

That Laplace was vain and selfish is not denied by his warmest admirers; his conduct to the benefactors of his youth and his political friends was ungrateful and contemptible. When he refused to sign the document of the French Academy of Sciences supporting freedom of the press in 1826, he lost the remaining friends he had in politics.

Laplace married on 15 May 1788. His wife, Marie-Charlotte de Courty de Romanges, was 20 years younger than the 39 year old Laplace. At the time that his influence was decreasing, personal tragedy struck Laplace. His only daughter, Sophie-Suzanne, had married the Marquis de Portes and she died in childbirth in 1813.

He did not return to Paris until after July 1794. Although Laplace managed to avoid the fate of some of his colleagues during the Revolution, such as Lavoisier who was guillotined in May 1794 while Laplace was out of Paris, he did have some difficult times.

Laplace had always changed his views with the changing political events of the time, modifying his opinions to fit in with the frequent political changes which were typical of this period. In 1814 Laplace supported the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy and cast his vote in the Senate against Napoleon. The Hundred Days were an embarrassment to him the following year and he conveniently left Paris for the critical period.

He never concealed his views on religion, philosophy, or science, however distasteful they might be to the authorities in power; it should be also added that towards the close of his life, and especially to the work of his pupils, Laplace was both generous and appreciative, and in one case suppressed a paper of his own in order that a pupil might have the sole credit of the investigation. During an access of revolutionary suspicion, he was removed from the commission of weights and measures.

Laplace proved that planetary motions are stable, and that perturbations produced by mutual influence of planets or by external bodies, such as comets, are only temporary.

Laplace died in Paris. Few events would cause the Academy to cancel a meeting but they did on that day as a mark of respect for one of the greatest scientists of all time. On his deathbed it is said that he uttered:

*"The knowledge we have of things is small indeed, while that of which we are still ignorant is immense."* The date was March 5, 1827.