavish interior, and the West Wing contained a chapel that was built on the scale of a church and described as the most sumptuous setting for Mass in England.[13] The same baronet and several of his contemporaries were also art connoisseurs having used their Grand Tours to collect antiquities, sculptures and paintings.[14]
One unintended consequence of the penal laws was that as a result of Catholic schools being illegal, wealthy Catholic families sent their children, both male and female to the continent for their education in the schools set up by expatriate religious communities, such as the Benedictines at Dieulouard for the boys and Cambrai for the girls or the secular seminary at Douai, which used a dual system of education catering for both seminarians and lay students. In comparison to their Protestant confreres, the education given to the boys was of a higher standard, and even surpassed the Universities, both of which were in decline during the eighteenth century. Regarding the girls, it was very unlikely their Protestant contemporaries would have had such a formal education, with most learning only the basics under the guidance of governesses. As a result, Catholics were welcomed into society despite their faith and were accepted as members of the Royal Society and the Society of Antiquities, which dominated the

[11] See Glickman, Gabriel, *The English Catholic Community, 1688-1745*
[12] More about the important Catholic families may be found in Mark Bence-Jones, *The Catholic Families* (1992, London)
[13] Mark Bence-Jones, *Catholic Families*, 39
[14] Ibid., Chapter 1.

intellectual life of Britain. They were also admitted to the Masonic lodges, even though Freemasonry was condemned in two Papal Bulls of 1738 and 1751. As Britain was a Protestant country, where Catholicism was officially proscribed, the Bulls were not promulgated, and so provided a loophole for British Catholics who wished to enter fully into the world of commerce at its higher echelons. A final option lay in joining the military. Although banned from holding commissions in the British military, some gentry particularly from the cadet branches of the major families entered into service of continental royalty, and some also found a way of serving the King, George I by becoming officers in the Hanoverian army, which he maintained in his position as Elector of Hanover.

However, the Catholic community was more than the wealthy gentry, there was a considerable number of Catholics in the lower classes, who relied on the gentry for support, particularly in London and increasingly in other major cities as they grew to accommodate workers in the developing industrial economy. In addition, there were groups of itinerant Irish workers who had been coming to Britain on a regular basis to find seasonal work on the farms and estates of the gentry. The numerical strength of this 'underclass' can be traced through Parliamentary Returns of Papists that were carried out in 1705, 1767 and 1780 with the 1767 Census being considered the most detailed of the three In that it asked for a level of information about papists that was without precedent, including occupation and length of time resident in a vicinity.[15]. Using the example of York, the Returns show that the social composition of Catholics living there reflected the whole social strata of Britain and this is replicated throughout England. (Fig 1) The Returns also show that York was typical of all the major urban centres in that few of the Catholic population were native to York, and that growth came from immigration rather than from natural increase.[16]

Fig 1: Makeup of Catholic Population in York 1767

Total number of Papists	No. of Adults	Gentry	Substantial Tradesmen	Service Industry	Professionals	Servants	Priests	Others
633	262	5 families	50	57	5	76	9	55

In the rural areas, there were small concentrations of Catholics who were not associated with one of the gentry's estates but engaged in manufacture that was carried on in the country towns, though often related to the agricultural economy. This was in part due to the efforts of the missionary priests during the penal times and was also helped by the establishment of a regular system of Catholic Church government in 1685 when England was divided into four districts, each headed by a Vicar-Apostolic. As a result of this development in governance, the organisation of the Church became increasingly mature with proper mission-stations developing. These were based on the Tridentine model that Charles Borromeo had developed in the archdiocese of Milan as a result of the deliberations during the Council of Trent. Some were Seigneurial missions growing out of chaplaincies in the houses of the landowning classes, where the priest was maintained by the family. Others were districts, where a priest lived on his own in a cottage or series of cottages that doubled as clandestine chapels and travelled around a wide area serving groups of Catholic farmers or minor gentry, who could not afford to maintain a chaplain. These priests were maintained from the accumulated funds of bequests, collections and contributions of food from the parishioners. The Missions were served by a mixture of

[15] Lords R.O. Main Papers, Returns of Papists 1705/6;, E.S. Worrall (ed.), Returns of Papists 1767, Vol 2 Dioceses of England and Wales except Chester (CRS Occasional Publications 2, 1989);Lords R.O. Main Papers, Return of Papists 1780

[16] For a detailed breakdown of the 1767 census see Marie B. Rowlands, '1767-The New People' in Marie Rowlands (ed.), *Catholics of Parish and Town 1558-1778* (Catholic Record Society, 1999)

secular and regular clergy, although most of the seigneurial chaplaincies were held by Regulars. This did cause some problems for the Vicars-Apostolic as the Regulars were not answerable to them, but to their Superiors and this was not solved until 1753, when the Papal Bull 'Apostolicum Ministerium' of Pope Benedict XIV was issued that clearly delineated the relationship in favour of the Vicars-Apostolic.

The passing of the first Relief Acts

The decision to provide Catholics in Britain with some relief from the Penal Laws that was initiated in 1778 was the first step in giving those who professed the Roman Catholic faith the opportunity to play a full and public part in the affairs of the country that had been forbidden to them for almost two centuries and there were several factors that led to this decision. The Act of Toleration (1 Will and Mary c.18) that was passed in 1689 granted freedom of worship to dissenting Protestants such as Baptists and Congregationalists. It was not intended to establish any form of religious equality with the Established Church of England, but rather to grant them relief from persecution, while still denying their full equality as citizens through the operation of the Test Acts. Although excluded from benefit of the legislation, Catholics were able to benefit from the simple fact that, in practical terms, church attendance could no longer be made compulsory, and they were able to establish discreet places of worship. It was a small first step in the process of the Protestant theory of Toleration being made a reality whereby the countries of Great Britain would become societies that allowed religious diversity as part of a modern liberal democracy.[17] The exclusion of Catholics from this legislation centered on two major points within the concept of Protestant Toleration theory, firstly that practices such as atheism, blasphemy and idolatry were all to be condemned and excluded from toleration as contrary to natural reason and public order.[18] Secondly, Catholics were still regarded as disloyal citizens owing allegiance to a foreign power that maintained principles inconsistent with a Protestant state. However, by 1778, there were a number of Protestants within the educated elite who were willing to consider the extension of the Toleration Act to Catholics. There was, amongst them a growing indifference towards religion, but also, they were influenced by John Locke's ideas on religious liberty, which provoked an innate sense of the injustice being shown towards Catholics in an age of Toleration. Their Catholic counterparts, who had become extremely anxious to join in fully with the political life of the nation had spent much of the decade playing down theological differences and deciding what concessions to Protestant sensitivities might be made in order to achieve this. Such actions they felt ought to be recognised as an unspoken signal that there was no desire on their part to destroy the Protestant state.

A second reason contributing towards Catholic Relief lay in the status of the relationship between the Stuart dynasty and Catholics in Britain. The early support for the Jacobites was partly concerned with belief in the divine right of the exiled Stuarts to rule as well as the possibility of a Catholic monarchy. As long as the Old Pretender, James Edward Stuart, styled James III/VIII by Rome had Papal recognition as the rightful king of Great Britain, British Catholics were believed to have a conflict of loyalty. However, after the failed uprising of 1715 much of the Catholic support for the Jacobites fell away, and in 1745 few Catholics rallied to the cause of the Young Pretender. In Scotland, for example 70 percent of the support was from Episcopalians defending the divine right of Stuart monarchy.[19] After the death of the Old Pretender in 1766, the Pope, Clement XIII ceased to support the claims of the exiled Stuart dynasty and gave de facto recognition to King George III, which in turn was accepted by Catholics in Britain. This had the corollary of rendering part of the Oath of Allegiance demanded by the Test Acts as no longer problematical to Catholics, but still left a barrier in that they could not in conscience swear to abjure their faith as demanded by the oath.

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[17] See further, John Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England 1558-1689,* (2000, London)

[18] Ibid.

[19] Christine Johnson, *Roman Catholic Church in Scotland*, 7

A third factor in enabling Catholic Relief lay outside the British Isles, and that was war and the consequences of war.[20] In 1759 the need for manpower during the Seven Years War between England and France led to the army quietly enlisting Catholics soldiers. The settlement of the war in 1763 gave England control over France's Canadian possessions, including nearly 100,000 Catholics. But as the tension rose in the English colonies of America, it was feared that the Canadians would go to the aid of Americans. As a result, the Quebec Act of 1774 was passed that emancipated the Catholic population including many Scottish Highland émigrés allowing them to vote in local elections and hold public office. Crucially it meant that they remained as the ally of Britain against North America when its Revolution began in 1775. In 1778, France allied herself with North America by recognizing it as a sovereign nation and then declaring war on Britain. With the need to draft more soldiers into the army, the British government began to realize that recruitment of Catholics would be both necessary and desirable despite the fact it required removal of some of the penal legislation.

Although the Act of 1778 made little material difference to Catholics, for they had become adept at finding ways around the issues of land, it did free the clergy from the threat of life imprisonment and most importantly symbolised a huge moral victory. Catholics were now recognised by Hanoverian Britain as an accepted part of its tapestry, and by declaring allegiance to the Hanoverian monarchs and praying for them by name during Mass, there was no longer any question of where their loyalty lay. However, even though the legislation was very limited it still brought about an explosion of anti-Catholic feeling.[21] In England, a Protestant Association was formed with branches throughout the country, for Catholic Relief was not popular in the Protestant middle and lower classes. In December 1779 the young MP, Lord George Gordon was elected as its president and by the beginning of June 1780 had gathered signatures on a petition from about one in five adult males living in London. It was decided to present the petition to Parliament in a mass protest on June 2nd at which large numbers assembled. Parliament refused to debate the petition immediately as Gordon demanded and as the crowd was dispersed by the military, rioting broke out that lasted a week. Targets included the Ambassadorial chapels and homes of known Catholics as well as the so-called Irish Quarters of London. Newgate Prison was burned down which swelled the ranks of the rioters with former inmates, and Catholic chapels and businesses were attacked. It was a week before the military managed to quell the riots and meanwhile, they had spread also to Bath, where its new chapel was destroyed two days before it was due to be opened and to Hull a town that was particularly renowned for its Protestant fervour. In many ways it was the ordinary Catholic who suffered the most in the riots, for they had enjoyed what Coffey termed toleration in its social context, a practical tolerance of religious dissidents by neighbours and friends. Unfortunately, he argues, it could quickly turn sour at times of heightened tension such as the Gordon Riots.[22] The riots were an ugly reminder that anti-Catholicism in Britain was never far from the surface, but reassuring also in that Parliament did not give in the demands of the Protestant Association and repeal the new Act. Further Relief was not forthcoming until 1791, by which time the social parameters of Catholicism in Britain were beginning to change. The clergy had used their newfound liberty to minister openly to good advantage and were challenging the dominance of the landed gentry in Catholic affairs. In 1788, through the Vicars Apostolic, they challenged the proposed second Relief Bill drawn up by the Catholic Committee (made up of ten leading laymen) to present to Parliament, which included an Oath of Allegiance that was unacceptable to many who still remembered active persecution against priests in particular. In the event, Parliament itself intervened by removing the contentious oath and the second Catholic Relief Act (31 George III Cap.33) that was passed in 1791 repealed the majority of the remaining penal code for those who swore an Oath of

[20] Robert Kent Donovan, 'The Military Origins of the Roman Catholic Relief programme of 1778' *Historical Journal Vol.28:1* (1985) 79-102

[21] Christine Johnson, *Roman Catholic Church in Scotland*, 18.

[22] John Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England 1558-1689*.

Allegiance to the King, using an acceptable form of words that had been used for the Irish Relief Act of 1774. In essence the Act extended to Catholics the provisions of the Toleration Act of 1687 that allowed Protestant dissenting worship in licensed chapels. However, the celebration of Mass in any building with a steeple or a bell was forbidden, thus preventing the possibility of calling the faithful to Mass. Catholics were also given the right to re-enter professions such as the Law, although the Religious were barred from teaching and no endowments could be given to schools and colleges.[23]

The Emancipation Act of 1829 (10 George IV Cap.7)

Although Catholics had achieved toleration and local civic freedoms, they remained unable to sit in Parliament. After the union of the English and Irish Parliaments in 1800, the question of full emancipation for Catholics became equated more with the Irish political agenda rather than the situation of Catholics in Britain. For the Irish particularly in the person of the radical Catholic layman Daniel O'Connell it was a matter of political rights and his election to Westminster in 1828, persuaded the Prime Minister, the Duke of Wellington and the Home Secretary Robert Peel to convince King George IV that it was necessary to allow Catholics the right to sit in Parliament, a position the King had hitherto vetoed as being against his Coronation Oath to uphold the Protestant state. The Bill was introduced to the House of Commons by Robert Peel who had been a long-time opponent of Catholic Emancipation. In a long speech he made it clear that the Act was a political necessity in order to prevent an uprising in Ireland rather than a concession to the intrinsic right of Catholics to be full citizens of the Kingdom. It brought to an end twenty years of debate on how Catholics might be given a voice in Government, for Parliament not only made the laws of the land, it also was the governing body of the Church of England and guarantor of the Protestant Constitution. It was the same dilemma that faced the King, whose assent was necessary for legislation to become law. For politicians allowing Catholics to have a say in the governance of the Established Church seemed to be both dangerous and illogical. Illogical also however, was the fact that it was their worries about the volatility of Ireland rather than the concept of justice that finally caused Emancipation.[24]

The Consequences of Relief

Internal dissension within the Catholic community centred on who made decisions about temporal affairs in the community, the clergy or the laity. In terms of matters such as Catholic Relief, the response of William Sheldon to the government in 1788 makes clear the position of the majority of the Catholic aristocracy and gentry who regarded themselves as the leaders of the Catholic community: 'I strongly opposed any application to our clergy in temporal matters, the English Roman Catholic Gentlemen being quite able to judge and act for themselves in these affairs.'[25] Such an attitude was derived from the French doctrine of Gallicanism that declared that the pope has supreme spiritual but no secular power; the pope is subject to ecumenical councils; that the pope must respect the customs of the local church, such as the right of secular rulers to appoint bishops and that papal infallibility in doctrinal matters is only binding, when accepted by the whole church.[26] In England it became known as Cisalpinism (meaning this side of the Alps) and led to twenty years of uncertainty and dispute as to what elements of Catholicism might be compromised in order to achieve the full recognition of Catholics as being loyal citizens of England and its monarch, rather than having an allegiance to an out-dated and foreign papacy.

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[23] For more details, see Mark Frassetto, *Catholic Emancipation: 1760-1829* (January 9, 2013). Available at SSRN: http://ssrn.com/abstract=2198549 or http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2198549 accessed 16.02.2016. John Bossy, *The English Catholic Community*

[24] See Edward Norman, *The English Church in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 1984) Chapter 1 for a fuller discussion.

[25] Paul Kennedy (Compiler and editor), *The Catholic Church in England and Wales 1500-2000*, (Keighley, 2001) 107.

[26] Joseph Bergin, The Politics of Religion in Early Modern France, (2014, Yale) 1.

The Cisalpine agenda if fully adopted would have changed the English Catholic Church into a national church with a minimum of Papal influence and maintaining lay control of church affairs. Their ideas included the introduction of a vernacular Mass, and a more democratic system of church government, whereby power to make episcopal appointments would be taken from Rome, and instead given to committees of the gentry in consultation with priests. They also desired a restored Episcopal hierarchy rather than governance by Vicars-Apostolic, who as noted above had no powers in themselves unlike bishops-in ordinary. Not all the leading gentry shared the Cisalpine principles, and it was opposed by many of the clergy and Vicars-Apostolic.

Ultimately the Cisalpinists failed for several reasons, including the onset of the French Revolution and the arrival of French émigré clergy. The fight for emancipation that was won in 1829 was not as a result of the Cisalpinists' fight for Catholic enfranchisement in Great Britain, but due to the political problems in Ireland. A third consideration is the fact that Cisalpine principles had little relevance to the majority of the Catholic population, which makes its dominance in the process of Emancipation puzzling. Was it really a progressive liberalising movement in English Catholicism or as Leo Gooch surmises was it a reaction to the uncoupling of the English Mission from the country houses? [27] Finally, whatever conclusions are reached by the individual about Cisalpinism, it was in reality a short-lived yet troublesome phenomenon. The make-up of the Catholic communities in Great Britain was destined to undergo sweeping changes within a generation that made talk of a national Catholic Church nonsense.

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[27] Leo Gooch, The Last Recusants of England: The Catholic Revival in England (1988) 2