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# Enlightenment and Dissent

No. 10 1991



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## CONTENTS

*Page*

1 Editorial

*Articles*

- 3 Dissent and radicalism?: the example of the Sandemanians *Geoffrey Cantor*
- 21 The Mill prisoners and the Englishman who continued  
"In the Light" *Sheldon S Cohen*
- 35 Richard Price and the London Revolution Society *Martin Fitzpatrick*
- 51 Thomas Spence and modes of subversion *Marcus Wood*
- 78 The Corruption of politics and the dignity of human  
nature: the critical and constructive radicalism of  
James Burgh *Martha K Zebrowski*

*Commentary*

- 104 Joseph Priestley, politics and ancient prophecy *Martin Fitzpatrick*

*Documents*

- 110 An attempt to create a general European Protestant Fund  
in 1725 *Jeremy Black*
- 113 Richard Price as a man of action *Alan Ruston*

*Reviews*

- 115 D W Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in modern Britain.  
A history from the 1730s to the 1980s* *Alan P F Sell*
- 119 John Dinwiddy, *Bentham* *D O Thomas*
- 121 Peter A Schouls, *Descartes and the Enlightenment* *Stephen Williams*

*Communication*

- 123 Joseph Priestley's bookplates *G F Carnall*

Greetings to all our readers on the appearance of the tenth issue of *Enlightenment and Dissent* and many thanks to all our subscribers, contributors and advisers for the support that has brought us this far.

With his *The end of history: the last man* Francis Fukuyama has created quite a stir. This has happened not because historians have been given grounds for fearing that their subject will disappear from the curricula of our Universities - the title of the book is misleading if it suggests that such calamities are foretold - but because Fukuyama puts forward the thesis that the evolution of social, economic and political forms has left the institutions of liberal democracy and the free market undisputed masters of the field. Progress has reached the point where all other contenders have been banished from the scene. Historians may still sleep soundly at night; it is the prophets who should fear redundancy.

It might be expected that such advocacy for the ideals of the Enlightenment would be warmly welcomed by the editors of this journal. A note of scepticism may not, however, be out of place. It is one thing to advance the virtues of constitutional government over those of authoritarian regimes, or the merits of free markets over those of command economies, but it is quite another matter to claim that they will be universally recognized, and quite another yet again to predict that they will be embodied throughout the world. For those who cherish the ideals of liberal democracy and free markets, scepticism might be a kinder and a more reliable ally than post-Hegelian enthusiasms. What those who defend liberal institutions most need is a sense of their frailty rather than a conviction of historical inevitability. Liberal institutions are continuously threatened and those who defend them will only succeed if they have a keen sense of how they are endangered and how those threats can be averted. If liberal democracy is to prevail, there has to be a consensus within the political community, not on the particular policies to be pursued by government, but as to how differences of policy are to be resolved. If toleration of dissent, committee procedures and the rule of the majority are to be sustained, minorities must be continually reconciled to the rule of the majority. There is, in our opinion, plenty of evidence to suggest that the thesis that liberal democracy and the free market are secure beyond all threat is over-optimistic. Thomas Hobbes taught that the fear of anarchy and the desire for self-preservation would reconcile all rational men to the rule of the sovereign, but he underestimated the extent to which threatened minorities will seek security in loyalty to their own group and maintain it by force if need be, rather than submit to an over-arching authority. The rule of law will only prevail where the law itself is not experienced as overwhelmingly oppressive and it would be a bold spirit who would proclaim that minorities, whether religious, ethnic or the economically



disadvantaged, will always feel sufficient confidence in the institutions of liberal democracy to eschew resort to violence and coercion.

M.H.F.  
D.O.T.

## DISSENT AND RADICALISM?: THE EXAMPLE OF THE SANDEMANIANS

*Geoffrey Cantor*

### I

In his magisterial *The making of the English working class* E.P. Thompson traced the roots of working class self-consciousness to the diversity of denominations and dissenting sects that flourished in the eighteenth century. These groups, he claimed, offered a great variety of religious and social experience outside the confines of the established church. While many dissenters became prosperous and were all too willingly absorbed into the middling ranks of society, others retained their separate organisations and their independent modes of thought. Often mixing millenarian beliefs with an emphasis on communitarianism these dissenters provided the people, ideas and experiments for eighteenth century radicalism. From these seeds also grew the self-awareness of the working class which was fully articulated in the clamour for social and political reform in the late 1820s and early 1830s.<sup>1</sup>

Among the sects mentioned by Thompson were the Sandemanians and since he cited them on three occasions they play a prominent role in the confirmation of his thesis. He first referred to the Sandemanians, or Glasites as they are known in Scotland, when offering evidence for the diversity of religious experience, and thus the high degree of liberty, provided by dissenting sects. Noting the existence of several sects in Frome, Somerset, Thompson proceeded to claim that other sects which had flourished in Scotland were introduced into England by immigrant tradesmen and artisans. Then he noted, presumably to illustrate this trend, that 'in the last decades of the eighteenth century the Glasites or Sandemanians made a little headway with their zealous church discipline, [and] their belief that the "distinctions of civil life [were] annihilated in the church and that membership implied some community of goods"'. Both church discipline and communitarianism featured significantly in Thompson's argument. However, note for the present that this passage contains an inner quotation which was derived from the four-volume *History of dissenters* (1808-12) written by two early nineteenth century Congregationalist ministers, David Bogue and James Bennett, who were highly antipathetic towards the Sandemanians. Thompson was aware of their bias when he subsequently questioned their claim that the Sandemanians possessed 'inordinate spiritual pride' and neglected "'the poor, ignorant, perishing multitude"'.<sup>2</sup> A closer analysis of the sect will indeed show that neither of these charges sticks and that Bogue and Bennett provided a prejudiced, if highly influential, account of the sect.

<sup>1</sup> E.P. Thompson, *The making of the English working class* (Harmondsworth, 1980), 28-58.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 39. Cf. D. Bogue and J. Bennett, *History of dissenters, from the Revolution in 1688, to the year 1808*, 4 vols. (London, 1808-12), 4, 117.

As further illustration that political radicalism arose from such sects as the Sandemanians, Thompson noted that Thomas Spence 'was brought up in a Sandemanian family'. Later in the same chapter he also claimed that in the complex web of English sects we can locate 'a forcing-bed for the variants of nineteenth-century working-class culture'. In support of this claim he mentioned several sects, including the Sandemanians, and then singled out William Godwin whose 'father was a minister' in the Sandemanian church.<sup>3</sup> Hence we are presented with the impressive coincidence that two leading radicals, Spence and Godwin, both grew up in close association with this very small sect. While Thompson may be correct in claiming that eighteenth century religious dissent provided an important seedbed for political radicalism, I will argue that the Sandemanians do not obviously fit this pattern and that both Spence and Godwin provide highly problematic examples for Thompson's thesis. First, however, I must offer a brief history of the Sandemanians and characterise their views on politics.

## II

The roots of the sect can be traced to the kirk at Tealing, near Dundee, whose young minister, John Glas, came into conflict with the Church of Scotland in the early 1720s. Glas took exception to the popular practice of covenanting which he claimed possessed no justification in the Bible. Moreover, he expressed reservations about the very existence of the Church of Scotland since national churches likewise were not legitimated in Scripture. A controversy soon arose over the latter issue which he made the subject of a sermon preached at Strathmartine on 6 August 1726. At a meeting of the Presbytery of Dundee in September, Glas was charged with opposing 'the doctrine and authority of the church and the martyrs' and was forbidden to raise this delicate subject again.<sup>4</sup> He refused and proceeded to publish his *Testimony of the king of martyrs concerning his kingdom* (1727) in which he again argued that state churches are unscriptural.<sup>5</sup> Glas's indiscretion led to his censure by the Synod in April 1728 and at the Synod's meeting in October he was deposed. However, he succeeded in attracting the support of four other ministers and of many members of his own congregation. The Glas affair, which had escalated into a rebellion of significant proportions, was

<sup>3</sup> Thompson, *English working class*, 39 and 55.

<sup>4</sup> *An account of the life and character of Mr. John Glas, late Minister of the Gospel at Tealing, near Dundee* (Edinburgh, 1813), xvi.

<sup>5</sup> John Glas, *The testimony of the King of Martyrs concerning his kingdom*, in *The works of Mr John Glas*, 5 vols. (Perth, 1782), I, 1-183.

only terminated by his final deposition in March 1730 and his separation from the Church of Scotland.<sup>6</sup>

Glas's stance was thus highly political. He was charged by his opponents with flouting the authority of the ecclesiastical establishment and with introducing 'the greatest division, confusion, and disorder, into this church'. Likewise, Glas was represented as 'a heretic - as a perjured man, who had broken his ministerial engagements, and rent the church'. He was branded Ishmael (the outcast) by his father, who was a minister, and suffered poverty, humiliation and contempt at the hands of the clergy. While his enemies abused him, one of his supporters argued that there were no adequate grounds for censure but that the whole matter should be understood as the exercise of 'mere church authority'.<sup>7</sup>

Having been separated from the Church of Scotland, Glas, together with a growing band of followers, held services every Sabbath in Dundee and pursued a pure and undefiled form of Christianity as specified in the Bible. The group had no minister but chose elders from among themselves in accordance with biblical injunction.<sup>8</sup> Such elders were responsible for teaching and the general running of the meeting house.

During the 1730s the sect spread to several other Scottish towns, but its main impact in England followed the publication in 1757 of *Letters on Theron and Aspasio* by Glas's son-in-law Robert Sandeman.<sup>9</sup> In this work Sandeman chastised popular preachers who fashioned Christianity to suit themselves and he instead insisted that the Bible should be the Christian's sole guide. Faith in the Bible and the unswerving adherence to its doctrines must, then, dictate the true standard of righteousness. Following an intense correspondence with several independent ministers in London, Sandeman visited the metropolis in April 1761 and a year later a legitimately-constituted Sandemanian community met in the Glovers'

<sup>6</sup> See *An account*; J.T. Hornsby, 'John Glas (1695-1773)', Ph.D. dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 1936; Id., 'The case of Mr John Glas', *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, VI (1937), 115-37; Id., 'John Glas: His later life and work', *ibid.*, VII (1940), 94-113; L.A. McMillon, *Restoration roots* (Dallas, 1983).

<sup>7</sup> *An account*, xl and xxxviii.

<sup>8</sup> See Acts 20:17 and 14:23; Philippians 1:1; Titus 1:4-9 and 1 Timothy 3:1-7.

<sup>9</sup> [R. Sandeman], *Letters on Theron and Aspasio. Addressed to the author*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1759). The work subsequently appeared in three English and two American editions. Reference will be to the 4th ed. (Edinburgh, 1803) in 2 vols.

Hall.<sup>10</sup> After an initial flush of interest the number of Sandemanians in London settled down to about one hundred and it remained the largest meeting house south of the Border. In the late eighteenth century there were nearly forty meeting houses in Britain and several in America, the total membership numbering about one thousand. Thereafter the membership slowly declined. Today (1990) there are only a handful of Sandemanians remaining and the last meeting house closed in 1989.

It is important to recognise that the Sandemanians formed a highly homogenous group whose members agreed with one another on a wide range of doctrinal issues. The church's strict disciplinary code enforced this homogeneity by stipulating that if any disagreements arose then the deviant(s) was to be excluded. In contrast to this homogeneity there existed a sharp boundary between the sect and outsiders. To appreciate how this boundary was drawn and maintained we need to look more closely at Glas's *Testimony*. There he argued that God had made two sacred covenants; the first, with the people of Israel, was detailed in the Old Testament, while the second was recorded in the New. While the first covenant was purely mundane, the latter was a spiritual covenant in which God revealed what John the Baptist called 'the kingdom of heaven' (Matthew 3:2). This kingdom is the 'very antitype of all rule and government in Israel' since it possesses no kings, queens or national churches. Instead, as Jesus claimed in John 18:36, 'My kingdom is not of this world'.

Glas discussed at length the politics of the kingdom of heaven or, more precisely, the lack of politics. He extolled the virtues of that kingdom 'for the power and glory, number of subjects, and their quality, prosperity and peace; and for stability. Of this kingdom there shall be no end.' Moreover,

Here are the best of subjects ... and an order and government infinitely excelling that of other kingdoms; absolute government without compulsion or oppression, perfect liberty, and a willing people, without any confusion or disorder; a government of rich grace, reigning through righteousness unto eternal life; unparalleled laws, written on the hearts of the

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, *An epistolary correspondence between S.P.[ike] and R.S.[andeman] with several additional letters, never printed before* (London, 1764); D. Mackintosh ed., *Letters in correspondence by Robert Sandeman, John Glas, and their contemporaries* (Dundee, 1851); [J. Morison ed.], *Supplementary volume of letters and other documents by John Glas, Robert Sandeman and their contemporaries* (Perth, 1865).

subjects; the most righteous judgement, rendering unto everyone according to his works.<sup>11</sup>

Here, then, is a utopian vision of a society in which peace and happiness reigns. In this society there is no need for clergy, politicians or magistrates to direct and restrain the individual but every citizen accepts God's laws unquestioningly and by accepting them (s)he is granted eternal life.

The kingdom of heaven is the model for the Sandemanian church, an invisible church that unites God's obedient subjects. Moreover, the Sandemanians' aim was to live according to the Bible and in imitation of Christ so as to be worthy of the kingdom of heaven. But to live in this manner necessarily requires that Sandemanians turn their backs on *this world*. This does not mean that the Sandemanian becomes a hermit but, like Christ, (s)he should pass through this world, recognising its false and transient nature, while remaining committed to the higher spiritual values required in the kingdom of heaven. Members of the sect therefore set themselves apart from all other churches and from non-Sandemanians. However, in their social intercourse they should neither be arrogant nor bigoted but should practise humility. Moreover, while standing apart they should not despise those who are not members of the sect since they are required to 'do good unto all men' (Galatians 6:10).

If a utopian vision dominated Glas's conception of the kingdom of heaven, he projected an antithetical view of the mundane world. He portrayed this mundane kingdom as dominated by 'human authority with tyrannical and worldly power'. Such kingdoms arose from the need for men to band together for mutual defence and therefore men will defend their lives and fortunes by the sword. While accepting a view of natural justice Glas also cautioned that tyranny and the sword reign on earth, particularly in Catholic countries. Sandeman likewise warned that since religion has become the servant of politics in this world, true Christianity must avoid politics or be itself corrupted.<sup>12</sup>

The Sandemanian position on politics seems straightforward: worldly politics are to be totally avoided. The situation is, however, rather more complex since, in his first epistle general, Peter exhorted Christians to 'submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors' (I Peter 2:13-4). This was one of the scriptural passages cited in a work detailing the practices of the Sandemanian meeting house in London:

<sup>11</sup> Glas, *Testimony*, 85 and 91-2.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 92 and 118; Sandeman, *Letters*, 2,3.



We think every Christian must be a *loyal subject*, submitting himself to civil concerns to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, punctually regarding the rules laid down (Rom. xiii. 1-7; 1 Peter ii. 13-17). This was required of the disciples and churches, when they were under a tyrannical and persecuting government; and it cannot be less a duty, under the present mild and peaceable one.<sup>13</sup>

Glas had likewise emphasised that Christians should 'be subject to the powers that be, to pay tribute to them, to pray for them, and to lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty'.<sup>14</sup> Sandemanians had thus not only to eschew politics but also to abide by the laws of the state and its leaders, whether a just king or a despotic ruler. If any inconsistency could arise between these two requirements we may be sure that it would surface in Scotland where questions of loyalty were particularly convoluted. Here we find one mid-nineteenth century Glasite family cherishing 'Jacobite sympathies' and possessing 'several relics of Prince Charles Edward'.<sup>15</sup> On other occasions the Sandemanian attitude towards mundane politics was less ambiguous and more readily applied.

### III

To show how Sandemanians reacted to political events I shall offer three fuller examples, the first of which is based on Jean F. Hankins' study of Sandemanians during the American Revolution.<sup>16</sup> In the autumn of 1764 Robert Sandeman arrived in America at the invitation of several clergymen who had been impressed by his *Letters on Theron and Aspasio*. Sandeman soon attracted a moderate number of converts to his cause and several meeting houses were opened in the late 1760s. These Sandemanians engendered considerable curiosity and antipathy since, while loyalists, they neither bore arms nor aided the British in New England. Shortly after the introduction of the Stamp Act in 1765 a mob attacked and damaged the small Sandemanian meeting house in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, while in 1770 Sandeman was charged by

<sup>13</sup> [Samuel Pike], *An account of the Christian practices observed by the church in Barnsbury Grove, Barnsbury, London, and other churches in fellowship with them* (London, n.d.), 8. The first edition is dated 1766.

<sup>14</sup> Glas, *Testimony*, 115.

<sup>15</sup> M. Tait and W.F. Gray, 'George Square. Annals of an Edinburgh locality, 1766-1926. From authentic records', *The Book of the Old Edinburgh Club* XXVI (1948), 45.

<sup>16</sup> J.F. Hankins, 'A different kind of Loyalist: The Sandemanians of New England during the Revolutionary War', *The New England Quarterly* LX (1987), 223-49.

the Danbury, Connecticut, selectmen with being a transient. With the growing demands for independence in the mid-1770s Sandemanians came under increasing suspicion, being generally perceived as loyalists and Tories who retained their support for the King.

The small Sandemanian community in Boston, who placed loyalty above passivity, aligned themselves with other loyalists and were evacuated from the city in March 1776. By contrast, the community at New Haven refused to take sides. Yet, in the highly polarised political environment of the day, such passivity was understood as support for the British. In September 1777 they were called upon by the local Committee of Inspection to clarify their position. The documents they produced in response display the equivocal messages contained in the Sandemanians' social philosophy since they not only requested the freedom to exercise their Christian profession and asserted their wish to be at peace with both parties, but they also acknowledged their obedience to the King's commands, including, if necessary, the bearing of arms. These Sandemanians did not enter the fray, but their declaration of loyalty led them to be imprisoned, although they were subsequently released on the understanding that they would not act against the revolutionaries. Some Sandemanians living in Danbury, Connecticut, were likewise jailed for a time. Members of the sect also refused to be drafted into military service since, they claimed, it is 'contrary to the Law of God to take up arms against the King of Great Britain'.<sup>17</sup> Hence we see these American Sandemanians of the revolutionary period running a fine line between passivity and loyalty.

The second example contains no such equivocation. Late in 1830 James Morison, a third generation Sandemanian and a printer from Perth, reflected on the insurrections that were sweeping across Europe in the following letter to a co-religionist.

It is almost impossible for one to think or write upon any other subject at present than the remarkable doing among the nations (including our own Country), which are daily passing before our eyes. Violence is indeed fast o'erspreading the earth [Genesis 6:11] - the waters roar and are troubled, and the mountains, more and more shaking by the swelling thereof [Psalms 46:3] ... In all that is going forward, I hope the Brethren both in Scotland and England will be found taking no part; but watching and keeping their garments [cf. Revelations 16:15] - rendering unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's. [Matthew 22:21]<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 246.

<sup>18</sup> J. Morison to P. Cochran, 19 Dec. 1830, Glasite Papers, Dundee University, MS 9/3 (20).

Like other Sandemanians, Morison made extensive use of biblical quotations; indeed, the exhortations delivered by the elders every Sabbath likewise consisted of biblical quotations with a minimum of linking material. By staying close to the text of the Bible, distortion was minimised.

Morison conceived social and political events in this world as the unfolding of God's plan contained in the Bible, especially in the prophetic books. Since the course of world history was divinely ordained and would lead necessarily to destruction, the Sandemanian must stand aloof from these events and be concerned only with the kingdom of heaven. The passage from St. Matthew's gospel with which Morison's letter ends was often quoted by members of the sect since it starkly asserted not only the distinction between the worldly and spiritual kingdoms but it also specified the proper attitude of Christians towards the former.

The third example is taken from the sect's most famous member, Michael Faraday, the eminent early Victorian scientist.<sup>19</sup> Faraday's father belonged to the sect and his paternal grandparents were also associated with it. He made his confession of faith in 1821, the year he married the daughter of one of the London elders, became a deacon in 1832 and served as an elder for two periods, each of about three and a half years. In Faraday's extensive correspondence the very few references to politics show his bleak disdain for all forms of political activity. Thus he claimed that he never meddled in politics which he dismissed as 'one of the games of life'.<sup>20</sup> He was particularly scornful of radical movements as is indicated by the following anagrams taken from his *Commonplace Book*: 'Revolution' he transposed into 'to love ruin', while 'Radical Reform' became 'Rare Mad Frolic'.<sup>21</sup>

However, in the period 1848-9, when so much of Europe was immersed in revolution, his letters to several close friends among continental scientists indicate clearly how he responded to revolutionary events in the mundane realm. Although his response was similar to Morison's it differed in two significant respects. Firstly, Faraday did not employ biblical quotations in writing to non-Sandemanians although it is clear that he understood the contemporary political turmoil in the same

<sup>19</sup> J.F. Riley, *The hammer and the anvil: A background to Michael Faraday* (Clapham, 1954); Id., 'The faith of a scientist', *The Scots Magazine*, LXXXVII (1967), 214-7; C.A. Russell, *Cross-currents: Interactions between science and faith* (Leicester, 1985), 256-65; G.N. Cantor, *Michael Faraday, Sandemanian and Scientist: A study of science and religion in the nineteenth century* (Basingstoke, 1991).

<sup>20</sup> Faraday to A. de la Rive, 9 July 1849 in L.P. Williams, *The selected correspondence of Michael Faraday*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1971), 558.

<sup>21</sup> Faraday's 'Commonplace book', ff391, 404 and 434: Faraday papers, Institution of Electrical Engineers.

way as Morison. When, however, he wrote to fellow Sandemanians he made extensive use of biblical passages. Secondly, he contrasted civil uprisings with the peace created by the calm contemplation of nature. In this respect, among others, Faraday likened science to pure religion but contrasted both with politics.

Thus we find Faraday expressing his delight that the Swiss chemist Christian Schoenbein was maintaining his detachment from the political situation and was not

fighting among the crowd of black passions that seem now a days [December 1848] to urge men every where into action. What incredible scenes everywhere, what unworthy motives ruled for the moment, under high sounding phrases, and at the last, what disgusting revolutions. Happy are we here who have thus far been kept from these things and hope to be preserved in the future.<sup>22</sup>

When writing to Jean-Baptiste-André Dumas in July 1848 Faraday likewise expressed his anxiety that Dumas and his wife might have been caught up in the fierce fighting that had swept through Paris. Almost a year later he wrote again to Dumas, who had accepted political office, indicating a rather different concern 'for so much turns up near & about you that seems to me to be incompatible with your habit of mind & occupation that I mourn a little at times'.<sup>23</sup> Science was, in Faraday's opinion, thoroughly incompatible with politics, not only because politics, especially revolutionary politics, was likely to disrupt a life devoted to science but also because of attributed opposing sets of values to the two activities.

This opposition was expressed in a slightly earlier letter in which Faraday described Dumas as 'a man of peace[,] order & science' whose fine feelings would have made the political events in Paris distasteful to him.<sup>24</sup> Likewise in writing to the Genevan scientist, Auguste de la Rive, Faraday claimed that he was saddened by the way 'Scientific men should be so disturbed' by politics and the progress of science also disrupted by

<sup>22</sup> Faraday to C. Schoenbein, 15 December 1848 in G.W.A. Kahlbaum and F.V. Darbishire eds., *The letters of Faraday and Schoenbein, 1836-62* (Basle and London, 1899), 182.

<sup>23</sup> Faraday to J.B. Dumas, 18 June 1849 in Williams, *Selected correspondence*, 555.

<sup>24</sup> Faraday to J.B. Dumas, 5 June 1849 in Williams, *Selected correspondence*, 552.



'the passions of men'.<sup>25</sup> The letter to Schoenbein of December 1848 cited above opens with Faraday proclaiming 'What delight it is to think that you are quietly and philosophically at work in the pursuit of science; or else enjoying yourself with Madame Schoenbein and the children amongst the pure and harmonious beauties of nature'.<sup>26</sup> Nature, then, is beautiful and harmonious and the scientist adopts these qualities in contemplating nature and the divinely ordained laws that govern natural phenomena. Science is the realm of peace, order and progress, whereas politics in general and radical politics in particular create strife, confusion and regress. In short, Faraday conceived science as a thoroughly moral activity and politics as the paradigm of immorality.

Finally, Faraday was the very epitome of a loyal subject. He responded to the demands made on him by the Queen and Prince Albert, who attended a number of Faraday's lectures and invited him to the Palace and to Windsor. Likewise he was ready to make his scientific expertise available to the Admiralty, the Board of Ordnance and Royal Commissions which were turning increasingly to scientists for advice on a wide range of topics. A further aspect of his loyalty was his constant and dedicated service over a period of more than half a century to his employer, the Royal Institution.

#### IV

From the foregoing discussion it should be clear that Sandemanians operated with a simplistic but powerful dichotomy that distinguished sharply between the worldly and heavenly kingdoms. Politics, especially radical politics, was consigned to the first category and thus kept at distance. The situation was however sometimes complicated by the demand that a true Christian must be a loyal subject. However, in such cases Sandemanians usually opted for the established regime and did not welcome radical political change. Thus Sandemanians were often labelled as Tories. However, we should be careful not to apply this label in the party political sense since they rejected both Tory and Whig parties while adhering to a traditional philosophy of conservatism. This characterisation and the sect's marked antipathy towards radicalism seems difficult to reconcile with Thompson's claim that the Sandemanians were one of those sects from which working class radicalism was derived. The difficulty is further compounded if we look more closely at Thompson's two examples, Spence and Godwin.

<sup>25</sup> Faraday to A. de la Rive, 9 July 1849 in Williams, *Selected correspondence*, 558.

<sup>26</sup> Faraday to C. Schoenbein, 15 December 1848 in Kahlbaum and Darbishire, *Letters*, 182.

Malcolm Chase has recently examined the example of Spence. The Glasite meeting house in Newcastle was founded in 1751 - the year after Spence's birth - and contained seventeen members in 1768 rising to thirty-six in 1799. The Spence family were relative late-comers to the sect, having previously belonged to the congregation of an Independent minister named James Murray. According to Chase, Thomas Spence's brother, Jeremiah, left Murray's congregation sometime after Murray's death in 1782, probably when the chapel acceded to the Scottish Presbyterians in 1785. A 1799 list of Newcastle Sandemanians includes Jeremiah as one of the two elders but no other male members of the Spence family.<sup>27</sup> Thomas certainly experienced a pious upbringing but since he left Newcastle for London in 1787 or 1788 he probably did not follow his brother into the fold. Moreover, although Eneas Mackenzie's article on the Glasites, which forms part of his history of Newcastle, includes a brief biography of Spence, the only explicit connection between the family and the sect is through Jeremiah who is described as 'a man of the most distinguished worth'.<sup>28</sup> There is no evidence that Thomas Spence joined the sect in Newcastle and he certainly did not enter the London church, whose membership is well documented, when he moved to the metropolis.

As further evidence that Spence was not a Glasite, Chase points out that Spence's radicalism had surfaced in print about a decade before Jeremiah joined the sect. Moreover, Chase notes that Spence's father encouraged a critical reading of the Bible which would have been incompatible with the strict biblical literalism encouraged by the Sandemanians.<sup>29</sup> In all, Thompson's claim that Spence was 'brought up in a Sandemanian family' lacks confirmatory evidence.<sup>30</sup>

The case connecting Godwin with the Sandemanians appears both stronger and more problematic. Born in 1756, Godwin was brought up in the Calvinist faith by his father and then, moving to Norwich at the age of 11, he lived with an Independent minister named Samuel Newton, until he was 15 years old. It has often been claimed that Newton was a

<sup>27</sup> Until recently several rolls of the Newcastle church were kept in the Edinburgh Glasite meeting house. However with the closure of the meeting house the archive is being relocated.

<sup>28</sup> E. Mackenzie, *A descriptive and historical account of the town and county of Newcastle upon Tyne, including the Borough of Gateshead*, 2 vols. (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1827), II, 399-402.

<sup>29</sup> M. Chase, *'The people's farm': English radical agrarianism, 1775-1840* (Oxford, 1988), 39-40.

<sup>30</sup> Thompson, *English working class*, 39. See also T.M. Parssinen, 'Thomas Spence (1750-1814)' in J.O. Baylen and N.J. Grossman eds., *Biographical dictionary of modern British radicals*, 3 vols., (Sussex and New Jersey, 1979), 454-8.

Sandemanian, and he certainly described himself by that term. However, according to the sect's records there was no Sandemanian meeting house in Norwich. A small Sandemanian community existed at rural Banham, some 15 miles to the south-west, by the mid-1760s but 'lack of brotherly love and discipline' led to this church being severed.<sup>31</sup> By 1790 a few of the members of this Banham group had helped form a new meeting house in the neighbouring village of Old Buckenham, which likewise was a satellite of the larger and more prosperous London community. It therefore appears that Newton and his Norwich church did not form part of the Sandemanian network. More importantly, he and his church did not therefore submit to the proper disciplinary code of the Sandemanians. For example, while the Sandemanians rejected ministers as contrary to biblical teaching, Newton maintained his ministry at the Old Meeting House in Norwich. To clarify the situation we must deny the label of Sandemanian to Newton, while admitting that, in his religious activities and opinions, he may have drawn selectively on the writings of Robert Sandeman.

In his biography of Godwin, Peter Marshall misrepresents the Sandemanians by drawing principally on Newton's writings, Godwin's subsequent critical comments on Newton's 'Sandemanianism', and Bogue and Bennett's biased account of the sect.<sup>32</sup> A few examples of his mischaracterisation will suffice. The Sandemanians are portrayed as ultra-Calvinists on the evidence of Godwin who later claimed that while Calvin damned ninety-nine out of a hundred of mankind, Sandeman 'contrived a scheme for damning ninety-nine in a hundred of the followers of Calvin'.<sup>33</sup> This is a false way of viewing the sect which neither sought its roots in the Reformation nor damned outsiders. If Newton was a pedant, if he was extremely cruel to Godwin, if he instilled the fear of eternal damnation into his pupil, these were all characteristics that genuine Sandemanians abhorred. Likewise, as will be discussed below, it is incorrect to portray Sandemanians as placing reason before faith. Nor were they bleak killjoys since they drank in moderation - note the connection with the Sandeman and Bell families - played music and attended the theatre. Finally, Newton's support for John Wilkes is out of character with the loyalty and political quietism generally practised by members of the sect. Whatever Newton's debt to Sandeman's writings, he was no Sandemanian.

Earlier biographers of Godwin, such as F.K. Brown and Don Locke, have emphasised Godwin's close study of Sandeman's writings even after

<sup>31</sup> J. Boosey to ?, 23 October 1790 in T.J.F. Deacon's book, f 326. See n.27.

<sup>32</sup> P.H. Marshall, *William Godwin* (New Haven and London, 1984), 24-8. Marshall, however, also consulted Sandeman's *Discourses on passages of Scripture: With essays and letters* ed. D.M.[ackintosh] (Dundee, 1857).

<sup>33</sup> Quoted by Marshall, *William Godwin*, 23.

he had left Norwich. Thus we find Godwin in Kent in the summer of 1773 'reading the works of Sandeman'. He had earlier been refused entry to Homerton Academy, supposedly because he was attached to Sandeman's doctrines, but even when he was a student at Hoxton Academy he avoided other creeds and, in his own words, 'came out as pure a Sandemanian as I had gone in'.<sup>34</sup> Unlike Marshall both Brown and Locke have recognised the difficulty of making Godwin a Sandemanian. Thus Brown distinguished between Sandemanian observances and Sandemanian (or more precisely Sandeman's) doctrines and he claimed that Godwin was attracted to the latter, not the former. Locke also appreciated that Sandeman's teachings were subject to different interpretations and he noted that 'the mild Michael Faraday seems to have endorsed a faith very different from that of Godwin and Newton'.<sup>35</sup>

Godwin was not a member of the Sandemanian sect and he did not seek out members of that sect when he reached London. Moreover, there is no evidence that he studied John Glas's works: this omission is important since on most issues of doctrine Sandemanians drew more extensively on Glas than on Sandeman. Yet Godwin's close attention to Sandeman's writings raises a number of questions. How did Godwin interpret the *Letters on Theron and Aspasio*? What effect did this book (and other works by Sandeman) have on his later political writings? Was he equally attracted to the writings of John Glas, and if not (as seems likely) then why not? Why didn't he meet up with the London Sandemanians? I happily leave these questions to Godwin scholars but I would caution them against aligning Godwin too closely with the Sandemanians since, as I have argued, neither he nor Newton joined the sect. Indeed, his relation to Sandeman's writings seems to have been very idiosyncratic and in his subsequent intellectual development he appears both to have rejected much of his early 'Sandemanianism' and to have adopted and extended specific aspects of it. The situation, then, is complex and deserves further analysis. As a minor contribution to that project I will conclude this discussion, firstly, by arguing that two frequently-proposed connections between Sandemanianism and radicalism involve misrepresentations of the former. Secondly, I will identify one specific, but generally overlooked, passage in Sandeman's *Letters on Theron and Aspasio* which contains a radical political and ecclesiastical message.

<sup>34</sup> F.K. Brown, *The life of William Godwin* (London & New York, 1926), 7-12, quotations on pp.10 and 12; D. Locke, *A fantasy of reason: The life and thought of William Godwin* (London, 1980).

<sup>35</sup> Brown, *Godwin*, 9; Locke, *Fantasy*, 17. Locke (p.291) also notes Godwin's later connection with some of the Dundee Glasites.



In an insightful analysis of *Political Justice* W. Stafford has argued that Godwin drew extensively on his dissenting background which included exposure to Calvinism, Congregationalism and Socinianism as well as Sandeman's writings. For Stafford *Political Justice* represents an imperfect fusion between elements deriving from these dissenting traditions and philosophical radicalism. Thus when writing on such issues as moral judgement, rights and intentionality, Godwin often reflected a dissenting perspective rather than that adopted by fellow utilitarians. As Stafford recognised, it is frequently difficult to disentangle the influences of the different intellectual stands to which Godwin was exposed. However, towards the end of his paper, Stafford suggests that 'Sandemanianism helps explain Godwin's unmitigated faith in the power of reason'.<sup>36</sup> As he rightly claims, Sandeman firmly rejected revivalists and especially Methodists who appealed to a religion of the heart. Moreover Sandeman advocated the use of reason in understanding the Bible: 'No man will be reconciled to the gospel; till once his attention be awakened to hearken to reason; till the voice of reason prevail in his thoughts'.<sup>37</sup> Yet it is clear that, far from setting faith against reason, Sandeman insisted that we should use our reasoning powers to comprehend the Bible and to secure our faith.

This aspect of Sandeman's writings has often been misinterpreted. From his reading of Bogue and Bennett, Marshall asserts that Sandeman claimed that grace could not be achieved by 'faith, but only by the rational perception of divine truth'. Locke has likewise drawn far too sharp a distinction between reason and faith.<sup>38</sup> Yet the Sandemanians continually emphasised the crucial importance of faith. To gain entry to the sect a new member had to make his/her confession of faith. According to a description of Sandemanian practices the sect was prepared to admit people 'who, by their profession, appear to understand and believe the TRUTH'.<sup>39</sup> This connection between belief and understanding recurs frequently in works by Sandemanians. Although Sandeman claimed that reason should play an important role in religion he, like other Sandemanians, was concerned that reason should not be used excessively to the detriment of faith. Thus he was critical of natural theologians and complained that 'Philosophy leads its adepts to the knowledge of a very

<sup>36</sup> W. Stafford, 'Dissenting religion translated into politics: Godwin's *Political Justice*', *History of Political Thought*, I (1980), 279-99. Quotation on p.297.

<sup>37</sup> [Sandeman], *Letters*, 1, 309.

<sup>38</sup> Bogue and Bennett, *History of dissenters*, 4, 109 and 116-9; Marshall, *William Godwin*, 23; Locke, *Fantasy*, 17.

<sup>39</sup> [Pike], *Account*, 11.

complaisant Deity'.<sup>40</sup> A further example is provided in a letter dating from 1850 concerning Faraday who was greatly distressed at the possibility that he might be excluded from the sect. According to his wife, Sarah, the possibility of exclusion had arisen because Faraday had been 'reasoning beyond what the Scriptures allow'.<sup>41</sup> This is a telling phrase since it indicates the limitations that need to be applied to reason; reason should instead be subservient to faith.

It is significant that when Faraday attacked the table turners in a lecture in 1854 he did not charge them with being poor reasoners. Instead, he identified a '*deficiency of judgment*' among not only table turners but also much of society, and he therefore emphasised the need for people to improve their judgement.<sup>42</sup> Since the word reason carries too many inappropriate connotations, judgement and understanding appear to be more appropriate terms when discussing the mental philosophy of the Sandemanians. They were not the rationalists that they have sometimes been portrayed, nor did they extol reason above faith.

Marshall is correct in portraying the Sandemanian sect as a community linked by the bond of love. Those who share the kingdom of heaven share this love. Moreover, he claimed that Sandemanians 'practised a form of communism' since they adhered to the biblical prohibition against laying up treasures on earth while sharing their property with other members of the sect. As noted above, Thompson attributed a similar view to the Sandemanians which he likewise identified as providing a natural link with political radicalism.<sup>43</sup> The argument is an attractive one and is certainly not wholly invalid. However, it requires closer scrutiny not least because both Thompson and Marshall used Bogue's and Bennett's *History of dissenters* as their main source on this point. What Bogue and Bennett claim is that, because the Sandemanians adopt a literal interpretation of the Bible, their religious principles induce 'them to maintain such a community of goods, that every member of the church must consider his property subject to the claims of the body'. The same passage may also be the source for Eneas Mackenzie's less extreme contention that the Sandemanians 'hold the *community* of goods, so far that every one is to consider all that he has in his possession liable to the

<sup>40</sup> [Sandeman], *Letters*, 1, 303.

<sup>41</sup> Sarah Faraday to William Buchanan, 3 November [1850]: in possession of Mrs J.M. Ferguson and Joan Ferguson, Edinburgh.

<sup>42</sup> M. Faraday, 'Observations on mental education', in *Lectures on education delivered at the Royal Institution of Great Britain* (London, 1854), 39-88.

<sup>43</sup> Marshall, *William Godwin*, 36; Thompson, *English working class*, 39.



calls of the poor of the church.<sup>44</sup>

It is important to note that members of the sect fulfilled a wide range of economic functions: there were many workers, both skilled and unskilled, a smattering of professional men and a few employers. Among the latter were Edward Barnard (a leading London silversmith), Thomas Boosey (sheet music publisher) and members of the Sandeman (wine importer) and Waterston (stationer) families. It is misleading to claim that these more affluent Sandemanians were either required to share their wealth with other members of the sect or to make their earnings over to the community.<sup>45</sup> However, they were required to exercise Christian charity to a high degree in accord with the principle of brotherly love. Members had to support each other. If any was sick or in real need of money, then the community gathered round and it was the duty of those who could provide to assist the poor. The sect was particularly distinguished by the care it took of its members not only through financial aid but also in other ways. For example, Sandemanian employers often employed other members of the set, and Faraday assisted several young Sandemanians in finding employment.<sup>46</sup> In addition, while the Sandemanians looked after one another they did not 'neglect the poor, ignorant, perishing multitude', as Bogue and Bennett incorrectly insisted.<sup>47</sup> Of the three collecting boxes in each meeting house, one was for maintaining the building, one was for the poor in the community and the third was for the needy without. Almsgiving was considered a Christian duty and all members were expected to contribute to the weekly collection prior to celebrating the Lord's Supper. There were also numerous instances of individual Sandemanians making donations to charitable causes: for example, although Faraday refused to give money to beggars, whom he considered unworthy, he made anonymous contributions to various charitables, such as hospitals and the London Female Dormitory.<sup>48</sup> However extensive the Sandemanians' practice of Christian charity, it falls far short of the communal ownership of goods which Bogue and Bennett attributed to the sect and which has been subsequently claimed by several historians.

<sup>44</sup> Bogue and Bennett, *History of dissenters*, 4, 113; Mackenzie, *History of Newcastle*, 3, 399.

<sup>45</sup> Although several Sandemanians were successful in business, they did not subscribe to the spirit of capitalism. Cf. M. Berman's interpretation of Faraday in his *Social change and scientific organisation. The Royal Institution, 1799-1844* (London, 1978), 156-86.

<sup>46</sup> Hornsby, 'John Glas', 161-2. See also Cantor, *Michael Faraday*.

<sup>47</sup> Bogue and Bennett, *History of dissenters*, 4, 117.

<sup>48</sup> M. Faraday to W. Wright, 11 March 1856: *Notes and Queries*, XI (1872), 73.

While the sect cannot have acted as a model for communal ownership of goods its members were committed to practising Christian charity. Moreover, they opposed covetousness and the spirit of capitalism. (Although some members were successful in business their religion required them not to respect or to hoard wealth, which, being part of the mundane realm, was of no real, lasting value.) In a spirit of Christian fellowship Sandemanians were supposed to live without envy or greed and to view economic differences as of no significance. More importantly, in the Sandemanian fellowship there was unity and equality. No member stood higher than another, the poor intermingled with the rich and women were of equal status (except that they could not become elders). Marshall drew attention to this 'egalitarian and democratic tendency' which he also located in Godwin's writings.<sup>49</sup>

This line of argument needs to be extended in order to uncover a radical strand that was central to the Sandemanian social philosophy. In his *Letters on Theron and Aspasio* Sandeman argued that

the whole New Testament speaks aloud, that, as to the matter of *acceptance* with God, this is no difference betwixt one man and another:- no difference betwixt the best accomplished gentleman, and the most infamous scoundrel:- no difference betwixt the most virtuous lady and the vilest prostitute:- no difference betwixt the most revered judge, and the most odious criminal, standing convicted before him, and receiving the just sentence of death from his mouth:- in a word, no difference betwixt the most fervent devotee, and the greatest ringleader in profaneness and excess.<sup>50</sup>

In the all-important matter of gaining acceptance with God our conventional moral judgements and categories are as nought. Moreover, in the kingdom of heaven there are no social divisions; instead, from this (divine) perspective all people are equal. Thus in contrast to the divided society we witness in this world Glas and Sandeman offered a vision of a world of peace, prosperity and equality. Furthermore, as noted in the foregoing discussion Glas and his followers forcefully rejected the established ecclesiastical institutions and proclaimed their dissent. Not surprisingly some commentators have viewed the sect as a threat not just

<sup>49</sup> Marshall, *William Godwin*, 27.

<sup>50</sup> [Sandeman], *Letters*, 1, 87-91.

to religious institutions but to the very stability of society.<sup>51</sup>

Whether any Sandemanians, ex-Sandemanians or pseudo-Sandemanians (such as Godwin) perceived and developed the radical implications of this passage is a separate issue. However, since genuine Sandemanians have generally adopted a quietist position towards politics and have emphasised their loyalty, they would seem unlikely recruits to political radicalism.

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University of Leeds

<sup>51</sup> See, for example, I. Nicholson, *The substance of a sermon, delivered in Pell Street Chapel, in the month of June 1806, intended as an antidote against the virulent poison of the Sandemanian heresy, diffused in London by the Hibernian stranger* (London, 1806); C.A. Webster, 'John Glas and the Sandemanians' (mimeographed paper read to Dundee Reformed Fraternity, August 1983). In the latter Glas is charged with having committed 'an act of folly, inexcusable provocation and rebellion'.

## THE MILL PRISONERS AND THE ENGLISHMAN WHO CONTINUED "IN THE LIGHT"

Sheldon S Cohen

Naval aspects of the American Revolution included far more than the intrepid escapades of John Paul Jones or the courageous deeds of other Yankee ship captains. Behind their celebrated exploits were the less popularized episodes of drudgery, fear, hardship, monotony and suffering endured by patriot seamen during the long struggle for American independence. Of course, such adversities were the commonly accepted lot for those men who then sailed the high seas. But for more than 2,500 American sailors similar tribulations were encountered on land. These men were those captured rebel mariners who were incarcerated in British Prisons during the years 1777 to 1782.

Captured patriot seamen were held in several British locales during this period, but only two prisons, Forton and Mill, held large numbers of internees. The groundwork for the re-opening of these detention centres was laid by an act of Parliament on March 3, 1777. It empowered 'His Majesty to secure and detain persons charged with or suspected of the Crime of High Treason committed in any of His Majesty's colonies or Plantations or on the High Seas, or the Crime of Piracy.' The latter portion of this act applied to captured rebel sailors, many of whom were then confined on guardships in English seaports. Accordingly, Mill Prison in Devonshire and Forton Prison in Hampshire, which had housed captives during the Seven Years' War (1756-1763), were ready by the end of May 1777 to receive their American detainees.<sup>1</sup>

Of these two English gaols, Forton had a much better reputation among those Americans who had experienced confinement in Britain. The prison was situated across the harbour from the town of Portsmouth; it consisted of two spacious buildings easily capable of holding 2,600 inmates; a solitary eight-foot fence surrounding the prison facilitated escapes, and its supervisors were not especially harsh. Jonathan Carpenter, one of Forton's first American inmates "rejoiced" upon being transferred there, and Caleb Foote, a later detainee, recalled that leaving his prison ship for Forton 'was like coming out of Hell and going into

<sup>1</sup> T.C. Hansard ed., *The Parliamentary history of England from the earliest period to the year 1803* (London, 1814), XIX, 51-55; Olive Anderson 'The Treatment of Prisoners of War in Britain During the American War of Independence', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, XXVIII (1955), 63-67; Catherine M. Prelinger, 'Benjamin Franklin and the American Prisoners of War in England During the American Revolution', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser. XXXII (1975), 264-265.



Paradise.’<sup>2</sup>

But Mill Prison was a different story for American prisoners. None of those who recorded their confinement there had anything pleasant to say about this gaol and most had only bitter memories of the place.

Mill Prison was located on a headland midway between the Devonshire towns of Plymouth and Plymouth Dock (Devonport). Its name was derived from a cluster of windmills that had once occupied the site and it was sometimes referred to as Old Mill or Millbay Gaol. The prison, constructed in the early eighteenth century, superseded these structures, and it probably seemed an ideal, as well as secure, site for a confinement facility. Guarded by water on three sides, the prison itself also appeared well protected. Much of it was surrounded by double stone walls, ten to fourteen feet high, which were topped with mortar encasing broken glass. Besides this deterrent to attempted escapes, the prison had an outer iron gate and an inner wooden gate which served as the primary means of entry and exit.<sup>3</sup>

The physical features within Old Mill Prison added to its grim, unsavoury reputation. A damp, partly windowless and ill-furnished two storey building, known as the Long Prison, housed almost all of the prisoners. A commissary, hospital, and an administrative centre within the inner courtyard comprised the remainder of the prison structure. All of these buildings served to animate unpleasant reminiscences among the surviving veterans of the gaol.<sup>4</sup>

Although some historians have declared that the prisoners at both Forton and Mill were each given attention to their personal needs, the records show a definite disparity in treatment at these detention centres. Unlike Forton, the Mill inmates complained periodically up to the spring

<sup>2</sup> John K. Alexander, ‘Forton Prison During the American Revolution: A Case Study of British Prisoner of War Policy and the American Response to that Policy’, *Essex Institute Historical Collections*, CIII (1967), 365-371; ‘Diary of Jonathan Carpenter’, Vermont Historical Society, *Proceedings*, no.46 (1872), viii; Caleb Foot, ‘Prison Letters and Sea Journal of Caleb Foot’, *Essex Institute Historical Collections*, XXVI (1889), 109-110; John Howard, *The state of prisons in England and Wales*, 4th edn. (London, 1792), 185-187.

<sup>3</sup> Howard Applegate, ‘American Privateersmen in the Mill Prison During 1777-1782’, *Essex Institute Historical Collections*, XCVII (1961), 304-306; Charles W. Bracken, *A history of Plymouth and her neighbours* (Plymouth, Eng. 1931), 221-3; Andrew Sherburne, *Memories of Andrew Sherburne: A prisoner of the navy of the Revolution* (Providence, R.I., 1831), 79-84.

<sup>4</sup> William R. Cutter, ed., ‘A Yankee privateersman in Forton Prison in England’, *New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, XXXII (1878), 185-186; Sherburne, 80-84; Bracken, 222-223; Applegate, 304-306.

of 1781 about their lack of clothing, shoes and blankets. And while complaints about food were made at both prisons, those at Mill Prison were distinctly more serious. There, the commissary rations, after the prison first opened, were so limited that one inmate claimed that many of the Americans ‘are strongly tempted to pick up the grass in the yard and eat it.’ Others among the first detainees allegedly ate snails from the prison walls. Later, in August 1777, when the quantity of food coming from the prison cookhouse had increased, the quality of victuals evidently had not. At that time, there were protests from the inmates to prison supervisors that they had been served ‘necks of beef with maggots’ in them.<sup>5</sup> The prisoners’ grievances about Mill’s food continued to be more frequent than their compatriots, at Forton.

Provisions for health care at Mill were also inferior. The prison hospital was ill-managed, ill-staffed and poorly arranged and maintained (one prisoner, Charles Herbert, declared that when it rained, ‘the wet beat against the patients as they lay in their beds’). And in early 1778, John Howard, England’s eminent penologist, wrote that the infirmary ‘was still quite dirty and offensive’. Recurrent outbreaks of diseases such as smallpox and dysentery were inadequately or improperly treated by Mill’s prison physician, whose sudden death in June 1778 was not at all mourned by the American captives.<sup>6</sup>

Inmates at the Devon prison likewise held little respect for the overall management at their gaol. The administrative structures governing both Mill and Forton were similar. The topmost supervision lay in London in the hands of the Admiralty, the Secretary of State and a subordinate body, the Commissioners for Sick and Hurt Seamen and Prisoners of War. At each prison the staff was headed by a keeper or agent and a staff that included turnkeys, deputies, clerks, cooks, labourers and a *per diem* physician. Local militia or nearby military units performed the duties of

<sup>5</sup> ‘Charles Herbert’s Diary’, in Richard Livesey ed., *The prisoners of 1776: A relic of the Revolution...* (Boston, 1854), 59-60, 216-219, 231; Commissioners for Sick and Hurt Seamen to Admiralty, 29 Aug. 1777, NMM, Adm/404, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, England; Applegate, 308-310, Sherburne, 84-85.

<sup>6</sup> John Howard, *The state of prisons in England and Wales with preliminary observations...* 3rd edn. (Warrington, Eng., 1784), 184; ‘Jonathan Haskins’ Diary’, *New England Quarterly* VII (1944), 298-299; ‘Cutter’s Diary’, *N. Eng. Hist. & Gen. Reg.*, XXXII (1878), 187, 305-308, ‘Charles Herbert’s Diary’, 52-53, 52-58; Comm. for Sick and Hurt Seamen to the Admiralty, 12 Jul. 1777, NMM Act M/404. (There was apparently significant plagiarism involved in the Herbert and Haskins’ Diaries with Haskins suspected of being the perpetrator. See John K. Alexander, ‘American Privateersmen in the Mill Prison During 1777-1782; An Evaluation’, *Essex Institute Historical Collections* CII (1966), 322-325.

prison guards.<sup>7</sup>

Yet, despite these outward similarities, manuscript records of the Admiralty, the Commission of Sick and Hurt Seamen, as well as prisoner diaries, mention that while some guards were friendly and tolerant at both prisons, discipline at Mill was distinctly more arbitrary and severe. The inmates' writings show that the gaolers there were more often accused of cruelties and petty indignities. Recurrent accusations were made against Mill sentinels for allegedly stealing prisoners' personal possessions or rations, capriciously harassing them, pilfering their charity boxes and on several occasions shooting at them without cause.<sup>8</sup>

Mill Prison agent William Cowdry, appointed on April 21, 1777, was often cited for his offensiveness. One Massachusetts seaman privately castigated the keeper declaring that he 'was as great a tyrant as any in England'. Agent (keeper) Cowdry clearly earned the Americans' antagonism by his actions toward them. He confined inmates to the prison dungeon (the Black Hole) for minor infractions; he indiscriminately locked prisoners out of the wards during inclement weather; he sometimes denied the detainees their clothing or other personal possessions; and in countless other small-minded ways harassed the prisoners far more than did his counterpart, John Newsham, at Forton. Not surprisingly, when Cowdry requested the inmates in 1782 to sign a document attesting to his fair treatment, the remaining Americans declined to do so.<sup>9</sup>

All of these manifest circumstances made Mill Prison an unpleasant experience for its American inmates. And while their overall treatment within its confines may not have been as miserable as indicated in prisoners' accounts or contemporary historical evaluations, British records do reveal that Mill Gaol nevertheless did not match the favourable assessment of scholars including Olive Anderson or Larry Bowman.<sup>10</sup> Britain, after all, regarded the American inmates as rebels, not citizens of

<sup>7</sup> Admiralty, Admiralty Entry Books, 14 Mar. 1777, Adm. 3/98/11, 88, 114 P.R.O., Kew; Francis Abell, *Prisoners of war in Britain, 1750-1815* (London, 1914), 214-234, Adm. to Comm. for Sick and Hurt Seamen, 12 Mar. 1777, 10 Jul. 1777; Anderson, 'Treatment of prisoners of war', 64-66.

<sup>8</sup> See Letters from Comm. for Sick and Hurt Seamen to and from Admiralty, 1777-1782, Ad M/404, 405; NMN; Admiralty Records, Adm. 3/98/11, 12, 13; P.R.O.; Applegate, 303-319; Alexander, 'Forton Prison', 365-389; 'Mill Prison', 318-340.

<sup>9</sup> Admiralty to Comm. for Sick and Hurt Seamen, 21 Apr. 1777 Ad M/404; Samuel Cutler's Diary, *N. Eng. Hist. Gen. Reg.* XXXII, 186, Alexander, 'Mill Prison', 308; 'Forton Prison', 369-380; Applegate, 305-306.

<sup>10</sup> Larry Bowman, *Captive Americans, prisoners during the American Revolution* (Athens, Ohio, 1976), 40-68; Anderson, 'The treatment of Prisoners of War', 63-83; Alexander, 'Mill Prison', 318-340; Applegate, 305-319.

a recognized belligerent. This fact obviously influenced London's initial neglect over conditions at the Devonshire gaol. Consequently, when one English official visiting Mill was told by prisoners that William Cowdry was a 'dirty fellow', the keeper answered the official indifferently: 'The government keeps dirty fellows to do their dirty work.'<sup>11</sup>

But even more than such administrative apathy, pettiness and physical deprivation, the emotional stresses of confinement endured by the Americans must have been psychologically detrimental. The imprisoned patriots were thousands of miles from their homes and families; the countryside was unfamiliar to them; and the knowledge that many among the local populace had relatives in the King's service must have rendered them initially suspicious of Devon's inhabitants. Furthermore, there was no guaranteed means of getting accurate news of the conflict in America, much less messages from home. There was also no certainty of how long the war might last, and until early 1779, there was no assurance of any prisoner exchange. The prisoners did form committees to protect their own interests, but these associations were inadequate to allay their feelings of boredom, frustration or melancholy.<sup>12</sup>

Opportunities to leave the constrictive atmosphere of Mill, aside from hoped-for prisoner exchanges, were limited. The Americans, of course, were given recurrent chances to exit the gaol by abandoning the patriot cause and enlisting in royal service, but the overwhelming majority of captives chose to remain loyal to the struggle for independence. Escape was another alternative that many attempted; but the majority were re-apprehended and subject to incarceration in the dungeon on limited rations. All in all, the physical and psychological ramifications of incarceration in this English prison must have been severe.<sup>13</sup>

There were, however, some individuals in England who decided to offer friendship and relief for these imprisoned seamen. In London during December 1777, and again the following month, Britons, along with several American expatriates sympathetic to the patriot cause, initiated a prisoner relief fund which quickly swelled to £3,700. This fund, which was to be further augmented throughout the war, was distributed by respected and trustworthy agents at both Forton and Mill prisons. At Forton the individual selected to deliver these funds and who

<sup>11</sup> Ralph D. Paine, *The ships and sailors of Old Salem* (New York, 1909), 164; Jesse Lemisch, 'Listening to the inarticulate: William Wigden's Dream and the Loyalties of American Revolutionary Seamen in British Prisons', *Journal of Social History*, III (1969), 12.

<sup>12</sup> Lemisch, 11-22; Prelinger, 262-276.

<sup>13</sup> Olive Anderson, 'American Escapes from British Naval Prisons During the War of Independence', *The Mariner's Mirror*, XLV (1955), 238-240; Lemisch, 14-18; Anderson, 'The treatment of prisoners of war', 71-72.



was already performing worthy services there was the Reverend Thomas Wren, a Presbyterian minister from Portsmouth. His many benefactions were subsequently recognized in both England and America.<sup>14</sup> But Robert Heath, the man who worked tirelessly to aid the Mill captives, still remains unrecognized for his humanitarian services.

Most of the meagre facts concerning the career of Robert Heath are detailed in a memorial published in the *Theological Magazine* for May 1801. According to this English periodical, Heath was born in 1741 at Totnes, a small town in South Devon about twenty miles east of Plymouth. His parents attended Episcopal Church services in the community, but they were apparently neither prominent nor prosperous. Consequently, Robert was given 'an education for trade', and at about the age of fourteen he was apprenticed to a whitesmith (tinsmith) in Totnes. When his master's business collapsed, Heath travelled to Plymouth where he was bound to a 'clock and watchmaker', and afterward to a silversmith. Young Heath's second indenture ended when the silversmith also went bankrupt, and the newly freed apprentice moved to Plymouth Dock where he began his own successful mercantile venture.<sup>15</sup>

It was evidently during his indenture to the Plymouth silversmith that Heath underwent the spiritual conversion that determined the future course of his life. Influenced by the personal devotions of his master's son, and concluding that he was 'unacquainted with the true nature of prayer', he began attending evangelical prayer meetings held at the Plymouth Tabernacle. (The congregation then met in a house in Charles Parish). His actions apparently earned the displeasure of his father 'who was mortified at his son having turned Whitefieldite.'<sup>16</sup> But Robert remained committed to the Calvinist Methodist beliefs which he zealously

<sup>14</sup> John Sainsbury, 'The Pro-Americans of London, 1769-1782', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., XXXV (1978), 443; *The Annual Register; or a view of the history, politics and literature for the year 1778*, 3rd edn. (London, 1778), 79; *Gentleman's Magazine*, XLVII (1777), 607, XLVIII (1778), 43; *The Public Advertiser* 2 Jan, 1778; *London Evening Post*, 23-25 Dec., 1777, 8-10 Jan., 1778; Sheldon S. Cohen, 'Thomas Wren: ministering angel of Forton Prison', *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, CIII (1979), 279-301.

<sup>15</sup> 'Memoir of the late Robert Heath', *The Theological Magazine* (May 1801), 161-162. A shorter reference to Heath's career is found on pages 61, 89-90 of a paper entitled 'An historical retrospect' by the Reverend Eliezer Jones. The paper is part of a larger work entitled *A memorial of nonconformity elicited by the centenary services of the Rodborough Tabernacle* (c. 1866), Gloucestershire Record Office, Records of Rodborough Tabernacle, D4248, 1417.

<sup>16</sup> Edwin Welch, 'Andrew Kirkman's Churches at Plymouth', *Transactions of the Devonshire Association*, XLVII (1965), 212-236; Richard Worth, *History of Plymouth from the earliest period to the present time* (Plymouth, 1890), 255-257; 'Memoir of Robert Heath', 161-162.

pursued alongside his mercantile concerns. He became a deacon in the Plymouth Tabernacle (presided over by its founder, the Reverend Andrew Kinsman), and he also spread his evangelical zeal to smaller communities in the West Devon and Cornwall regions. His fervour for sermonizing soon brought him the notice of the famed English revivalist George Whitefield, who had earlier played a role in the founding of Kinsman's congregation. According to his biography, Heath subsequently travelled to London where 'Mr. Whitefield introduced him to the Tabernacle Pulpit, and on his retiring required him temporarily to supply the Tabernacle at Bristol'. In all of this, Heath must have appeared divinely inspired, for it was also said that he found time to 'visit the sick and distressed areas of the poor' in his Devon neighbourhood.<sup>17</sup>

Opportunities arose to move to other locales and spread Calvinist Methodist teachings, but Heath remained in his Plymouth Dock residence throughout the years of the American Revolution. One such pulpit opening occurred following the death in 1773 of the Reverend Joseph Hart, minister of the Independent (moderate Calvinist) church at Jewin Street in London. Robert Heath's biographer states that the congregation wanted him to be a candidate for their pastoral office, but Heath allegedly declined the offer since it would sever his 'long standing ties' to the Plymouth Tabernacle. Perhaps, though, there was another reason for rejecting this distant possibility. In 1764, Heath had married a Plymouth girl and the fact that she bore her husband ten children in the next twenty years was anchor enough to keep the businessman-minister near his Devon domicile.<sup>18</sup>

The death of his devoted and supportive wife in 1787 probably had a determinative effect, for Heath at last accepted a permanent pulpit. Until this time he had been considered merely an unordained, unpaid evangelical or itinerant preacher (accounts of Americans in Mill Prison later mistakenly gave him the title of Reverend which, in turn, would mislead recent historians).<sup>19</sup> However, in 1789 he finally abandoned his mercantile endeavours in Plymouth Dock and, with the encouragement of Andrew Kinsman, he was ordained at Wotten-Under-Edge in Gloucestershire by the Cambridge-educated Reverend Rowland Hill, another Calvinist Methodist minister. The Reverend Mr. Heath preached at a church in Looe, Cornwall, until sometime in 1790 when he received a call

<sup>17</sup> 'Memoir of Robert Heath', 163; Jones, 'Historical retrospect', 40.

<sup>18</sup> Walter Wilson, *History and antiquities of Dissenting meeting-houses in London, Westminster and Southwark including the lives of their ministers* (London, 1809), III, 343-350; 'Memoir of Robert Heath', 163-164; Jones, 'Historical retrospect', 90.

<sup>19</sup> 'Memoir of Robert Heath', 164, Jones, 'Historical retrospect', 90. (Two such historians who were misled into thinking that Heath was already a clergyman at this time are Howard Applegate and the American naval historian, William B. Clark.)

by the members of the Rodborough Tabernacle, located just outside Stroud in Gloucestershire. The Tabernacle had been opened in 1750 through the efforts of George Whitefield, who had preached there occasionally and whose favourite chair was still respectfully preserved by the congregation.<sup>20</sup>

Robert Heath spent the remainder of his life ministering to his Rodborough congregation. Evidently he was rather popular as well as successful in this post. One congregant later remembered his career this way: 'He spent nine or ten years at Rodborough and was made very useful both awakening sinners and comforting saints.' The Reverend Mr. Heath also made structural changes during his tenure at Rodborough: The Tabernacle was pewed, the pulpit was moved and an area was set off in the gallery for the choir. During his last years there, Heath's health began to fail, and on July 18, 1800 he died unexpectedly from 'an instant stroke of the palsy' while returning from Shortwood in Gloucestershire. He had gone there to attend a sermon delivered by Rowland Hill who subsequently officiated at his funeral. A nineteenth century poem recounting the Tabernacle's history perhaps offers further insight into the man and his faith:

Then Heath took up the sword, and he  
Told Formalist and Pharisee  
That only Christ could save;  
That seas of blood could not atone  
For the Transgressions they had done  
They must be saved by Christ alone  
Or sink beneath the grave.<sup>21</sup>

These scanty facts then comprise the unexceptional career of an eighteenth century Methodist cleric whose passing was commemorated without any biographical connection to the War for American Independence. But turning back the clock to events before his Rodborough ministry, Robert Heath had emerged as the Mill captives' English benefactor as well as their outside link. Because of his Plymouth Dock

<sup>20</sup> Edwin Sidney, *The life of the Reverend Rowland Hill* (London, 1834), 1-5, 46; Luke Tyerman, *The life of the Reverend George Whitefield* (London, 1876), II, 453, 517-559; Arnold H. Dollimore, *George Whitefield, the life and times of the great evangelist of the eighteenth century* (Edinburgh, 1980), II, 419, 464; Notes on the history of Rodborough Tabernacle sampled by Rev. C.E. Watson, Ms records of the Rodborough Tabernacle, D4248, 13, 13/1 Gloucestershire Record Office; 'Memoir of Robert Heath', 164; Jones, 'Historical retrospect', 90.

<sup>21</sup> Jephtha Young, 'Rodborough Tabernacle, Gloucestershire, a poem', in John Knight to Rev. Benjamin Brockhouse, 17 Aug. 1844, *The early days of Rodborough Tabernacle*, Records of the Rodborough Tabernacle, D4248, 14/11; *Gloucester Journal*, 21 Jul. 1800; 'Memoir of Robert Heath', 165-166.

residence, he was soon aware of these new detainees. Legal procedures required that shipboard detainees had to be examined by civil magistrates before being remanded to their prisons on land. It is quite possible that Heath attended these open sessions of the Plymouth courts where he could witness the forlorn condition of arriving American captives. And perhaps he also became aware of the spiritual desires of prisoners such as Charles Herbert from Newburyport, Massachusetts, who, early in his confinement, lamented that, 'It is a great grievance to be shut up in prison and disbarred from hearing the gospel preached on the Lord's Day'. In any event, by the autumn of 1777, Heath had become a regular visitor to the Americans for whom he dispensed Christian comfort, sermons, news and even financial assistance. Samuel Cutler cited this last benefit when he noted on October 21, 1777 a £20 donation that he and a fellow inmate used to help finance their escape.<sup>22</sup>

It was through this supervising and distributing of outside financial and personal necessities that Robert Heath provided one of his most important services to the imprisoned Yankees. There was some local assistance, much of it emanating from Deacon Heath's Plymouth Tabernacle, but most of the financial donations were obtained through the efforts of the previously mentioned London relief committee. The directors of the committee, for various reasons, were tied to London. Consequently, they were obliged to seek the most dependable and trustworthy individuals living near Forton and Mill Prisons who would directly distribute and account for these sums.<sup>23</sup>

Robert Heath, already known in Devon for his benevolence and piety, was charged with supervising the distribution of the funds apportioned to the Mill prisoners. In this task, as with subsequent grants, he was assisted by Miles Saurey, a Plymouth linen draper (and probably a fellow Dissenter) who, like Heath, had earned the inmates' confidence. Indeed, the veneration in which both men were held by the captives was noted by Charles Herbert who wrote on March 12, 1778, that 'A smile from these men is like a smile from a father.' And it was earlier, on a raw cold New Year's Day in 1778 that Heath informed the Americans of the relief subscription and, perhaps as an extra celebration, distributed plum pudding to the grateful men.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Marion and Jack Kaminkow, *Mariners of the American Revolution* (Baltimore, 1967), ix-xi; 'Charles Herbert Diary', 78; 'Samuel Cutler Diary', *N. Eng. Hist. & Gen. Reg.* (1878), 396-397.

<sup>23</sup> William B. Clark, 'In Defense of Thomas Digges', *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, LXXVII (1953), 389-391; Prelinger, 266-271.

<sup>24</sup> 'Charles Herbert Diary', 85-86, 104, 110; Jonathan Haskins's *Diary*, 302-303; Applegate, 313. Miles Saurey's profession as a linen draper is mentioned in the Plymouth city directories. Letter to the author from the West Devon Record Office, Plymouth, 14 Jul. 1987.



The monetary subscriptions, distributed by Heath and Miles Saurey, commenced two weeks later. The allowances came in the form of clothing and food as well as money, and they lasted (with some reductions) until December, 1778. Starting early the following year, new, less successful subscription drives were held in England, and the two Devon men apportioned smaller sums to the inmates that continued for the next two years. Repeatedly, Heath and Saurey would travel the two hundred and fifteen miles to London where they received allotted shares of these donations from the committee - a group which included Thomas Digges, a Maryland-born merchant and well-connected patriot partisan. Digges' character and his ultimate support for the American cause remains controversial, but he nonetheless played a key role in funnelling funds as well as important wartime news to the prisoners.<sup>25</sup>

Meanwhile, the American Commissioners in Paris had been apprised of their work. On March 10, 1780 William Hodgson, a sympathetic English subscriber, wrote to Benjamin Franklin, 'The Agents for our Fund at Plymouth are Messrs. Heath and Saurey, both very zealous friends.' There are no records of any commendatory responses by Dr. Franklin or the other commissioners personally directed to Heath or Saurey. Nevertheless, both men continued conscientiously with their work without either plaudits or remuneration. And Heath himself often augmented the monetary grants with his own gifts of books, clothing and food.<sup>26</sup>

Heath also helped Mill's American captives in the matter of prisoner exchanges. These agreements or cartels were the principal avenue through which the prisoners sought authorized release from English gaols. However, the captives at both prisons discovered that obtaining prisoner exchanges could be a drawn-out and contentious matter. Benjamin Franklin's initial overtures to Lord Stormont, Britain's Ambassador to France, were summarily rejected in April, 1777. One year later wartime reversals made England more receptive to a prisoner cartel, although formal negotiations between Franklin and English officials dragged on throughout 1778. Finally, in December 1778, the British agreed to an exchange procedure, and the following March one hundred Americans were sent to France from Mill. Difficulties plagued later exchanges, and after March, 1780 no cartels were made either from Mill or Forton, until March of 1782 when Parliament acknowledged that captured Americans were in fact prisoners-of-war. The next month the Admiralty ordered all these captives sent to North America for exchange

<sup>25</sup> 'Charles Herbert Diary', 85-86,104,110,134,136; 'Jonathan Haskins' Diary', 302-305; Applegate, 313, Clark, 386-390.

<sup>26</sup> William Hodgson to Benjamin Franklin, 10 Mar. 1780, Papers of Benjamin Franklin, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia; 'Johnathan Haskins's Diary', 'Charles Herbert's Diary', Permission to quote from the Hodgson letter granted by the American Philosophical Society.

and by July 1782 more than 1,000 American prisoners had left for home.<sup>27</sup>

The protracted diplomatic negotiations over prisoner cartels provided yet another means of service for Robert Heath. The hope of exchange quite naturally produced considerable anxiety and expectation among Mill's American inmates, and the Plymouth Dock evangelist became their primary source of news concerning their prospects. Thus it was Heath, accompanied by Miles Saurey, on March 12, 1778, who brought the initial tidings to the inmates that their 'long wished for prize' of exchange might be imminent. Throughout the ensuing year it was Heath who returned from London carrying reports about the prolonged negotiations and who comforted and mollified the Americans over the postponement of their expectations. And it was this evangelist, on March 18, 1779, who boarded a cartel ship in Plymouth Harbour to wish those fortunate prisoners involved in the first exchange a *bon voyage* and to donate 'wine, tea, and sugar and other necessaries for those who are sick.'<sup>28</sup> Similar good works were repeated during subsequent exchanges.

Aside from these cartels, or volunteering to join His Majesty's Service, escape was the only means of freedom from Mill's confines. The Plymouth prison was more secure than Forton, but neither place was escape-proof. Almost eight hundred inmates were listed as having escaped from both gaols, although many fugitives were recaptured including several who had merely made staged flights.<sup>29</sup>

Samuel Cutler (October, 1777), Gustavus Conyngham (November, 1779), John Manley (1780) and Joshua Barney (May, 1781) had outside assistance during their successful getaways from Mill. Robert Heath's role in their escape, however, remains unclear. As previously noted, Cutler received £20 from the evangelist in October, 1777 (although it is not documented that he knew it was to be used in the American's actual escape). Afterwards, in early 1780, Thomas Digges used Heath to funnel eighteen guineas to Captain John Manley, a noted continental naval officer. However, the money was allegedly to be used for bribing Manley's way on to a cartel and not to finance his failed gaolbreak. Similarly, the purposes of an even larger sum given to Captain Conyngham are not revealed. As for Joshua Barney, after he had jumped the prison walls, sympathetic Englishmen directed him to sanctuary with

<sup>27</sup> Eunice H. Turner, 'American Prisoners of War in Great Britain, 1777-1783', *Mariner's Mirror*, XLV (1959), 204-205; Prelinger, 271-291; Anderson, 70-71; Applegate, 319.

<sup>28</sup> 'William Wigder's Mill Prison Diary', *Essex Institute Historical Collections*, LXXII (1937), 334; LXXIV (1938), 36. 'Charles Herbert Diary', 104,228.

<sup>29</sup> Anderson, 'American escapes from British naval prisons', 238-240; Alexander, 'Mill Prison', 336-338; Alexander, 'Forton Prison', 381-383; Lemisch, 18.

'a venerable clergyman of Plymouth', but this apparently referred to Baptist minister Philip Gibbs or Plymouth Tabernacle's Andrew Kinsman, and not to Heath. Barney's daughter later wrote that he returned to Plymouth shortly after the war to honour those who had assisted his flight, but she failed to cite the names of any individuals in the affair.<sup>30</sup>

Whether Robert Heath was among those fêted by Commodore Barney remains unrecorded (though it is quite probable he was there), but it is known that the evangelist received no recognition from the newly independent United States. [The Reverend Thomas Wren of Portsmouth, for his part, was given the official thanks of the American Congress and, in November 1783, he was awarded an honorary doctoral degree from the College of New Jersey (Princeton).] We know only that Heath left Plymouth Dock after the war for his post at Rodborough, at least with the memories of his welcomed efforts to champion the cause of prisoners from across the Atlantic Ocean.<sup>31</sup>

Such are the details we have concerning this little-known eighteenth century merchant-deacon who, by his own initiative, gave aid and comfort to those Americans confined within Mill Prison. The extant facts, however, beg the question of why Robert Heath acted for the betterment of these rebels from across the Atlantic Ocean.

He did not act for money, fame, or out of political beliefs. There is no indication that Robert Heath achieved any financial gain for his endeavours, or requested any reimbursement for any personal funds that he advanced to the inmates. Furthermore, although several prisoners praised his efforts on their behalf, he received no honours from the United States as had the Reverend Mr. Wren. Heath also did not undertake his work to fill in idle hours; he was then engaged in business obligations along with his duties as deacon in the Plymouth Tabernacle and his charity work for the poor and needy. Thus the added burden of assisting Americans not only cut into these duties, but meant that he would have to make several long journeys to London. Lastly, Heath is not recorded as having performed this task out of empathy for any liberal

<sup>30</sup> Mary Barney, ed., *A biographical memoir of Commodore Joshua Barney* (Boston, 1832), 89-90, 141; Robert W. Neeser, ed., *Letters and papers relating to the cruises of Gustavus Conyngham, a Captain of the Continental Navy* (New York, 1915), 190; Clark, 399-400, 405-405, 409-410; 'Samuel Cutler's Diary', XXXII (1878), 397. (The Reverend Philip Gibbs, who occasionally visited Mill Prison is identified in *The Evangelical Magazine* (Jan. 1801), 35 and Henry M. Nicholson, *A history of the Baptist Church now meeting in George Street Chapel, Plymouth* (London, rev. edn., 1904), 81.

<sup>31</sup> Cohen, 297-299; Barney, 241 (Captain Barney claimed that a son of the 'venerable' Plymouth clergyman helped in his escape. Barney, 89-90).

patriot precepts. Although enunciating the words of Thomas Jefferson or Thomas Paine would not have endeared Heath to any pro-monarchical Wesleyan Methodists or High Churchmen, still there were many Englishmen - even in Parliament - who did not hesitate to declare some affinity toward the patriots.<sup>32</sup>

The primary motive underlying Robert Heath's work on behalf of the American prisoners was, I believe, evangelical. As a Calvinist Methodist, Heath was a product of the revivalist movement that had emerged during the mid-1730s and continued through the remainder of the century. The movement, which was particularly strong in the west of England, was marked in part by spiritual zeal and by efforts to rejuvenate basic tenets of scriptural piety among an increasingly apathetic and unregenerate populace. From an evangelical standpoint, it also sought to perform acts of charity and self-service among the less fortunate Protestant brethren.<sup>33</sup> According to the testimony of Mill prisoners, Robert Heath distinctly exhibited such principles. Charles Herbert, for example, noted on January 16, 1778, that the American inmates had received several printed exhortations from Mr. Heath 'urging us to lead a civil, sober life and to leave off swearing and profaning the name of the Lord'. The following June, both Herbert and Jonathan Haskins wrote in their journals that Heath had distributed provisions to the prisoners, and afterwards chastised many of them for 'having no regard for the Sabbath'.<sup>34</sup>

There is, perhaps, another related element influencing Heath's evangelical endeavours. Professor Susan O'Brien's recent article, 'A Transatlantic Community of Saints: The Great Awakening and the First Evangelical Network, 1735-1755', has shown the various interconnections and avenues of direct assistance which were established between the widespread religious revivals in eighteenth century Britain and America. She also notes that the evangelical community was established through a network with the Reverend George Whitefield at its centre. Prior to his

<sup>32</sup> Robert Southey, *The life of Wesley and the rise and progress of Methodism* (London, 1925), II, 234-246; John Wesley, *A calm address to our American colonies...* (London, 1775), 1-22; Dora M. Clark, *British opinion and the American Revolution* (New Haven, 1930); Sir Lewis Namier, *England in the age of the American Revolution* (London, 2nd edn., 1961); Solomon Lutnick, *The American Revolution and the British press* (Columbia, S.C., 1967); Luke Tyerman, *The life and times of the Rev. Joseph Wesley, M.A. founder of the Methodists* (New York, 1872), III, 185-199, 236-237.

<sup>33</sup> John Overton, *The Evangelical Revival of the eighteenth century* (London, 4th edn. 1900); Robert F. Wearmouth, *Methodism and the common people of the eighteenth century* (London, 1945); Ronald D. Knox, *Enthusiasm: A chapter in the history of religion with special reference to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries* (Oxford, 1950).

<sup>34</sup> 'Charles Herbert Diary', 88, 134; 'Jonathan Haskins's Diary', 424.



death in Newburyport, Massachusetts (September, 1770), Whitefield made seven journeys to the American colonies where he had earned great notoriety and attracted enthusiastic audiences. Indeed, so revered was the English revivalist that in September, 1775, American officers in Newburyport opened his tomb and removed bits of his clothing hoping that with the aid of these relics divine providence would aid their upcoming campaign against Quebec. Likewise, during the Revolution, patriots often equated Whitefield's stature with that of George Washington as a man who gave assurance of the justification of a cause. Heath himself was an ardent Whitefieldite who had witnessed the famed revivalist preach before packed congregations. Beside his preaching, Whitefield's renowned humanitarian endeavour, i.e. befriending the poor and imprisoned, assisting the sick and disabled and establishing orphanages and charity schools for indigent children, must have had a significant impact on the zealous deacon from Plymouth Dock.<sup>35</sup> Consequently, Heath was aware of the acclaim and respect that the evangelist had garnered in America, and this fact probably added to his empathy for the Mill prisoners.

Supplementing the evangelical influence of George Whitefield, was yet one other motivation that helped spur the benevolent actions of this unsung Englishman. This inducement emanated from the Bible with its manifest passages that emphasized the brotherhood of man. There are many such passages that extol this precept, but perhaps one of the most appropriate can be found in the first book of John: 'The man who continues in the light is the one who loves his brother; there is nothing in him to cause a fall.'<sup>36</sup> Robert Heath was such a man. He had continued 'in the light'.

Loyola University of Chicago

<sup>35</sup> Susan O'Brien, 'A Transatlantic Community of Saints: The Great Awakening and the First Evangelical Network, 1734-1755', *The American Historical Review*, vol.91, no.3 (1986), 811-832; Charles Royster, *A revolutionary people at war: the continental army and American character* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1979), 23-24,256; Alan Heimert, *Religion and the American mind* (Cambridge, Mass., 1966), 147-148. William V. Davis ed., *George Whitefield's Journals, 1737-1741...* (Gainesville, Fl., 1969), 60-61,66-67.

<sup>36</sup> 1 John 2:10.

## RICHARD PRICE AND THE LONDON REVOLUTION SOCIETY

*Martin Fitzpatrick*

The origins of the London Revolution Society are obscure. The minutes of the society, now housed in the British Library, begin abruptly on 16 June 1788, when a committee of the society, chaired by Rev. Joseph Towers, resolved to commemorate the anniversary of the Glorious Revolution.<sup>1</sup> However, there are indications that the society had existed for much longer than that. At the very next meeting, when concrete steps were taken to organize celebration, it was that after the 'Anniversary Dinner' 'the usual character of King William be read'. This character was a fulsome tribute to King William, so fulsome, one may infer, that it was resolved not to read it at the anniversary dinner on 4 November 1791.<sup>2</sup> By then, the debate on the French Revolution, stimulated in the first instance by Richard Price's *A discourse on the love of our country*, had reached a decisive stage with the publication in February 1791 of Thomas Paine's reply to Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, namely *The Rights of Man Part One*. In that work Paine attacked hereditary monarchy, and had some harsh things to say about monarchy in general. In the circumstances, the London Revolution Society, even if it had not moved decisively in a republican direction, was at least embarrassed by its uncritical celebration of King William which had been

<sup>1</sup> To be pedantically accurate, the first folio of the book simply says 'Index'; the next folio begins 'committee continued' and lists twelve names, only then do the minutes of 16 June begin. This would appear to indicate that there was a previous minute book. However, the opening minutes in the extant minute book were written into the book some six months after the first recorded meeting, and this would appear to undermine the argument for continuity. Evidence that the initial minutes were written up sometime later comes from the minute book itself. A committee meeting on 25 November 1788 resolved that the Secretary should be asked to provide a book 'for recording the resolutions and transactions of the Society'. At a subsequent meeting on 19 December the Secretary reported that he had bought a minute book and as he recorded that minute put in parenthesis following minute book, 'this'. Why the minute book begins in such an abrupt way, therefore, remains a mystery. B.L. Add. MS. 64814, Minutes of the London Revolution Society [hereafter 'Minutes'], ff.1-2, pp.1-3; f.10, p.20; f.11, p.22. The minute book is paginated and folio numbers have subsequently been pencilled in. Both page and folio numbers are given here. I would like to thank John Stephens for drawing my attention to these minutes.

<sup>2</sup> Minutes, f.48, p.95. In the previous year it had been read by Abraham Rees. *Ibid.*, f.38, p.75.

a feature of its recent anniversary occasions.<sup>3</sup> In 1788, it had loaned from Solomon Tozer Esq., of Newton Abbot, Devon, the original colours of King William when he landed at Torbay, and in the following year, when Price delivered his *Discourse*, it had borrowed King William's seal with which to stamp the tickets.<sup>4</sup> While Price may have enjoyed the symbolism of the occasion, and would undoubtedly have approved of the principles associated with the monarch's name, it is hardly likely that he would have approved wholeheartedly of the 'Character of King William', who, although the very model of a monarch, also sounded suspiciously like a King who could do no wrong in the closing memorialization:

King, Queen, Prince, Potentate, this age ne'er saw  
So wise, so just, so valiant, as Nassau,  
He was, but words are wanting to say what  
Say all thats good, and great, and he was that.<sup>5</sup>

Price himself had objected to the adulatory character of the address of the Protestant Dissenters in and about the City of London on George III's recovery, but he also modified the fourth edition of the *Discourse* to indicate clearly that he was not a republican.<sup>6</sup>

It is interesting to speculate on the course of history had Price preached his famous *Discourse* in 1788 rather than 1789. When the committee discussed the coming centenary, its first choice of preacher for the commemorative sermon was Richard Price. The minutes for 21 July 1788 record the invitation to Price, and those for the following week Price's reply, in which he thanked the committee for doing him the honour of the invitation, but with reluctance declined on the grounds that it 'would in the present weak state of my health, press my spirits too much, and probably prevent the benefit which I hope to receive from that

<sup>3</sup> Probably the last favourable mention of kingship in the Society's printed correspondence was in the letter of 13 March 1791 to the Society of the Friends of the Constitution at Toulouse which declared, 'Nothing can be more becoming and worthy of freemen than to treat with the utmost respect the memories of princes, who have made their people's welfare the object of their power - good kings are always the friends of freedom, and therefore their names ought ever to be held in the highest honor by freemen.' *Lettres des Amis de la Societé Révolutionnaire de Londres aux Amis de la Constitution à Toulouse* (1791) [B.L. 8050 d61 (26)].

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, f.20, p.40; f.9, p.17. Joseph Paice, a well-known and revered London Dissenter, was thanked at the same time as Solomon Tozer. Presumably he was the intermediary for procuring the loan.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, n.p. f.52. For the full 'Character', see Appendix B at the end of this article.

<sup>6</sup> A *discourse on the love of our country* (2nd edn., London, 1789), 26-27; D.O. Thomas, 'Neither democrat nor republican', *The Price-Priestley Newsletter*, no.1, 1977, 54.

retirement into the Country for the remainder of the Summer which I have in view'.<sup>7</sup> Although the deputation from the committee had failed to persuade Price to sermonize for them, the committee, in noting its concern on hearing of Price's state of health, picked up the closing sentiments of his reply in which he declared his mortification at 'not being able to contribute in the manner they desire to the usefulness of celebrity of so important an occasion'.<sup>8</sup> It immediately resolved, 'to ask the favor of his [Price's] preparing some observations on the importance and utility of commemorating the Revolution to be publish'd by the Committee before the day of the celebration.'<sup>9</sup> There is no indication in the minutes as to whether Price complied, but he was sufficiently refreshed by his sojourn in Wales of some eight weeks that he attended the important committee meeting on 27 October chaired by the Earl Stanhope, immediately prior to the anniversary commemoration.<sup>10</sup> On the following Sunday, 2nd November, he preached a sermon in preparation for the celebrations.<sup>11</sup> On the day itself, Andrew Kippis preached the commemorative sermon, and Joseph Towers gave the oration at the dinner. Price played the modest role of proposing a toast, 'To the memory of the Bishops who were imprisoned in the Tower, and may all clerical men shew themselves equal enemies to arbitrary power'.<sup>12</sup> In the following year, Price, who had been re-elected to the committee of the society,<sup>13</sup> was again invited to preach the commemorative sermon. Given the nature of the Glorious Revolution it was in a sense also to be a centenary sermon, and this time Price agreed. In the meantime the society began to organize its proceedings. Rules were formulated for membership. Following the practice of the Society for Constitutional Information, it was resolved that new members would cost 10 shillings and six pence and members of the committee would each pay five shillings towards defraying the expenses of their meetings.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Minutes, f.3, p.5.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, f.4, pp.7-8.

<sup>10</sup> 'Richard Price's journal for the period 25 March 1787 to 6 February 1791 deciphered by Beryl Thomas with an introduction and notes by D.O. Thomas'. *National Library of Wales Journal*, XX1, no.4, Winter 1980, 386. Minutes, p.9 f.5. This is the first recorded attendance by Price at a committee meeting.

<sup>11</sup> 'Price's journal', loc. cit., 387.

<sup>12</sup> D.O. Thomas, *The honest mind. The thought and work of Richard Price* (Oxford, 1977), 296.

<sup>13</sup> Minutes, f.8, p.15; a new committee was appointed at the centenary commemoration, 4 Nov. 1788.

<sup>14</sup> Minutes, ff.12-14, pp.22-23. In 1789, the committee met once a month, although in 1788 they had met more often as they prepared for the centenary celebrations.



At the same time, the society attempted to sort out its history. A subcommittee was set up to report on it. The materials available to it were undoubtedly limited. None the less it concluded:

Though no records have regularly been preserved of the Society we now have in view, there is no doubt of its having been formed soon after the Revolution and that it has annually met without interruption from that time to the present, and the fourth day of November being the birthday of King William the Third has always hitherto been the day of celebration.

For a long course of years this institution was chiefly confined to the City of London strictly so called and almost the sole supporters of it were a number of respectable inhabitants of that city consisting partly of Members of the Establishment and partly of Protestant Dissenters. But lately it has excited a more general attention and drawn to it many persons of rank and consequence from different parts of the kingdom.<sup>15</sup>

From the evidence of the report, and from the evidence of the minutes, one may surmise that the society prior to 1788 was little different from many of the eighteenth century clubs which existed to provide convivial occasions for like-minded people. However, in 1788 it began to act much more like a reform society, adopting a much higher public profile, propagandizing its principles not only in the metropolis but also in the country at large, and being prepared to lobby Members of Parliament. In 1788, before anything else it defined its principles, and these were moved by the Earl Stanhope in presenting the report of the committee at the anniversary meeting on 4 November 1788. They were,

That the three following Declaratory Principles are confirmed by the Revolution, & form the basis of the Society:

- I. That all Civil and Political Power is derived from the People.
- II. That the abuse of Power justifies resistance.
- III. That the Rights of private judgement, liberty of Conscience, Trial by Jury, the Freedom of the Press, and the Freedom of Elections, - ought ever to be held sacred and inviolable.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. f.13, p.25.

The motion was passed unanimously. It was this motion which formed the basis of Price's famous formulation of the principles of the revolution in his *Discourse* preached the following year, namely:

- First; The right to liberty of conscience in religious matters.
- Secondly; The right to resist power when abused.
- And,
- Thirdly; The right to chuse our own governors; to cashier them for misconduct; and to frame a government for ourselves.<sup>16</sup>

In doing so, Price not only provided a radical version of the principles of the society, stressing the active sovereignty of the people as the central principle of the revolution, he also epitomized the shift in the nature of the society away from the self-congratulation implicit in the 'Character of William', to a critical stance which desired the full implementation of revolution principles. The feelings of enthusiasm which characterized the centenary occasions were reserved for the encomiums to the growing prevalence of such principles in Europe and America and the feeling that it would be only a matter of time before their implementation in Britain would be complete. Price undoubtedly captured these feelings in his *Discourse*. As a revered and venerable philosopher, he was the living embodiment of the society, and from the moment he preached the *Discourse*, he appears to have been a major participant in all its initiatives even though he was not probably strong enough to be a regular attender at committee meetings had he been so inclined.<sup>17</sup>

After he had preached his *Discourse*, the society repaired to the London Tavern for dinner attended by 'upwards of 300' with the Earl Stanhope presiding, as in the previous year.<sup>18</sup> At that meeting it was resolved 'that the thanks of this meeting be given to the revd. Dr. Price for his excellent sermon preached this day, and that he be requested to publish the same together with that part which, for want of time and strength he did not deliver'.<sup>19</sup> This was done in the customary speedy fashion of printers at the time. By 25 November the committee was resolving to purchase two hundred and fifty copies of the *Discourse* and to distribute two to every committee member and one to every member. At the dinner

<sup>16</sup> *A discourse on the love of our country* (2nd edn., London, 1789), 34.

<sup>17</sup> Price had not attended regularly the meetings of the Society for Constitutional Information.

<sup>18</sup> Minutes, f.7, p.13; f.21, p.42.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., f.23, p.45. The history of the society and proceedings including the 4 Nov. 1789 meeting were published by the society as *An abstract of the history and proceedings of the Revolution Society in London to which is annexed a copy of the Bill of Rights* (London, 1789).

Price was also chosen to move a congratulatory address from the society to the National Assembly of France, and this, too, was published with his *Discourse* and subsequent editions included the replies from the Archbishop of Aix, President of the National Assembly, and the Duke of La Rochefoucauld.<sup>20</sup> The latter corresponded with Price throughout 1790, not only conveying his own thoughts and feelings but also acting as something of a conduit for French correspondence with Price and Price's replies.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, Price was so well known that he was the natural focus for communication with Frenchmen.<sup>22</sup> The committee with Price in the chair had invited the Duke of Orléans to their commemorative dinner, and its stewards had been snubbed by his servant. Price received 'a verbal answer and apology ... from the Duke', which he communicated to the committee.<sup>23</sup> He also received from the Earl Stanhope a translation of a letter from the Archbishop of Aix enclosing the reply of the National Assembly which he also reported to the committee. The society had the ambition of acting as a focus for similar societies in England and had encouraged such societies to become corresponding societies. This had hardly developed much momentum before correspondence with French patriotic societies began to occupy the attention of the 'corresponding committee'. Price was therefore quickly drafted on to it.<sup>24</sup> That was on 30 Dec. 1789, the meeting at which the replies from France were presented by Price. Such was the effect of their proceedings on that occasion that the committee concluded its deliberations by passing a resolution which paraphrased Price's sentiments in the *Discourse*:

Resolved, that this Committee feels itself powerfully impelled to express its satisfaction on the fair opening prospect of a complete Emancipation of human Society from Political and Intellectual Servitude - a Prospect manifesting itself, as in other great instance,

<sup>20</sup> R. Price, *A discourse on the love of our country* (2nd edn. London, 1789), appendix p.13. The next edition (1790), contained the reply of the National Assembly of 5 December 1789.

<sup>21</sup> Price's correspondence with La Rochefoucauld is held at the Cyfartha Museum and Art Gallery, Merthyr Tydfil, and it numbers fourteen items in all, ten of these being their direct correspondence. La Rochefoucauld also asked Price to welcome his French friends visiting London.

<sup>22</sup> When the *Compagnie Royale d'Assurance*, the first French life assurance company, was established in 1787, Price's advice was sought and the prospectus of the company proudly advertised the fact. T. Sibbert 'Richard Price: Preacher, Philosopher and Actuary', *The Actuary* (April, 1991), 28.

<sup>23</sup> Minutes, f.25, pp.48-49, 25 Nov. 1789. Price had chaired the meeting which resolved to invite the duke to the anniversary dinner. *Ibid.*, f.21, pp.41-42, 22 Oct. 1789.

<sup>24</sup> Minutes, ff.26-27, pp.52-53, 30 Dec. 1789.

so especially in the concurrent disposition, which, having been displayed in America is now permeating Europe, of rejecting all restraint on the freedom of Enquiry, or exclusion from the exercise of any civil right, on account of Religious Opinion.<sup>25</sup>

The resolution, however, was hardly original, for it was identical to a resolution of a meeting organized by the Society for Constitutional Information on 16 December to celebrate the centenary of the passing of the Bill of Rights. Price had attended that meeting and, as at a later occasion of the Revolution Society, his health was drunk, as 'the friend of the Universe', when he had temporarily left the room.<sup>26</sup> The repetition of the resolution was indicative of the growing co-operation and fellowship between the societies. Following the failure of Henry Flood's motion for parliamentary reform on 4 March 1790,<sup>27</sup> Daniel Adams, secretary of the Society for Constitutional Information, had formally approached the Revolution Society so that they might arrange a general meeting to draw attention to 'the present inadequate state of the representation'. A sub-committee was appointed to liaise with the S.C.I. and a meeting was held on 23 April.<sup>28</sup> That meeting began by a reaffirmation of the belief in the special appropriateness of the times for carrying through reform, a view which had been called in question by William Windham in the Commons' debate on Flood's motions,<sup>29</sup> but it was left to the meeting called to commemorate the anniversary of the fall of the Bastille to demonstrate dramatically the linkage between reform at home and revolution abroad. Once again, Price took a prominent part. In the meantime, especially in the early months of 1790, Price played a key role in dealing with the French correspondence and in framing replies and received the thanks of

<sup>25</sup> Minutes, ff.26-27, pp.52-53.

<sup>26</sup> P.R.O., T.S. 11.961, Minutes of the Society for Constitutional Information, f.206. Price was a founder member of the S.C.I.

<sup>27</sup> Flood proposed the addition of one hundred Members of Parliament elected by resident householders in the counties. His proposal for a bill to be brought in for such a reform was not voted on: the debate was concluded by a motion for adjournment. Flood was a member of the deputation sent from the S.C.I. to the Revolution Society. *Parliamentary History*, xxix, 1789-1791, 452-465; Minutes, f.30, p.59.

<sup>28</sup> Minutes, ff.30-31, pp.59-61. Daniel Adams was an auditor for the Revolution Society, *ibid.* f.24, p.47. The resolutions of the meeting of 23 April can be found in C. Wyvill, *Political Papers*, 6 vols. (1794-1806), V, i-iii.

<sup>29</sup> Wyvill, *Political Papers*, V, i; *Parliamentary History*, xxix, 1789-1791, 467; Windham had damaged the reform cause with the remark, 'What, would he [Flood] cause you to repair your house in the hurricane season?', which was no doubt more memorable because of the pun which it afforded on Flood's name. Flood lost his seat in the ensuing election.



the general committee for so doing.<sup>30</sup> The correspondence committee was so anxious to follow French affairs that on 17 Feb. 1790 it recommended to the general committee that the society should subscribe to the Parisian paper, *L'Union*.<sup>31</sup> Price's shorthand diary shows him following revolutionary developments with his customary blend of anxiety and enthusiasm. He noted with pleasure the resolutions of the National Assembly of 22 May 1790 concerning the future conduct of foreign policy. Crucially, what he noted was not the renunciation of wars of aggression, but the decision to reserve the right of making peace and war to the legislative assembly.<sup>32</sup> Naturally, when the preparations were made for the anniversary dinner commemorating the fall of the Bastille, Price was asked to play a leading role. He was a steward, and he was asked to propose a toast to 'An Alliance between France and Great Britain, for perpetuating peace and making the world happy'. In his speech proposing the toast, Price noted that he had heard 'from a very respectable authority' that such an alliance was to be proposed in the National Assembly. He had long dreamed of a confederation of European states which would preserve 'universal peace', and he now believed that that dream was close to realization, and the first step would be a pact between Britain and France for perpetuating '*peace on earth and good-will among men*'.<sup>33</sup> The dinner was something of a gala occasion for all shades of reformers, bringing together members of the Revolution Society, the S.C.I., the Whig Club and liberal Dissenters, Samuel Rogers, Price's neighbour at Newington Green, having played a leading role in organizing the event,<sup>34</sup> and it provided an opportunity for the collective renewal of feelings of enthusiasm for the revolution, for reform, for peace and universal brotherhood. Price had been designated to speak to two other toasts and would have done so had not Horne Tooke caused a little temporary dissension when he proposed a declaration of attachment to the

<sup>30</sup> Minutes, ff.27-29, pp.53-59; in January 1790, Price confided to his shorthand diary that drawing answers to the French correspondence 'cost me a good deal of time as almost everything does'. Price's journal, loc. cit., 393.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., f.30, p.59. *L'Union* was a bilingual three weekly paper which first appeared on 2 Nov. 1789, subscription three guineas, and lasted until 2 April, 1790. It reappeared as a daily paper, *Le Journal de la Liberté*, which lasted until August 1790. See G. Rouanet, 'Robespierre et le journal "l'Union"', *Annales Révolutionnaires*, IX (1917), 145-165.

<sup>32</sup> 'Price's Journal', loc. cit., 394, 6 June 1790. For the resolutions of 22 May, see J.M. Thompson, *French Revolution Documents 1789-1794* (1933).

<sup>33</sup> 'Price's Journal', loc. cit., 394-395, 1 Aug. 1790, & 398-399, app.III, which gives the text of Price's speech. D.O. Thomas ed., *Richard Price, Political Writings* (Cambridge, 1991), 24-25, 'Observations on the nature of civil liberty' (1776).

<sup>34</sup> 'Price's Journal', loc. cit., 395, 1 Aug. 1790; Albert Goodwin, *The Friends of Liberty. The English Democratic Movement in the age of the French Revolution* (London, 1979), 122-125.

British Constitution.<sup>35</sup> This caused a minor rumpus because of Whig hostility to Tooke who had stood for Westminster against Charles James Fox at the recent election.<sup>36</sup> However, amity was soon restored; Price later described the occasion as 'a most joyous and animating meeting'.<sup>37</sup>

Price was present at the general meeting of the society following the Bastille Day dinner when it indulged in a little self congratulation on its farsightedness in welcoming and supporting the revolution:

That this Society rejoice in the complete success of the late glorious Revolution in France, and look back with peculiar satisfaction on their congratulatory address to the National Assembly of France at the last Anniversary Dinner of the 4th Nov. 1789, presented at a time when some of its best friends were doubtful of the event, and its Enemies were anticipating its defeat, and defaming with the foulest aspersions.<sup>38</sup>

Such effusions of enthusiasm had the practical effect of further encouraging contacts with French patriotic societies. After a break in the work of the corresponding committee for a few months in the Spring of 1790, it met twice in early July; and it was busy again when the French responded to the Bastille Day communications.<sup>39</sup> Amongst the correspondence at the time was a letter conveyed via La Rochefoucauld from the District of Quimper in the Department of Finisterre in which the leading citizens of the District recorded how they had been 'affected even to tears' on reading Price's *Discourse*. Price's personal reply was printed in the *Correspondence* of the Revolution Society. It shows once again his belief that he was witnessing the dawn of a new age based on the growing acceptance of the universal principles of good government: the recognition of the sovereignty of the people and of the equality of all men, that civil authority was a trust, and that government should rest on the collective wisdom,

<sup>35</sup> Cyfartha MSS, Price to Le Duc de La Rochefoucauld, 15 July 1790, shorthand draft. I am indebted to Dr. Beryl Thomas for the transcription; Price was one of a three-man deputation to the French Ambassador to request his attendance at the dinner. He declined on account of a prior engagement.

<sup>36</sup> Goodwin, *Friends of liberty*, 123.

<sup>37</sup> MS. National Library of Scotland, facsimile National Library of Wales, Price to Alexander Christie, 2 August, 1790.

<sup>38</sup> Minutes, ff.33-34, pp.65-67, 20 July 1790.

<sup>39</sup> Minutes, f.30, p.59; ff.32-33, pp.63-65; 17 Feb., 8 & 13 July 1790; the general committee on 14 April also dealt with some French correspondence.

of the nation drawn from the general mass, and centred in a NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, by such modes of election, and such an extension of its rights, as form part of the new constitution of France.<sup>40</sup>

This presaged Price's enthusiastic toast at the forthcoming 4 November commemoration of the Revolution Society, which represented the culmination of a year of enthusiastic correspondence between the society and revolutionary societies in France, and one in which new personal contacts had been established between the French and the English.

Towards the end of the summer of 1790, a society in Nantes sent two representatives in person to meet the committee of the Revolution Society. Price was invited to join them at a dinner for the corresponding committee and some of the members of the society, including his nephew, George Cadogan Morgan. The Frenchmen read out their address to the society and Joseph Towers read the society's response. Price was next on his feet, reading a congratulatory letter.<sup>41</sup> This occasion at which 'many excellent toasts were given, some loyal songs were sung and the day concluded in great harmony' proved to be a foretaste of the grander celebration on 4 Nov. that year, chaired by Richard Price. Here one can see from the minutes the competing fervours which were aroused by the commemoration. Traditional patriotic songs including Rule Britannia and Hearts of Oak, interspersed conventional radical toasts to 'Magna Gharta, the Habeas Corpus Act and the Bill of Rights', the reading of addresses from England to France and from France to England and toasts espousing enthusiastically the new universal patriotism. If some sobriety was restored to the proceedings by halting the toasts for the reading of the report from the committee, it was only temporary, for the report contained details of the Anglo-French correspondence with the National Assembly and seventeen other patriotic societies, and particularly that of Nantes. It detailed how the two deputies from Nantes had brought over a banner used in a festival that August at which English residents were invited to attend. The banner 'depicted the Flags of England and France united together by a Ribbon containing the Words "Pacte universel" inscribed "a l'union de la France and d'Angleterre"'. The report concluded with aspirations that such amity based on the enlightened principles of society

<sup>40</sup> *The correspondence of the Revolution Society in London with the National Assembly with the various societies of the friends of liberty in France and England* (London, 1792), 97-100. This was the only letter signed by Price, all other letters of the society were signed by Benjamin Cooper, the Secretary. The letter was also incorporated into *Additions to Dr. Price's discourse on the love of country* (London, 1790), 39-40, and Price's reply was added as an appendix to the fifth edition of the *Discourse* (London, 1790), 40-42.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, ff.36-37, pp.72-73, 4 Oct. 1790.

would spread 'throughout the Globe'. Amidst all this enthusiasm, Richard Price, as at the earlier Bill of Rights dinner, had occasion to leave the chair. In doing so, he temporarily lost control of the proceedings, and the opportunity was immediately taken by Serjeant Watson, who proposed that they should drink his health.<sup>42</sup> This was received with 'unbounded applause'. Price on returning to the chair, somewhat overcome by the emotion of the occasion thanked the company for drinking his health and proposed a toast to 'The Parliament of Britain, May it become a National Assembly'. John Horne Tooke responded with a typically waspish toast, 'Should Mr. Burke be impeached for his libel of the Constitution, may his Trial last as long as that of Mr. Hastings'.<sup>43</sup> Also, according to William Godwin who attended the dinner, Tooke, as at the earlier Bastille Day Dinner, managed to inject a note of dissension into the proceedings by proposing a motion 'against nobility'. Price, he tells us, voted against this.<sup>44</sup> Such behaviour has an authentic ring but the motion did not find its way into the minutes,<sup>45</sup> which, following that of Tooke's on Burke, record ten more euphoric toasts, several more songs, and thanks to the committee, and of course the chairman 'the Revd. Dr. Price our excellent Chairman for his wisdom and Prudence in that situation'. Burke's uncharitable assessment of Price's *Discourse* might have been more appropriately applied to such proceedings:

...there are some good moral and religious sentiments, and not ill expressed, mixed up in a sort of porridge of various political opinions and reflections; but the Revolution in France is the grand

<sup>42</sup> James Watson of Bedford Square, serjeant-at-law. A Protestant Dissenter and an active member of the Committee for the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. See T.W. Davis, ed., 'Committees for repeal of the Test and Corporation Act', *London Record Society Publication*, xiv (1978).

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, ff.38-41, pp.75-81. Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution France* had only just been published on 1 Nov. 1790.

<sup>44</sup> Bodleian Library, Abinger Collection, M.S. Film 72, William Godwin's Journal, 5 Nov. 1790. Godwin wrote up his journal after events and he consistently misdated the 4 November meetings of the Revolution Society.

<sup>45</sup> Something of this sort undoubtedly occurred. *The Times* reported on the following day that Tooke has proposed that 'henceforth they should abolish all titles at least among themselves'. It also noted that Tooke's animus was directed against Lord Stanhope and Lord William Russel for withdrawing from the society. Price had hoped that Stanhope would, as in the previous year, take the chair at their 4 Nov. meeting, but Stanhope had withdrawn from the society and had personally crossed his name out of the subscribers' list in the minute book. This was on 11 August 1790, but Price still hoped he might take the chair. Price to Le Duc de la Rochefoucauld, 14 Oct. 1790, printed in *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 2nd ser., vol. xvii (1903), 376ff. Minutes, f.34, p.68; f.58, p.348. On Stanhope's resignation, see Goodwin, *Friends of liberty*, 127.



ingredient in the cauldron.<sup>46</sup>

Perhaps 'punch' would be more apposite than porridge! However, it was not fortuitous that Price was Burke's prime target in *Reflections* and that it was the *Discourse* which provoked that impassioned defence of the *status quo*. Moreover, it was not Burke but Price and the Revolution Society who first portrayed radicalism at home and revolution abroad as part of the same movement of enlightened change. Whenever Price appeared to be recommending French principles and their leadership, he was quick to qualify himself and to re-state his belief that the British Constitution was already founded on correct principles and only required their full implementation. Thus, in an appendix to the fourth edition of his *Discourse*, he explained that, in toasting the example of the National Assembly, he had meant that the principles of equality of representation, which had characterized the elections to that assembly, should be introduced at home, arguing that 'equality of representation' was 'the one thing needful in our government'.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, when the letter to the citizens of Quimper was published, he added a footnote to his suggestion that government should be based on the 'collective wisdom drawn from the general mass', to the effect that

The government of BRITAIN would be nearly such a Government as is here meant, and its constitution all that the writer of this letter can wish to see it, were the three States that compose it perfectly independent of one another, and the House of COMMONS in particular, an equal and fair representation of the kingdom, guarded against corruption by being frequently renewed, and the exclusion of ` and pensioners.<sup>48</sup>

No doubt such qualifications were made in part for domestic political consumption, but they were also a reminder of the coherence of an outlook which was able to link British constitutionalism, with American and then French Revolutionism; and it was an outlook which was attractive to the members of the Revolution Society. Indeed, in the period up to Price's death in April 1791, they were convinced of Price's analysis of the principles underlying the Glorious Revolution, motivated by his recommendations of reforms in order that they might be fully implemented, and inspired by his view of the nature of events in France and his generous expectation that they would prove decisive in the transformation

<sup>46</sup> E. Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. J.G.A. Pocock (Indianapolis/Cambridge, 1987), 10.

<sup>47</sup> D.O. Thomas, *Ymateb i chwyl dro, Response to Revolution* (University of Wales Press, 1989), 43.

<sup>48</sup> *Correspondence of the Revolution Society*, 100.

of the corrupt Old World. Despite his age, he played a key role in its proceedings. Although he was not to attend another meeting after the celebratory dinner of 4 November, he had so shaped the society's view of itself that it was inevitable that its role was meteor-like. Hard headed reformers and revolutionary enthusiasts would take the lead in reform societies after his death, when the revolution took a violent turn and patriotism assumed a more conventional garb. His death was deeply mourned and the role which the society played in arranging his funeral is testimony to that. A copy of the funeral handbill, printed below as Appendix A, was sent to every member of the society. At the very next meeting of the committee, it resolved:

That founded as this Society is on the basis of equal Liberty and the Dignity of Man the loss they have sustained, by the Death of one of the Best Citizens, and most enlightened Members of this Society, is sincerely to be deplored, and should stimulate, to the imitation of that Friend of Man: the late Wise, Learned and truly patriotic Doctor Price.<sup>49</sup>

For the rest of the year, the society proceeded very much as before, proclaiming its virtue, sympathizing with Joseph Priestley over the Birmingham Riots and keeping up correspondence with French patriotic societies, twenty four in all over the year. There were signs that the society might have changed its nature in response to events, becoming more secular and republican in its outlook. The sermon was dropped for the 4 November commemoration in 1791 as was the reading of the Character of King William, as already noted. In fact, the society failed to adjust to harsher times. Price's vision of things could attract generous minded individuals, reformers of all hues and even revolutionaries, but once the outlines of revolutionary France became clearer they would go their separate ways. The last meeting to be recorded in the minutes was the anniversary dinner of 4 November. The concluding part of the committee's annual report is in effect a last will and testament both of the society and its most illustrious member, Richard Price:

'Gentlemen, your Committee recollect with a peculiar degree of satisfaction, that this Society stood singly forward, firm and unshaken as friends to the liberties of mankind, at a time when the glorious struggle in France seem'd doubtful even to its best and bravest assertors! In that important moment, you became a bright example to the rest of your countrymen, by unanimously adopting a motion of congratulation to that truly illustrious Assembly, in the infancy and peril of their labors. But while we rejoice in this

<sup>49</sup> Minutes, f.44, pp.87-88, 11 May 1791.

pleasing retrospect, we cannot but very sensibly feel the almost irreparable loss, which this society, this country and the world has sustained, by the death of the late Dr. Price, to whose work no language can do sufficient justice. He was indeed the Apostle of Liberty, whose name will be recorded in the hearts of mankind, when not a trace of the existence of his calumniators shall remain.

Gentlemen, your Committee look back with triumph to the glorious exertions in the year 1688. The Principles then recognized and established are yours; they are the principles on which you now act, on which, and as friends to your country and mankind, you will continue to act, till political knowledge and the love of liberty shall be so general, that the prostitution of the public press to the united purposes and corrupting wealth of the worst men in this country, and the wretched fugitives from France, shall be no longer able to excite the ignorant fury of a misguided Mob, against the best, or rather the only friends of the rights and happiness.<sup>50</sup>

The University of Wales,  
Aberystwyth.

## APPENDIX A:

Society for commemorating the glorious Revolution in 1688.<sup>a</sup>

At a Meeting of the Committee of the Society at the King's-Head Tavern in the Poultry, on Friday, April 22, 1791.

THOMAS BRAND HOLLIS, Esq. in the Chair.

IT WAS UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED,

That, on the melancholy Event of the Decease of so distinguished a Friend to the Rights of Mankind as the Rev. Dr. Price, every public Mark of Respect is due to his Memory from this Society and all the Friends of Freedom.

That it be recommended to every Member of this society to attend the Funeral of Dr. Price, on TUESDAY next, the 26th instant, in their respective carriages, and that every Gentleman do provide his Servants with Crape Hat-bands.

Gentlemen, coming from the City, are requested to order their Coachmen to turn up Wells-Street, and those, coming from the West End of London, to enter Hackney by Way of Dalston, to Ward's Corner. Proper persons will be stationed at the End of Wells-Street and at Ward's Corner, to direct gentlemen where to join the Procession, which will move at Eleven o'Clock in the Forenoon towards Bunhill-Fields.

That this Meeting recommend to every Member of this Society, as a farther Testimony of the Respect they owe to the Memory of Dr. Price, and the sincere Regret they feel at his Loss, to wear Mourning for Eight Days.

That these Resolutions be signed by the Chairman, and be transmitted immediately to every Member of the Society.

THOMAS BRAND HOLLIS, Chairman

\*\*

\* A general Meeting of this Society will be held at the KING'S-HEAD TAVERN in the POULTRY, on Wednesday, May 11, at 6 o'Clock.

P.S. You are requested to take Notice, that the Funeral will be on TUESDAY next, the 26th instant, and not on *Thursday*, as mentioned, by Mistake, in the former Notice.

Saty Night

<sup>50</sup> Minutes, ff.48-50, pp.95-98, 4 Nov. 1790. Another indication of the Society distancing itself from the Williamite nature of the previous celebrations was that it decided to alter the ticket design. Previously the ticket had been designed to accommodate being stamped with King Williams's seal. Ibid., f.47, p.94, 2 Oct. 1791. Although this was the last minute, the society had a shadowy existence for some time afterwards. Correspondence with France was still being answered in the early months of 1792, and the withdrawal of members was noted as late as November 1793. *Correspondence of the Revolution Society*, pp.263, 273-274; Minutes, f.61, p.335.



## APPENDIX B:

<sup>a</sup> The document printed here is the printed handbill [B.L. 1878 D.12 F.11] rather than the minute on which it was based. The difference between the two versions is insignificant. The earlier notice suggesting that the funeral would be on Thursday was either not from the society or an inaccurate transmission from the minutes. Minutes, ff.43-44, pp.86-87, 22 April 1791.

Character of King William as usually read at the Anniversary Meeting.

He was But is no more, the Head, Heart,  
and Hand of the Confederacy.  
the Assertor of Liberty,  
the Deliverer of Nations,  
the Support of the Empire,  
the Bulwark of Holland,  
the preserver of Brittain,  
the Restorer of Ireland, and  
the Terror of France.

His thoughts were wise, deep & secret,  
His words few and faithful.  
His actions many, and heroick.  
His Government without tyranny.  
His justice without rigour, and  
His religion without superstition.

He was Magnanimous, but without Pride,  
Valiant, without Violence,  
Victorious, without Triumph.  
Active without weariness,  
Cautious without Fear, and  
Meritorious without due recompense.

King, Queen, Prince, Potentate, this age ne'er saw  
So wise, so just, so valiant, as Nassau,  
He was, but words are wanting to say what  
Say all thats good, and great, and he was that.<sup>b</sup>

<sup>b</sup> Minutes, f.52.

Marcus Wood

Thomas Spence was born in Newcastle in June 1750, one of nineteen children, his family was poor and he experienced poverty throughout his life.<sup>1</sup> The most profound influence on Spence's early intellectual development was the Rev. James Murray, an extreme Presbyterian who had moved down to Newcastle after his dismissal from a pastoral position in Alnwick. Murray was something of a local celebrity, his highly inflammatory sermons and the political journals he ran, *The Freeman's Magazine* and *The Protestant Packet*, took a firm stand on several issues connected with radicalism, condemning heavy taxation, land enclosure and the American Civil War. In the early 1770s Murray and Spence were both actively involved in the agitation surrounding the fight by local inhabitants to prevent the enclosure of the Newcastle town moor. The town moor affair was central to Spence's development as a radical and to his political thought. From the mid 1770s Spence evolved the ideas relating to land reform which were to form the basis of his 'land plan' and which were to underpin his political thought from then on.

In 1775 speaking to the Newcastle Philosophical Society, Spence put forward his land theories for the first time in a paper entitled 'The real rights of man'. Here he advocated common ownership of land, the organisation of society according to a set of communally owned parishes and the abolition of all rent and taxes with the exception of a parish tax paid equally by all members of the parish. Spence's subsequent publishing of the paper in the form of a cheap broadside led to his expulsion from the society. From 1775-1792 Spence remained in Newcastle where he continued to publish tracts, chapbooks and pamphlets advocating his land reform plan and the plan for language reform which he also developed. During this period things went badly for him, he lost his job as a local school teacher and his political views and difficult temperament prevented the school he attempted to set up himself from being a success. Murray died in 1782, Spence's publisher, Thomas Saint, in 1788, and Spence's first wife, with whom he had not been happy, in 1792. Spence decided to move to London and consequently arrived in the capital when the effects of the French Revolution on English political thought were at their height. Both reform and anti-reform societies flourished and Paine's writings were published. *The Rights of Man*, for the sale of which Spence was to be arrested, appeared in two parts in 1791-1792. From 1793-1803 Spence, despite continual government harassment, arrest and imprisonment, produced his most significant publications, prints and tokens. He was involved in radical activity across a wide area, and the government

<sup>1</sup> Spence's 'career' and various activities are described in Olive Rudkin, *Thomas Spence and his Connections* (London, 1972). P.M. Ashraf, *The life and times of Thomas Spence* (Newcastle, 1983), 11-41. Malcolm Chase, *The people's farm* (Oxford, 1989), 18-77. Iain McCalman, *Radical underworld* (Cambridge, 1988), 1, 4, 7, 17-22, 21-5, 42-49, 117-119.

took a keen interest in his operations, regarding him as a dangerous agitator. While he was certainly in contact with respectable and main-stream radicals such as Francis Place, who wrote an unpublished biography of Spence, he also interacted with other areas of radicalism where politics and underworld criminality could not easily be disentangled. He organised graffiti campaigns, debating societies, and free-and-easies. By the early nineteenth century he had acquired a committed if small circle of disciples who were to form the nucleus of the Society of Spencean Philanthropists. This was set up by Thomas Evans immediately following Spence's death in 1814. The society flourished over the next six years and attracted quite a large following in the capital. It increasingly became associated with revolutionary radicalism. Spenceans were actively involved in the planning of two attempts at instigating violent popular insurrection, the Spa Fields Riot of 1816 and the Cato Street Conspiracy of 1822. The government had become concerned enough with the activities of the revolutionary Spenceans to include reports on their meetings in Committee meetings in both the Lords and Commons in 1817. Recent research has suggested that the influence of Spence went beyond the first two decades of the nineteenth century and that his theories were well known to leading Chartists.<sup>2</sup>

While there is growing interest in the influence of Spence as a political theorist and organiser there has not been any adequate consideration of his role as a propagandist. In this article I attempt to fill this need. A good way into a consideration of Spence's methods of subversion is simply to consider the enormous variety of his activities in terms of their potential for propaganda. Spence was a self-educated radical activist, an agrarian and finally revolutionary theorist, a philologist and phonetician, a token dealer, cataloguer and manufacturer, a schoolteacher, a lecturer, a leader of debating societies and tavern free-and-easies in London and Newcastle, a graffiti artist, a printmaker, a shop and then barrow keeper, he edited two journals, *Pigs Meat* (which took the form of an anthology of political writings past and present) and *The Giant Killer*, he was the author of numerous chapbooks, broadsides, pamphlets and handbills, produced in the forms of songs, hymns, poems, showman's notices, marginalia, advertisements, letters, declarations and constitutions. His publications and his attempts to sell the work of Tom Paine led to his arrest and detention without trial on several occasions. He was tried and imprisoned twice, and conducted his own defence and published his own trials.<sup>3</sup> Behind all these activities lay the desire to publicise his ideas and to educate the public. Spence's propaganda exerted a significant influence both in formal and methodological terms on subsequent radical agitation. His methods were quickly absorbed by some of his contemporaries in the

<sup>2</sup> Chase, 2, 3, 5, 135-6, 158, 168.

<sup>3</sup> Rudkin's is still the most detailed account of the variety of Spence's activities.

1790s, and most noticeably by Daniel Isaac Eaton. More significantly the propaganda of Spence and Eaton provided a framework and a set of models for radical agitation in the period 1816-1822 described by E.P. Thompson as 'the Heroic Age of popular radicalism'.<sup>4</sup>

I shall examine Spence's propaganda in terms of how it was produced, where its content came from, what its influence was, and how it related to loyalist propaganda during the early 1790s. I would like to contend that a very significant aspect of Spence's influence and relevance for early nineteenth century radicalism lay not in what he thought. What he said is not perhaps as important as the ways in which he said it. He was prepared to look at any available means of reproduction as a vehicle for his ideas. Conventional aesthetic notions involving hierarchy and quality are difficult to apply to his works, there is no falling back on distinctions between beauty and ugliness, literature and trash. His work showed that in popular satire the most effective approach to form is that anything can go with anything else, and this was a bequest which was enthusiastically exploited in radical satire in the decade following his death.

Given the fact that Spence is attracting increasing attention in historical, linguistic and literary studies I shall begin with a brief survey of the literature concerning him in terms of the way it relates to my approach. Spence attracted considerable attention in his lifetime, yet was an increasingly neglected figure in the nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries.<sup>5</sup> It was only in the 1960s that his importance as a protosocialist agrarian theoretician and as a linking figure between the radicalism of the seventeen nineties and that of the first two decades of the nineteenth century began to be examined: the latter in Thompson's *The making of the English working class*, the former in a volume of essays focusing on Spence and dedicated to the Scottish socialist Willy Gallacher.<sup>6</sup> The diversity of Spence's activities as a propagandist was first noted by Olive Rudkin in the nineteen twenties, but she did not attempt analysis or contextualisation of the work, and a similar pattern is to be observed in several recent books which deal with Spence and Spenceanism in some detail. Iorwerth Prothero, in his brief discussion of Spence in *Artisans*

<sup>4</sup> E.P. Thompson, *The making of the English working class* (New York, 1966), 4. For Spence and Eaton's influence see Marcus Wood, 'Popular satire in early nineteenth century radicalism' (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Oxford University, 1989), 83-96, 209-211.

<sup>5</sup> T. Evans, *A brief sketch of the life and times of Thomas Spence* (1821). E. Mackenzie, *A memoir of Thomas Spence* (1826). A. Davenport, *The life, writings and principles of Thomas Spence* (1836). F. Place, 'A collection for a memoir of Thomas Spence' (unpublished), B.L. Add MS 27808, fos. 138 ff.

<sup>6</sup> Thompson, *The making*, 138-9, 161-3, 175, 497, 613. P.M. Kemp-Ashraf, 'Selected writings of Thomas Spence 1795-1814' in *Essays in honour of W. Gallacher*, ed. P.M. Kemp-Ashraf (East Berlin, 1966).



and politics, states that: 'Spence's real importance in radical history lies in his pioneering of new methods of propaganda - cheap tracts and verse, slogans, tokens, wall chalkings, free-and-easy, and so on'. Prothero does not, however, develop this *aperçu*.<sup>7</sup> Similarly Malcolm Chase in his recent *The people's farm* observes that 'Spence was first and foremost a publicist and educator'. Chase's book provides a cultural and intellectual context for Spence's thought. He has produced the first proper analysis of the influence of James Harrington's *Oceana* on Spence's land plan, and of the influence of the dissenting Scottish minister James Murray on Spence's thought generally during his formative early years in Newcastle. His study also considers the impact of London on Spence's thought, particularly in terms of the influence of millennialism on his agrarian theory, and goes on to suggest that by the early 1800s Spence 'had become one of the most sophisticated theoreticians of revolutionary radicalism in the capital'. Spence's propaganda, its working methods, commercial context and ideological sources are not discussed.<sup>8</sup>

Olivia Smith's recent discussion of Spence in *The politics of language* constitutes the first effort by a modern scholar to place Spence's experiments in satire and language theory in the general context of radical attempts at language reform in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Smith's survey of his life and writings concentrates upon his theories of language rather than on his satiric methods. In her discussion of the latter Smith repeats Prothero's listing of Spence's varied output and also makes the important observation that Spence's work 'anticipates the more widely circulated and more skilful writings of William Hone'. Yet the comparison of levels of skill in the satires of the two men does not do justice to the complexity of Spence's work, or to the extent of Hone's debt to Spence.<sup>9</sup>

Iain McCalman's important recent book *Radical underworld* has begun to examine Spence's influence on the mixed band of men who claimed to be his followers, and who were politically active for two decades after his death. He does not look at the diversity or the formal basis of Spence's satire, and more significantly he does not consider Spence's influence on the forms and satiric methods of radical satirists, such as Henry Brougham, William Cobbett, William Hone, Thomas Wooler, John

<sup>7</sup> I. Prothero, *Artisans and politics in nineteenth century London* (Folkestone, 1979), 88-9.

<sup>8</sup> For James Harrington see Chase, 32-6. For James Murray see Chase 42-7. For Spence as revolutionary see Chase 67-8, as publicist, 58.

<sup>9</sup> Olivia Smith, *The politics of language 1791-1819* (Oxford, 1984), 90. For a more detailed comparison of Spence and Hone see Wood, 79-96.

Cahuac and Thomas Dolby, who were not Spenceans.<sup>10</sup>

McCalman's book is nevertheless an important breakthrough. It traces the activities of Spence's varied disciples and adherents in the politics and thought of the radical underworld from 1795-1840 and constitutes the first attempt to address the diversity and ingenuity of extremist radical propaganda during this period. McCalman's emphasis is on the exploitation and infiltration of institutions. He reveals how ultra radicals such as Thomas Evans, Robert Wedderburn, John Cannon, William Benbow and Samuel Waddington, who were all at various times Spenceans, used the debating society, the chapel and the trial as forums for political satire, publicity and self-expression. He looks at their relative social positions and shows how these controlled the type of satire produced, and he argues that they used shocking elements inherent in underground life for political ends. He shows that Evans was prepared to use blackmail and extortion and that many of the more extreme and vitriolic radical publishers during the Queen Caroline affair used pornography as a central element in their propaganda.<sup>11</sup> This material reveals the sensational methods of the extreme regency radicals, yet Spence, working primarily in the very different publishing environment of the 1790s, was a good deal more ingenious and less superficially shocking than his followers. He generally steered clear of openly blasphemous or obscene expressions in his propaganda, while he looked to the infiltration of rapidly developing communications networks such as token coin production, the advertising industry and children's book publishing. McCalman does not make this distinction. It is important because the satires of Hone and his numerous imitators which take up Spence's methods were of much greater impact than the published works of any of Spence's disciples. The pamphlets Hone produced between the Peterloo Massacre and the end of the Queen Caroline Affair sold in enormous numbers and were part of the radical mainstream, working alongside the journalism of Wooler and Cobbett, and even the productions of the more 'respectable' radicals such as Hazlitt and the Hunts.<sup>12</sup> It is necessary to place Spence's works in this wider context in view of the way that historians continue to examine his influence simply in terms of the personal following he was able to command. H.T. Dickinson wrote recently that by the 1800s Spence 'still peddled his Land Plan, but his works now had a tiny circulation and he was only able to influence a small group of disciples who met with him in

<sup>10</sup> Thompson, *The making* 670-83. Prothero, 133-138, 365 n.14. T.W. Laqueur, 'The Queen Caroline affair - politics as art in the reign of George IV', *Journal of modern history* 54 (1984), 424-43. McCalman, 113-77.

<sup>11</sup> McCalman, 34-5, 208-230.

<sup>12</sup> For the success and influence of Hone's Pamphlets see Ann Bowden, *William Hone's political journalism, 1815-21* (unpublished D. Phil. dissertation, University of Austin, Texas, 1975), 203-361. Wood, 227-247.

a London tavern.<sup>13</sup>

The view that Spence was politically naive, hopelessly eccentric and unworldly has remained surprisingly resilient. Thomas Knox wrote Spence off in the late 1970s in the following familiar terms: 'his obsession with his [land reform] "plan", well rooted by his middle age, stunted Spence and produced...a radical crank'.<sup>14</sup> This view of Spence as a crank finds much of its justification in the surviving biographical recollections of his contemporaries. The engraver Thomas Bewick knew Spence while he was still living in Newcastle and Bewick's account of a political argument which he had with Spence reveals the violent obsession with which he adhered to his theories. After a meeting in which Bewick, together with most of the company, had voted against Spence's plan, he found Spence:

became swollen with indignation, which, after all the company were gone he vented on me... "If I had been as stout as you are I would have thrashed you" - indeed! said I "it is a great pity you are not" - but, said he, "there is another way in which I can do the business and have at you!" he then produced a pair of cudgels - and to work we fell...after I had blackened the insides of his thighs and arms, he became quite outrageous and behaved very unfairly, which obliged me to give him a severe beating.<sup>15</sup>

Francis Place summarised Spence's character and politics in a passage in his unpublished biography of Spence:

He was a very simple, very honest, single minded man, querulous in his disposition, odd in his manners, he was remarkably irritable. He was perfectly sincere, unpractised in the ways of the world, to an extent few could imagine in a man who had been pushed about in it as he had been, yet what is more remarkable this character never changed, and he died as much of a child in some respects as when he arrived at the usual age of manhood.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> H.T. Dickinson, *British radicalism and the French Revolution 1789-1815* (Oxford, 1983), 69.

<sup>14</sup> T.R. Knox, 'Thomas Spence: the trumpet of jubilee', *Past and Present* 76 (1977), 75.

<sup>15</sup> Thomas Bewick, *A Memoir of Thomas Bewick written by himself*, ed. Iain Bain (Oxford, 1976), 52-3. For the opinions of Pitt and Southey see McCalman, 66.

<sup>16</sup> BL Add. MS 27808, fo. 152.

Spence's refusal to compromise his ideas or his life and his unflinching commitment to idealistic egalitarian notions certainly make him appear naive from the perspective of a worldly political operator such as Place, yet once we concentrate not upon biographical detail but Spence's works themselves it is impossible to consider him a political innocent. The different ways in which he attempted to disseminate his theories, using as many commercial forms as possible, reveal him to have been a shrewd and sophisticated propagandist. A lot of his work appears very simple, yet detailed analysis reveals great complexity and tact in the destructive economy of his satire.

One of the most successful and surprising of Spence's operations as a radical propagandist was his production of token coinage. In England during the last two decades of the eighteenth century copper currency was in such a neglected condition that various forms of alternative token coinage were struck independently in enormous quantities.<sup>17</sup> While they lasted the tokens were a popular art form, the content and quality of which was very varied. The coins had several functions; while usually struck simply as currency they were also produced for commemorative reasons. Tokens would also often be produced by individual businesses as advertisements.<sup>18</sup> The potential of the tokens for political propaganda was exploited to a limited extent before Spence's activities in the field. Medals and tokens had been struck on a large scale to celebrate Wilkes' victories in the Middlesex elections of 1768 and 1773. Tokens of Pitt, Fox and Sheridan were brought out as part of the propaganda during the King's illness of 1789. Further patriotic tokens were brought out by the Pittites after the King's recovery. The trial and acquittal of the leaders of the L.C.S. in November 1794 led to a mass of celebratory tokens. All these examples are unambitious in terms of the way they used the form and mostly consisted of portraits which accompanied uplifting inscriptions. It was left to Spence to use the token as a satiric vehicle, and to exploit its different functions, in trade, advertising, and the collector's market.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> R. Dalton and S. Hamer, *The provincial token coinage of the eighteenth century*, 14 parts (London, 1910-1918), i, introduction. Hereafter cited as *D.H.* followed by part, page and catalogue numbers. *The British Numismatic Journal and Proceedings of the British Numismatic Society*, Vols. 1-3 (London, 1904-6), i 299-332, ii 369-397, iii 271-281. A.W. Waters, *The trial of Thomas Spence in 1801* (Leamington Spa, 1917), 9-11. R.C. Bell, *Commercial coins, 1787-1804* (Newcastle, 1963), 9-11. J. Whiting, *Trade tokens, a social and economic history* (London, 1971), 13-31. J. Newark, *Trade tokens of the industrial revolution* (Aylesbury, 1981), 3-8.

<sup>18</sup> Newark, 7, 14-18. Whiting, 99-112, 119-120. *D.H.*, v. 144-6. Bell, *Tradesman's tickets*, introduction, xi-xii.

<sup>19</sup> Whiting, 121-130. Newark, 8. For Pitt, Fox and Sheridan's tokens see Whiting, 121-4. For Wilkes see Laurence Brown, *A catalogue of British historical medals* (London, 1980), 27-45, 42.



Spence designed a whole range of dies and with these struck many different series of coins of penny, halfpenny and farthing denominations. These combined folklore, proverbs and literary quotations. They also developed the popular imagery of chapbooks and late eighteenth century children's emblem books. He produced them as currency, for the collectors' market, and as a form of free advertising.<sup>20</sup> He is described throwing large numbers of them out of the windows of his shop to passers-by on the London streets, much in the manner of a free advertiser's handout of today.<sup>21</sup> The extent to which Spence's tokens were distributed on a national scale, both as currency and as free propaganda, has not been sufficiently analysed. E.P. Thompson's conclusion that 'his [Spence's] propaganda was scarcely likely to win any massive following in urban centres, and never seems to have reached any rural districts' does not hold up for the tokens. Spence's coins reached a variety of counties apart from Middlesex. They were circulating in different forms in London, Newcastle, Hastings, Birmingham and all over Worcestershire, and in Ireland and France.<sup>22</sup> A contemporary description of Spence's token business suggests that it was a considerable operation:

It is not long since I called at Spence's shop and saw many thousands of different tokens lying in heaps, and selling at what struck me as great prices. These therefore could not be considered as struck for a limited sale. I confess, considering the number of them I saw struck, and what the subjects of them were, I thought myself justified in supposing that it was the intention to circulate them very widely.<sup>23</sup>

Spence knew a lot about the token collector's market. He produced limited editions of several of his tokens in silver or white metal, a practice which catered for the specialist market. He also produced *The coin collector's companion, being a descriptive alphabetical list of the modern*

<sup>20</sup> The best discussion of this question is still that of Waters, 9-11. See also Ashraf, *The life*, 194-5.

<sup>21</sup> BM Add. MS 27808, fol. 182-5.

<sup>22</sup> Thompson, *The making*, 162. For the distribution of Spence's tokens in the British Isles see *D.H.* i, 7, no.35. i, 30 no.1. iv, 95, no.39. viii, 217-220. ix, 251, no.2. ix, 257, no.33. x, 285, nos.230,239. x, 317-18, nos.7-31. Spence's tokens even got to Munster, see xiii, 521, nos. 14-15. For France see Christopher Brunel and Peter Jackson, 'Notes on tokens as a source of information on the history of the labour and radical movement. Part I', *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History* 13 (Autumn, 1966), 27. See also *Seaby's Coin and Medal Bulletin* (June, 1964), 229. The most thorough discussion of the question of distribution is in Wood, 72-4.

<sup>23</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 67 (April, 1797), 33.

*provincial political and other token coinage.* This includes an introduction in which Spence states that the printing of tokens was often inspired by popular reactions to such events as the French Revolution or the Birmingham riots. This suggests that Spence was familiar with the popular propaganda which came out of France during the Revolution and which provided brilliant examples of the conversion of the iconography of traditional state propaganda into revolutionary satire. Coins and medals were particularly charged in this context. They had been considered such a potent weapon of propaganda that Louis XIV declared them a royal monopoly. When the Revolution came masses of medals and tokens were produced commemorating historic episodes such as the storming of the Bastille, the King's enforced return to Paris and the execution of the King and Queen. Many were designed and signed by the common artisans and labourers who produced them and were a direct celebration of the destruction of the ancien regime. The fall of the Bastille was by far the most popular subject to appear on tokens and in prints and Spence produced a token of this subject himself for the English market.<sup>24</sup> Spence's *Companion* and his activities in the coin collector's market are typical of his infiltration and politicization of publishing environments normally considered to be apolitical. There was strong contemporary reaction. The attacks on him in a series of articles in *The Gentleman's Magazine* show the efficacy of his token propaganda. One contributor complains:

His dies were numerous and were interchanged almost beyond the powers of calculation. The design of many of his pieces was corrupt and illiberal in the extreme... they have not either taste or beautiful execution to recommend them, but are struck in a very careless and awkward manner upon the most corrupt copper.<sup>25</sup>

The outrage is directed against the method of production. The very crudity of Spence's coins is seen as reprehensible and threatening. The statement 'his dies were numerous and interchanged almost beyond the powers of calculation' unwittingly reveals the efficient way Spence exploited the processes of manufacture and the double sided nature of the

<sup>24</sup> Mark Jones, *Medals of the French Revolution* (Worcester, 1977), 1-3. For the image of the Bastille in revolutionary propaganda see Claude Langlois, 'Counter-revolutionary iconography', *French caricature and the French Revolution, 1789-1799*, exh. cat. (Wight Art Gallery, Los Angeles, 1988), 42-3. Michel Beurdeley, *La France a l'encan. Exode des objets d'art sous la Revolution* (Fribourg, 1981), 18-20. Jean Jaques, 31. Leveque, *L'art et la Revolution Française 1789-1804* (Neuchâtel, 1987), 55-74. Jones, 1. For its influence on English radical literature and thought, including Blake and Erasmus Darwin, see Albert Boime, *Art in an age of Revolution* (Chicago, 1987), 330-1. For Spence's Bastille token see Waters, 23. *D.H.* vi, 166, no.692.

<sup>25</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 68 (Feb. 1798), 122.

coin. His dies were designed so that they could be recombined with each other to create a series of different messages. Almost any combination for the obverse and reverse of a token was both possible and effective. Spence developed a visual and verbal medium that would creatively combine set elements. In ringing the changes 'almost beyond the powers of calculation' Spence promulgated his ideas through an ever varying series of juxtapositions.

Spence's tokens mirror his publications in incorporating a bewildering mixture of material. They include satire, straightforward statements of political belief and many non-political images. Several tokens appear to have been produced as popular entertainment and some even take the form of occasional celebrations of victories in the French wars. It is probable that Spence produced these to entice an audience that would have found the political tokens unacceptable.

By far the majority of Spence's token output was aggressively political, presenting the essence of his views on slavery, taxation, land reform and the French Revolution. His uncompromising opinions adapted well to the combination of image and aphorism on a coin. The picture of an American Indian with a bow encircled by the words 'IF RENTS I ONCE CONSENT TO PAY MY LIBERTY IS PASSED AWAY' [fig. 1] is a good example of the way Spence would anchor his theory in popular imagery. Indians were a fairground phenomenon as well as serving in the context of political debate as representatives of the natural man.<sup>26</sup>

Spence produced several tokens which turn the tables on the viewer revealing satire beneath what appears to be almost simple entertainment. Animal imagery is used particularly effectively in this context. A token showing a cat bears the inscription 'MY FREEDOM I AMONG SLAVES ENJOY' [fig. 2]. This makes a general point about liberty similar in its effect to that of the Indian token. Here the message is that the domestic pet has more freedom than the people who keep it. Spence is both asserting his own freedom (he regarded the token as his personal symbol) and accusing his audience of being unaware of their thralldom. Many tokens question the acquiescent servitude of the British public, a satiric stance which is probably inherited from the sermons of James Murray. One shows a dog with a stick in its mouth and is inscribed 'TOO MUCH GRATITUDE BRINGS SERVITUDE' [fig. 3], another shows a snail crawling along in a pastoral landscape with the inscription 'A SNAIL MAY PUT HIS HORNS OUT' [fig. 4]. This is informed with a gentle but taunting sarcasm. The primary thrust of the satire is against the

<sup>26</sup> R.D. Altick, *The shows of London* (Cambridge Mass., 1978), 46-8, 276-9, 286-7. For Spence's discussions of the Indian and land ownership, see Thomas Spence, *The political works of Thomas Spence*, ed. H.T. Dickinson (Newcastle, 1982), 41-4. The illustrations are reproduced at the conclusion of this article.

oppressors for tyrannizing the people to an extent where they cannot go their own slow way or express themselves, but the comparison of the people unfavourably with a mollusc is again challenging their docility. Spence has the boldness as a satirist to attempt to stir up his audience by insulting them for their failings while simultaneously sympathising with their sufferings. The homely animal imagery enjoys an unspecified status, the semiotic implications of the tokens remain fluid for it is only the aphoristic inscriptions that anchor them in a specific meaning.

Many of Spence's coins consisted of images and proverbs which were open ended and which could react in different ways if connected to more specific political messages on the other side of a token. Powerful and often hilarious effects could result. One of Spence's tokens shows a guillotine standing in stark outline on a platform. The design is unadorned except for three steps, the empty basket awaiting the victim's head, and a distant building. The token was simply inscribed HALFPENNY [fig. 5]. The image was ambiguous. In loyalist propaganda it had become the central symbol of the Terror and of the collapse of the French Revolution into blood lust and recrimination.<sup>27</sup> Negative associations for the image were standard in the political prints of Gillray and his imitators. In radical circles, however, the image had maintained its significance as a triumphant expression of liberty. It was an explicit reference to the culminating event in the death of the old order, the decapitation of the King, its symbolic and physical head. More extreme radical publications of the 1790s had alluded to the desire to see George III suffer a similar fate. One of the most inflammatory pieces of evidence brought forward by the prosecution during Thomas Hardy's trial for high treason was a handbill which opened, 'A New and Entertaining Farce Called la GUILLOTINE or George's head in a basket'.<sup>28</sup> Spence's token developed the theme with great vivacity for he issued it with the conventional portrait of the king's head on the reverse. Juxtaposed with the guillotine the image ceases to be read as a classical bust of the King and is inverted into a celebration of the destruction of the monarchy. Spence's token has a laconic simplicity which relates to the grim humour of popular French prints brought out after the king's execution. One bipartite print shows a

<sup>27</sup> M.D. George, *Catalogue of political and personal satires: preserved in the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum* (London, 1947-52), Gillray's 'A view in perspective' (George, 8300), 'Destruction of the French Colossos', (George, 9260), 'Apotheosis of Hoche' (George, 9156) and Cruikshank's 'The radical's arms' (George, 13275), 'A view of the grand triumphal pillar' (George, 12541, 12541a) and 'A radical reformer or a neck or nothing man' (George, 13271). For the English obsession with the image of the guillotine see Ronald Paulson, 'The severed head', in *French caricature and the French Revolution*, 55-65. George hereafter cited as George with print number.

<sup>28</sup> The broadside is discussed in John Wardroper, *Kings, lords and wicked libellers* (Chatham, 1973), 165-6.



crown suspended in mid-air with the inscription, 'I have lost a head'; on the right below a crudely drawn guillotine is the rejoinder, 'I have found one'.<sup>29</sup>

Spence was a multi-media satirist. Several of his most outspoken tokens were simultaneously produced as prints either by him or by other publishers. The token showing a man walking on all fours with the inscription 'IF THE LAW REQUIRES IT WE WILL WALK THUS' also came out as a small format caricature etching [figs. 6 and 7]. Sometimes the imagery from two tokens could be conflated into one print. The token showing an ass loaded with a double set of paniers inscribed 'rents' and 'taxes', and bearing the title 'I WAS A FOOL TO BEAR THE FIRST PAIR' was simultaneously brought out as part of a print caricature [figs. 8 and 9]. This contains the figure of the American Indian on the left who looks at the ass on the right. The text has been altered from the token so that the Indian now exclaims 'Behold the civilized Ass / Two pair of Paniers on his Back / The first with Rents a Heavy Mass / With Taxes next his Bones do Crack'.<sup>30</sup> The choice of the image of the overloaded ass as a metaphor for the burdens of the common man is a good indication of Spence's instinctive feeling for popular culture. It had been used on the engraved frontispiece to all early editions of John Murray's *Sermons to asses*. The image also ran throughout the heyday of the satiric print from the 1790s until the 1820s. It was to be the basis of Cruikshank's celebrated print *Poor bull and his burden or the political Murraion* and continued to be a staple in political prints in England and France throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>31</sup> Spence also brought out a token showing a pig trampling on emblems of the church and state. This image related to his journal *Pig's Meat or Lessons for the Swinish Multitude* [fig. 10] and to the whole body of prints and journals that had capitalised upon Burke's notorious indiscretion. The various forms of advertising which Spence used to sell his publication highlight his formal versatility as a political satirist. A bubble coming from the pig's mouth in the token announced 'PIG'S MEAT PUBLISHED BY THOMAS SPENCE LONDON'. Spence produced *Pig's Meat* firstly in weekly penny numbers then in bound editions in single and three volume form. Spence also produced handbills which he called 'Loose meat for the pigs' and which contained songs and other material extracted from the journal. He even brought out a caricature of the pig developed from the token and carrying the jingle 'This is that matchless Pig's meat / So famous far and

<sup>29</sup> Waters, 19. For humorous French prints dealing with the King's decapitation, see Daniel Arasse, *Le Guillotine dans la Revolution*, exh. cat. (Paris, 1987), 127-31.

<sup>30</sup> Waters, 13. Ashraf, 193. For Murray's influence on Spence see Ashraf, 17-25. Chase, 40-7.

<sup>31</sup> George, 13288. For a discussion of the allegory of the social pyramid in the political print see Robert Philippe, *Political graphics, arts as a weapon* (Oxford, 1982), 15-16.

near / Oppressor's hearts it fills with dread / But poor men's hearts with cheer' [fig. 11]. Sometimes copies of this caricature would be bound up into copies of the collected edition of *Pig's Meat*.<sup>32</sup>

In using the satiric etching Spence appropriated a form that was both fashionable and primarily a weapon of conservative propaganda. The satiric etching market first developed on a major scale in the 1780s and was dominated in its early stages by prints celebrating loyalist positions. It was not until the second decade of the nineteenth century that it became central to radical propaganda. The political work produced in the 1790s by Thomas Rowlandson, Isaac Cruikshank, Richard Newton and most powerfully by James Gillray, typically defended the constitution and fed off the increasingly anti-jacobin popular mood. John Bull was celebrated at the expense of the lean bedraggled revolutionary Frenchman. Priestley, Price and above all, Paine, entered the standard vocabulary of political caricature and were ridiculed as more dangerous and even less respectable than Fox and his supporters.<sup>33</sup>

Spence's tokens and publications provided ideas and models for a multitude of radical pamphlets and prints in the second decade of the nineteenth century.<sup>34</sup> It is, however, not only the specific visual and textual analogues he provided but the attitudes which underlie the forms and methods of his work which provided an inheritance for subsequent radical journalism. It is above all the ebullience and bravura of Spence's satiric stance that make him such a significant antecedent of the next generation of radical publicists. Spence's contemptuous and hilariously irreverent attitude to what he considered the figureheads of corrupt state power are increasingly mirrored by the later radicals who similarly launched concentrated campaigns of ridicule at individual members of the Liverpool administration and with most fervent irreverence at the Regent. The basis of much of Cobbett's satire in attacks on the corruption and luxury of individuals, his genius for creating nicknames, which Hazlitt picked out as one of the glories of his prose style, and the basis of his political argument in a stolid egoism can all be related back to Spence. It is above all in his hate campaign against Pitt that Spence pointed the way for the later radicals.

Spence's attacks on Pitt present the remarkable example of a self-educated working man in the 1790s using all the resources of the contemporary media at his disposal to attack, as a personal enemy and equal, a major political figure.

<sup>32</sup> Waters, 21.

<sup>33</sup> For Richard Price see George, 8286, 8624, 9345, 9522. For Joseph Priestley, see George, 8286, 8318, 8320, 8331, 8356, 8624, 8685, 9240, 9370, 9522. The number of prints dealing with Loyalist reactions to Paine in George are legion.

<sup>34</sup> Wood, 82-4.

Spence wrote pamphlets such as *A letter from Ralph Hodge to his cousin Thomas Bull* attacking Pitt's financial policies. He also produced a series of tokens attacking Pitt in the most outrageous terms. One showed Pitt's head on the top of a pole under which four rustics dance holding hands in a circle. The caption reads 'TREE OF LIBERTY'<sup>35</sup> [fig. 12]. Two tokens use the famous Janus head, a satiric medallic device which dates back at least to the time of Luther. One shows the head of Pitt looking out to the left and conjoined to that of the Devil whose face also resembles that of Pitt, only it carries two horns. The caption reads 'EVEN FELLOWS'. The identification of Pitt with the Devil was a general one in the radical press of the day. The device on the medal had, however, a specific history in Lutheran anti-catholic satire, where the conjunction of the head of the Pope with that of the Devil was standard, and this identification had been absorbed into English eighteenth century broadsides and caricature satire and would not have been lost on Spence's audience.<sup>36</sup> Spence's other anti-Pitt tokens go even further in the virulence of their satire. In one Pitt is presented hanging on the gallows [fig. 13]. The inscription 'END OF PITT' includes a pun that is both graphic and linguistic. The I in the middle of Pitt's name is presented literally as an open eye. This image revivifies popular iconographic tradition. The discovery of the gunpowder plot, the destruction of the armada, and the execution of enemies of the state, were conventionally presented in prints from the seventeenth century onwards as divinely ordained events. God's approval in the destruction of evil was shown by the depiction of the all seeing eye of God, placed above an illustration of the events concerned. Spence's token satirically exploits the convention. In presenting the prime minister as an enemy of the state executed beneath the eye of God, Spence ironically redirects a powerful image of state propaganda. There is sheer daring in such a reversal and refined dexterity in a pun that is both

<sup>35</sup> Thomas Spence, *A letter from Ralph Hodge to his cousin Thomas Bull*, n.d. (London, 1795). For the use of the tree of liberty in visual satire see *L'art de l'estampe et la Revolution Française*, exh. cat. (1977, Alençon), 16. Also Leveque, 156, 158. The image has been traced in English political prints, see Louis James, *English popular literature 1819-1851* (New York, 1976), 75-80.

<sup>36</sup> For the identification of Pitt with the Devil see Waters, 30. Waters claims that Spence may be the author of the squib he quotes but gives no evidence beyond the similarity of the token and the verse. For another squib on the Pitt/Devil theme, see Daniel Isaac Eaton, *Politics for the People: or, A Salmagundy for Swine*, 2 vols. (London, 1794-5), ii, 54. For the history and continuing influence of the Janus head motif, see F.P. Barnard, *Satirical and controversial medals of the reformation, the biceps or double headed series* (Oxford, 1927), 1-45. R.W. Scribner, *For the sake of simple folk, popular propaganda for the German Reformation* (Cambridge, 1981), 166, 233-4. E.H. Gombrich and E. Kris, *Caricature* (Harmondsworth, 1940), 8. For the development of the image in English graphic satire, see George, 319, 1505, 6234, 6570, 8433, 13290.

orthographic and typographic.<sup>37</sup>

Spence's attacks on Pitt were carried into his journal *Pig's Meat* and he used mock advertisements with great skill. He reproduced a hand bill supposedly advertising a performance by 'Signor Gulielmo Pittachio'; this was simultaneously brought out as a broadside carrying an illustrated headpiece. Pitt is caricatured and shown ringing a bell. Spence was adapting a popular satiric form that had been used by Rochester, Swift and a great many anonymous eighteenth century pamphleteers.<sup>38</sup> The text opens:

SIGNOR Gulielmo Pittachio  
 The SUBLIME WONDER of the WORLD!!!  
 Condescends to inform the Public at large and his friends in Particular, that he has now opened his grand hall of Exhibitions at Westminster, with a grand display of his ASTONISHING AND MAGNIFICENT DECEPTIONS...  
 First! - The Signor will bring forward  
 A Magical ALARM BELL, At the ringing of which all the company will become mad or foolish. Secondly he will produce his justly Celebrated CURIOUS SPY GLASSES, which distort and misrepresent all objects that are looked at through them... Thirdly by means of an ENCHANTED DRUM, he will set all the Company a FIGHTING, for the avowed purpose of preserving ORDER AND TRANQUILLITY. During the battle Signor Pittachio will convey THEIR MONEY out of their POCKETS in a new and entertaining manner... In the course of the entertainment the Sublime Pittachio will exhibit UPWARDS OF TWO HUNDRED MOVING AUTOMATA OR PUPPETS, who will rise up, sit down, say Yes, or No, Receive Money, Rake among the Cinders, or do any Dirty Work he may think proper to put them to.

<sup>37</sup> For the satiric history of the image of the hanging man, see Gombrich, *Caricature*, 9. E. Kris, *The principles of caricature*, 192-4. Scribner, 78-80. For the device of the eye of God, see George, 13, 41, 45, 10737, 10738.

<sup>38</sup> For the broadside, see George, 8500. See also her discussion of this print in the British Museum Catalogue. For Swift's use of the form, see *Irish tracts 1720-3 and sermons*, ed. Louis Landa (Oxford, 1948), 285-7. For the general background, see *The wit of the day, or the humours of Westminster* (London, 1784), 88-9. Altick, *The shows of London*, 307. James, *English popular literature 1819-1851* (New York, 1976), 245.



Of all forms of advertisement the mountebank's and quack doctor's were the most disreputable. By the end of the eighteenth century there was a history of hostile criticism attached to them and Spence brings this opprobrium down on Pitt's head.<sup>39</sup> The satire operates on a number of narrational and fictive levels and uses the rhetoric of this form of advertising with surprising delicacy. While the primary narrative voice is supposed to be that of the fictive Pittachio the author's voice breaks through the surface at times in undisguised outrage. The description of the control which Pitt exerts over the House of Commons is a good case in point: 'In the course of the entertainments the sublime Pittachio will exhibit UPWARDS OF TWO HUNDRED AUTOMATA OR MOVING PUPPETS who will rise up, sit down, say Yes, or NO, Receive money, Rake among the Cinders, or do any dirty work he may think fit to put them to.' The first sentence exhibits a latinized and circumlocutory diction, the tone of grandiose patronage reaching a climax with the translation of the word 'automata' into the plain English 'moving puppets'. This is immediately succeeded by the introduction of a series of short sharp clauses peppered with verbs that describe the helpless responses of the politicians. A mechanical rapidity and awkwardness of movement is suggested through verbal mimesis: 'rise up, sit down, say Yes, or NO, Receive money'. It is as if the speed with which the figures go through their paces destroys all power of individual conscience. The list of orders is carefully arranged as it moves from the purely physical actions of sitting and standing, in themselves not morally charged, to the pairing of 'say Yes, or NO', which describes an absolute abuse of language. Sycophancy and moral blindness operate to a degree that confounds semantic content and words which should possess precisely opposite meanings - YES AND NO - become interchangeable. From here the development of the inventory into more overt accusations of bribery ('receive money') and corruption ('do any dirty work') appear inevitable. By this stage the narrational voice is clearly that of Spence, and the fury is expressed without irony.

Such narrational duality allows certain lines to operate a lethal ambiguity. Later a 'Dramatic piece in One Act ... The Humbug: Or John Bull a Jack Ass' is proposed. This title can be taken in two ways. Spoken by Pitt it articulates his callous contempt for the British public. Spoken by the author it expresses the anger that Spence felt towards the people for letting themselves be imposed upon. This attitude, as I have argued earlier, is central to Spence's political thought.

Spence's piece is a good example of the way his work was absorbed into, and developed by, the radical press. *Signor Pittachio* inspired a

<sup>39</sup> See B.B. Elliott, *A history of English advertising* (London, 1966), 102-113. For the reactions of early nineteenth century radicals to the corruption of advertising, see Wood, 107-14.

number of sequels including one published by Eaton in his journal *Politics for the People or a Salmagundy for Swine*. Eaton's piece is called *More Wonderful Wonders* and echoes the titles of Swift's earlier parodies of the mountebank's broadsheet.<sup>40</sup> In satiric method, however, it is more reminiscent of the Bickerstaff pamphlets. As Swift and his imitators followed up the first Bickerstaff pamphlet with a series of fictional denials of and ripostes to their own earlier satire, all supposedly by Bickerstaff himself, so Eaton presents Pitt replying indignantly to his public in *More Wonderful Wonders*. The process of satiric dialogue and interchange generated by *Signor Pittachio* was unusual in such popular models in the 1790s but was to become a common and celebratory practice in radical satire by the second decade of the nineteenth century.<sup>41</sup>

Spence constantly questioned and stretched the resources of late eighteenth-century English. His poetry, hymns and songs are composed in an impressive variety of metric forms. He had a gift for compact and striking language, the inscriptions on the tokens and the titles of his works use proverb, aphorism and linguistic features which are now associated with the headline and the block language of advertising, but which were only just being developed in the broadside in the 1790s.<sup>42</sup> Unfortunately it is impossible, for obvious reasons, to study the forms of the graffiti which Spence chalked over London's walls, yet this enterprise again suggests his open approach to language, nor should the graffiti be written off as an impotent or small scale operation. As late as 1812 Lord Sidmouth sent a circular letter to the police calling attention to the chalking of slogans such as 'Spence's Plan Full Bellies' on walls in London, and Home Office spy reports suggests that Spence, and after his death the Spenceans, organised coordinated graffiti campaigns which reached out into the suburbs.<sup>43</sup>

Spence saw language as a political and class weapon, and linguistic reform as an essential stage in political reform. Spence's concern with the development of a phonetic system that would standardise pronunciation and eliminate class distinctions based on dialect was linked with his notions of the coming of the millenium. The link is made explicit in several of the editions of his works which he had printed according to his phonetic system. The dedicatory poem to *A supplement to the history of Robinson Crusoe* puts the thesis into urbane doggerel, the full effect of which is only apparent when the text is seen printed in his specialised

<sup>40</sup> *Politics for the People*, ii, 406-407. Eaton also reprinted Spence's piece, *PP*, ii, 388-9. Compare Swift's titles, *The Wonderful Wonder of Wonders* and *The Wonder of all the Wonders that ever the World Wondered at* in *Irish Tracts*, 281-7.

<sup>41</sup> See Wood, 182-185, Bowden, 257-278.

<sup>42</sup> See Wood, 125-134.

<sup>43</sup> Rudkin, 45, 126-7, 146. Chase, 74.

alphabet, which he termed the 'Kruzonian Manner':

And dho mi bwk's in Kwer Lingo  
 I will it send two St. Domingo  
 Tw dhe Republik ov dhe 'Inkaz  
 For an egzampl how tw fram Looz  
 For hw kan tel but dhe mileneum  
 Ma tak its riz from mi pwr Kraneum.

Spence's concern with the political implications of mass literacy led him to publish a dictionary *The grand repository of the English language* explaining the conventions of his phonetic system and printing his new alphabet. He published the majority of his works both in conventional form and according to his system. And in London in the mid 1790s he tried to launch a phonetic bible to be sold in penny numbers.<sup>44</sup>

I have alluded to the variety of published forms in which Spence's work appeared. It is also important to stress his mastery of vernacular rhetorical modes. In *The restorer of society to its natural state* he experimented with epistolary forms writing a series of open letters to the citizens of England.<sup>45</sup> Several of his Newcastle publications are in the form of children's chapbooks and he wrote these in a style of unembellished simplicity which complements the vehicle and anticipates the parodic children's books which became vastly popular after 1819 in the wake of Hone's *The political house that Jack built*.<sup>46</sup> He used various popular biblical styles connected with the prophetic and millennial pamphlet literature of London in the 1790s, including *A fragment of an ancient prophecy*. Malcolm Chase has pointed out that Spence's millennialism dates from the period of his move to London in the late 1780s, and stresses both the popular interest in millennialism and millenarianism in the capital at this time, and the publishing boom in astrological, homeopathic, prophetic and mystical chapbooks which this generated.<sup>47</sup> Spence's stylistic absorption of this material is a complicated affair. Most popular prophetic pamphlets during the mid seventeen nineties, under the initial impact of events in France, had a pre-millennialist basis, that is they assumed the millennium would arrive as a cataclysmic and final event, a day of judgement. Spence appears to have tended towards a more

<sup>44</sup> By far the best account of Spence as linguistic reformer is that of Anthea Shields, 'Thomas Spence and the English language', *Transactions of the Philological Society* (Oxford, 1974), 33-45. Shields quotes Spence's dedication to *A supplement*, 42.

<sup>45</sup> Dickinson, *Political works of Spence*, 73-92.

<sup>46</sup> Bowden, 265-278. For Spence's use of children's books in satire see Ashraf, 152-60. Wood, 207-216.

<sup>47</sup> Chase, 47-9.

respectable post-millennial position in terms of his eschatology. He believed that the millennium would precede the Second Coming and manifest itself as an idyllic period, the Spencean Jubilee, which was to be achieved through the mass adoption of his policies of land and language reform. It must, however, be recognised that Spence frequently uses the sensational and apocalyptic style of popular pre-millennialist literature for his own ends, often in surprising contexts. Jon Mee has argued that Blake is doing much the same thing in the rhetoric of his early prophecies.<sup>48</sup> *The rights of infants* is a typically strident Spencean chapbook in which the theme of the rights of women and children are explored in a furious dialogue between a working class mother and an aristocrat. It ends with an attack on Paine's *Agrarian Justice* but the first part of the work falls into two halves. In the first the woman triumphs over the aristocrat in a debate, in the second she logically and calmly sets forward the basic ideas of Spence's land plan to her vanquished opponent. The climax of the argument in the first half is distinguished by the woman's increasing use of the diction of popular prophecy. Her final outburst takes the following form:

Hear me! Ye oppressors! Ye who live sumptuously everyday...Ye for whom the heavens drop fatness...Ye who are insatiable as the grave! Your horrid tyranny, your infanticide is at an end! Your grinding at the faces of the poor and your drinking the blood of infants, is at an end! The groans of the prisons, the groans of the camp, and the groans of the cottage, excited by your infernal policy are at an end! And behold the whole earth breaks into singing at the new creation, at the breaking of the iron rod of aristocratic sway, and at the rising of the everlasting sun of righteousness.<sup>49</sup>

Spence shifts into this pre-millennial register in many works, and this aspect of his work again both anticipated and provided a method for later radical satire.

Spence's journal *Pig's Meat* provides further evidence of his unconstrained approach to the way language could be used in political debate. It was an influential publication, the collected editions sold over a long period and were absorbed into Chartist literature in the 1840s.<sup>50</sup> Its form was innovatory. Spence described it as 'the honey or essence of politics' and 'the political bible'. It was a creative anthology of texts concerning

<sup>48</sup> Jonathon Anson Mee, 'The political rhetoric of William Blake's early prophecies' (unpublished Ph.D.dissertation, Cambridge University, 1989), 40.

<sup>49</sup> Dickinson, *Political works of Spence*, 73-92.

<sup>50</sup> Chase, 18-19.



liberty, oppression, taxation, revolution, reform and the luxury and corruption of rulers. Its content varied in style and chronology to an astonishing degree. It included substantial quotations from civil war and interregnum texts including Cromwell, Harrington and his follower William Spryge. It included pieces of Locke and Berkeley, passages from Shakespeare, Swift, James Thomson and Goldsmith. There are texts from more contemporary sources, Priestley, Richard Price and several quotations from Volney's fashionable *Ruins of empires*. There is a translation of the French Constitution of 1793, which Spence was to use as the basis for his utopian *Constitution of Spensonia*, and an account of the dismantling of the Bastille. The journal also took up a number of popular and satiric forms reprinting songs, hymns, squibs and showman's notices, and it is of course sprinkled with a good number of Spence's own compositions. Recent commentators such as Smith and Chase see *Pig's Meat* as a source book of texts which could be used by radicals in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.<sup>51</sup> It certainly did make accessible a number of texts which were otherwise expensive and not generally available, yet it works upon the texts it incorporates. It performs a function of ideological archaeology uncovering political ideas in texts which had become buried in aesthetic or historical theory. The political basis of Goldsmith's *Deserted village* and the increasing politicization of James Thomson's poetry are emphasised by the texts they are sandwiched between, and surrounded by.<sup>52</sup> Spence also prints particularly absurd examples of loyalist propaganda and converts them into his favourite polemic form, the dialogue, by adding his own interjections. There is for example an hilarious inter-textual version of Sir John Sinclair's *An antidote against revolutions* which is now published 'with remarks by a Spensonian on the same' and the title text from St. Mark 'out of thy own mouth will I judge thee thou wicked servant'. Sinclair's piece, a fantasy showing how if the king falls, society will immediately degenerate into anarchy, ends with a prophet being sent by God to restore society to its former monarchical state. Spence responds with an outburst thoroughly reminiscent of Blake's marginalia: 'Is it not a shame, Sir John, to father such lies upon God, and make him the author of such ridiculous sophistry in favour of oppression?'<sup>53</sup> The form of the journal has a levelling effect on the content. Spence treats his sources with a utilitarian

<sup>51</sup> Smith, 105-7. Chase, 60-2.

<sup>52</sup> For Goldsmith see *Pig's Meat* (1793-5) i, 33-5. The text is placed between an extract from Richard Price 'On the excellency of a free government', and a tract titled, 'On the responsibility of kings', by a 'candid philosopher'. For Thomson, see *Pig's Meat* iii, 117. The text is placed between a tract titled, 'On the trust power and duty of grand juries' and a passage 'The ambiguity of kingly titles' from Harrington's *Oceana*. For contemporary reactions to the political content of these texts, see *Collected works of Oliver Goldsmith* 5 vols. (Oxford, 1965) v, 178-9. James Thomson, *Liberty, the Castle of Indolence*, ed. James Sambrook (Oxford, 1986), 37-9.

<sup>53</sup> *Pig's Meat* iii, 188-92.

panache as he applies a cut and paste technique indiscriminately to Milton, Shakespeare, anonymous balladeers and loyalist propagandists. He questions and redefines the notion of a political text, he breaks down boundaries between disciplines and schools of thought, above all he celebrates the accessibility of the English language, an accessibility which, as Olivia Smith has argued, the state rigorously attempted to obfuscate and deny.<sup>54</sup> His confidence and omnivorous approach to form and chronology were increasingly mirrored in Daniel Isaac Eaton's *Politics for the People*. The influence of these journals on radical publications from 1815-1822 is pervasive. Wooler's 'Black neb' feature in *The Black Dwarf* and Hone's collage approach to journal, pamphlet and book production grow directly out of this tradition.<sup>55</sup>

Eaton was, next to Spence, the most significant and adventurous of the radical satirists prepared to use popular models in the 1790s. His approach to political satire appears to have undergone a fundamental change after his detention and subsequent acquittal on three charges of seditious libel in 1794. After his release his journal *Politics for the People* became increasingly experimental in terms of its methodology and the type of material which it used as the basis for its satires. Like *Pig's Meat* it is a gallimaufry, the very form of which was politically charged. Its mixture of ballads and popular songs (including a reworking of the national anthem beginning, 'God save great Thomas Paine, / The Rights of Man explain / To every soul'), fables, dream visions, mock news sheets, quack advertisements and children's games, appeared all the more striking in the light of the literary company they kept in the journal, for Eaton continued to reprint texts on such subjects as corruption, injustice and liberty from a range of sources that included Pindar, Rhianus, the Bible, Shakespeare, Dryden, Butler, Swift, Voltaire, Addison, Wilkes, Dr. Johnson, Robespierre, Rousseau, Thelwall, Priestley and Godwin. There are mock book catalogues and pretended lists of resolutions for Loyalist Associations.<sup>56</sup> Eaton's contribution to the anti-Pitt campaign included a *Te Deum Pitticus* which was advertised as a 'Litany to be used every Sunday by the Swinish Multitude'. Parodies of religious forms constituted an ancient tradition of popular satire which first exploded in publishing terms during the pamphlet battles of the Reformation and which was thereafter part of the standard vocabulary of popular political satire. They gained mass popularity after Hone triumphantly defended himself in three trials on charges of blasphemous libel for having published religious parodies in 1817. The continuity of these forms in radical satire is indicated in the fact that one of Hone's parodies was a reworked version of a satire by John Wilkes' *The late John Wilkes's catechism*. Eaton's work provides further evidence of the popularity of

<sup>54</sup> Smith, 1-32.

<sup>55</sup> Wood, 119-148. 248 n.10.

<sup>56</sup> Smith, 80-9. Wood, 91-6.



the genre in eighteenth century radical satire; *Politics for the People* is pitted with mock litanies, catechisms, creeds and hymns.<sup>57</sup>

As with Spence it is the general tone of Eaton's publication which is important in demonstrating the confident and independent way in which radical journalism in the late eighteenth century found its feet and increasingly built satire out of the most heterogeneous cultural material. Perhaps the most unusual and certainly one of the most effective of Eaton's experiments is a curious poem composed according to the game of crambo and titled 'A Crambo Epistle to Mr. Pitt, on his memory failing him at a late trial':

OH! Pitt, lately  
 Thy memory  
 Gave the the lie  
 Most treacherously,  
 When wilfully,  
 And craftily,  
 With effrontery,  
 To the Jury  
 Thou didst reply  
 To them falsely...  
 I heartily,  
 And constantly,  
 Pray Fervently,  
 Thou Pitt May'st Hie,  
 To the old Bailly,  
 And the Jury  
 That shall thee try,  
 Find thee guilty.  
 So may'st thou die,  
 Despicably,  
 On gallows high.<sup>58</sup>

The name crambo originates from the latin phrase 'crambe repetita' meaning cabbage served up again. By the early seventeenth century crambe had come to mean repeated punning or quibbling on the sound of a word. The game crambo developed out of this. By 1800 it had devolved into a children's game. Strutt's *Sports and pastimes* describes it as a 'Term used among schoolboys when in rhyming, he is to forfeit who repeats a word that is said before'. Eaton's rhyme is constructed according to the rules of this game. The form has great advantages as a political weapon. The rhyme will only stop when a word is repeated and

<sup>57</sup> *PP*, ii 353-355, Eaton also included 'The republican's creed', which is not satiric, see *PP*, ii 356-357. William Hone, *The sinecurist's creed, or belief: as the same can or may be sung or said throughout the kingdom* (London, 1817).

<sup>58</sup> *PP*, ii, 368.

so the poem is charged with the tension of this implicit competition. If the poet has to repeat himself in his criticisms of Pitt he must stop. Hence each new insult is a victory and as the poem totters and stutters its way through its inventory of accusation it appears that there is no end to the evils of the Pitt administration.

Spence's and Eaton's publications of the 1790s should be viewed against the background of loyalist propaganda. No clear pattern seems to have emerged for the period after the initial burst of activity from 1792-95. It is certain, however, that during this early period enormous amounts of Loyalist propaganda were produced in response to events in France, and more immediately in response to the phenomenal success of Paine's writings and the sudden and organised spread of radicalism through the Corresponding Societies.<sup>59</sup>

Pitt and Dundas built up a propaganda machine which attempted to discredit radical thought and to magnify the dangers of radical activity, and of armed insurrection in particular. The founding of the Association for the Protection of Property against Republicans and Levellers, and its rapid spread through local branches, greatly facilitated the mass dissemination of state backed propaganda. The government had a very tight hold over the stamped press; Dozier argues that the majority of news bulletins in the established newspapers in London and the Provinces were extracted from the government organ *The London Gazette*.<sup>60</sup> There were, however, areas of the publishing trade which the government could not control through the stamp taxes and which became increasingly influential in the 1790s. Radical propagandists increasingly used forms such as the pamphlet, the handbill, the chapbook and the broadside. Paine had been aware from the start of the way these areas of the media had to be exploited. The second part of *The Rights of Man* came out in February of 1792 and was a publishing phenomenon. Paine was writing a few months later of the necessity for following up this advantage through the mass distribution of cheap simplified editions of the text 'As we have now got the stone to roll it must be kept going by cheap publications. This will embarrass the Court gentry more than anything else, because it is a ground they are not used to'.<sup>61</sup> It has not been sufficiently recognised that for working people in the 1790s *The Rights of Man* would frequently have been read not in the form of the lengthy pamphlet, which in its combined form ran to some one hundred and twenty tightly printed pages, but in highly simplified forms which included broadsides, chapbooks,

<sup>59</sup> Austin Mitchell, 'The Association Movement', *Historical Journal* iv (1961), 56-77. H.T. Dickinson, 'Popular conservatism and militant loyalism', in *Britain and the French Revolution 1789-1815*, ed. H.T. Dickinson (London, 1989), 105-117.

<sup>60</sup> R.R. Dozier, *For King, constitution and country* (Kentucky, 1963), 15.

<sup>61</sup> Thompson, *The making*, 121. Smith, 68-70. Mark Philp, *Paine* (Oxford, 1989), 41-5.

handbills and selections. In Paine's trial the Attorney General complains that *The Rights of Man* was 'thrust into the hands of subjects of every description, even children's sweetmeats being wrapped in it'.<sup>62</sup> Spence's works with their stress on cheapness and variety should be seen as a contribution to this sudden radical exploitation of popular publishing forms. Loyalists rapidly took up the challenge. The Association commissioned pamphlets which were printed in enormous editions and circulated through its local branches with aid of the post office. It is also important to realise that many areas of loyalist opinion merged into genuine popular opinion. H.T. Dickinson and Robert Hole have recently produced work which warns against the dangers of underplaying the popular support for the constitution and the increasing intensification of anti-gallic feeling as the 1790s progressed. The evidence that has survived of the spectacular pageants and publications directed against Paine late in 1792 and into 1793 demonstrate the variety and energy of popular reactions against extreme proponents of radical reform.<sup>63</sup>

Spence's works in the 1790s must in part be seen as reactions to this publishing environment. He moved to London late in the 1780s and was right at the centre of the controversy surrounding the banning of *The Rights of Man*. He was arrested and imprisoned for selling a cheap edition of it.<sup>64</sup> His own publications played a part in the radical attempt to produce a counter rhetoric to combat government backed propaganda. His achievement lies partly in the fact that he continued to produce work during the fallow period from 1796 to 1814, when government repression attempted to force radical activity underground and when a definite gap opened up between 'respectable' or intellectual radicalism and popular forms of revolutionary radicalism. His works continued to emphasise accessibility, entertainment and a formal variety anchored in popular tradition, and consequently provided a vital link between radical satire in the second half of the seventeenth nineties and the period 1815-22. Spence was consistently opportunistic and intelligent in the way he looked at publicity, he aimed at producing works with genuine popular appeal that did not patronise his audience.

Spence opened his career as a political activist by reading a lecture on radical agrarian reform to the Newcastle Philosophical Society, and was expelled from the society in the words of Mackenzie, his earliest biographer, 'not for printing it [the lecture] only, but for printing it in the manner

<sup>62</sup> Thompson, *The making*, 118.

<sup>63</sup> Dickinson, *British radicalism*, 26-43. Robert Hole, 'British counter-revolutionary propaganda in the 1790s' in Colin James ed., *Britain and revolutionary France conflict, subversion and propaganda* (Exeter, 1983), 53-69. David Bindman, *The shadow of the guillotine*, exh. cat. (London, 1989), 21, 110.

<sup>64</sup> Rudkin, 78-86. Ashraf, 44-6.

of a halfpenny broadside and having it hawked about the streets'.<sup>65</sup> His heroic and efficient career as a grass roots publicist followed him quite literally into the grave. His coffin was preceded by a pair of scales bearing white ribbons and filled with equal quantities of earth symbolizing his purity and the fairness of his land reform plan. His favourite tokens, those showing the cat and the meridian sun of liberty, were thrown onto his coffin and distributed among the mourners.<sup>66</sup> The Festal Day of the Society of Spencean Philanthropists was Spence's birthday and the celebratory hymn which Thomas Evans composed to be sung on these occasions emphasises two things, the variety of Spence's publications and the way he suffered for them:

His books and songs for forty years,  
He's published many ways.  
For which he oft was sent to Jail  
Grant him your mead and praise.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>65</sup> E. Mackenzie, *Memoir of Thomas Spence*, 5.

<sup>66</sup> Rudkin, 142-3. McCalman, 99.

<sup>67</sup> Quoted in Rudkin, 161.



fig. 1



fig. 2



fig. 3



fig. 4



fig. 5



fig. 6



fig. 8



fig. 12



fig. 10



fig. 13



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JONES (P)



fig. 7



fig. 11



fig. 9



# THE CORRUPTION OF POLITICS AND THE DIGNITY OF HUMAN NATURE: THE CRITICAL AND CONSTRUCTIVE RADICALISM OF JAMES BURGH

Martha K. Zebrowski

Between 1745 and 1775, between the Jacobite Rebellion and the American Association, James Burgh published a series of pamphlets, essays and books in which he catalogued the corruption of British politics. The language of his criticisms was principally the civic language of the country and commonwealth radicals. He wrote of the ministerial use of bribes to corrupt voters and parliaments, of the excessive length of parliaments and the arrogant disregard by elected representatives of their constituents' will, of the arbitrary rule a standing army made possible, and of the pressing need for moral discipline and political reform. In *Political disquisitions* Burgh recommended association as a means to reform. He urged association in rationalist terms, in the face of claims that the constitution located sovereign power in the king, lords and commons, and that the will of the people was wholly contained within that of their representatives in parliament. Not prohibited at all from expressing their will, Burgh argued, the people had, rather, an unsundered sovereign authority to reform or new-model their government along whatever lines they saw fit, in opposition to the will of their representatives, if necessary. In fact, men had a constructive moral duty to protect and support their country. Burgh explained the duty in *The dignity of human nature*, when he joined a Stoic ethical theory with a Platonist cosmological and epistemological theory and admonished men to support and maintain the universal moral order of God.

## I

James Burgh spent thirty years warning the nation about the failure to reform and looking for leaders adequate to the task. He began with a pamphlet after the 'Forty-Five'. This was *Britain's remembrancer; or, the danger not over* (1746), in the Jeremiad style and with an apocalyptic tone. Britain in '45 was the battlefield of the kingdoms of light and darkness. The danger not over was her continued decline into luxury and irreligion, and Burgh said there was something for everyone of every rank to do to help her reform her manners and morals and return to virtue and religion.<sup>1</sup>

After *Britain's remembrancer* Burgh wrote in several voices and genres on one kind of reform and another. He was a compiler and facilitator, and often wrote simply to get information into the hands of others who would act. He had moved from Scotland to make his fortune in England. For most of his years there he was a dissenting school-master, and he wrote several texts for his own classroom and students. In *Theophilus* (1754), for example, he showed them the virtuous character of a citizen worthy of

<sup>1</sup> James Burgh, *Britain's remembrancer; or, the danger not over* (London, 1746), 35-47.

their imitation, and in *The art of speaking* (1761), he compiled a manual of practical exercises for their recovery of the uncorrupted rhetoric of nature, the language of action which would ground their authority and assure the effect of their leadership.<sup>2</sup>

Burgh dedicated *The dignity of human nature* (1754) to the Princess Dowager of Wales with the hope that she had influence enough to change the fashion of a 'thoughtless and voluptuous age' in favour of 'virtue and religion'. *The dignity of human nature* is several things: a book of etiquette, about decorum and the proper expression of character; a guide for parents, with suggestions for raising children and adolescents and the course of study and texts appropriate for their education; a textbook of natural religion and rational theology, and a handbook of duties for Christian and citizen.<sup>3</sup> In the manner of humanist counsellors to princes, Burgh prepared *Remarks historical and political* (1762) for George III when he took the throne. He urged the new king to reign as a patriot prince: to encourage virtue by his example and to lead the nation in the reform of education, along the lines of the educational programmes of the dissenting academies, in the reform of the law, to accommodate the practice of arbitration, which commercial men found convenient, and especially in the reform of the system of parliamentary representation, to account for shifts in population and the growth of the commercial, manufacturing and financial interests.<sup>4</sup> Nothing came of this programme, and Burgh published most of the miscellaneous observations and precepts on good government and political reform he had already set down in the King's manuscript in the *Crito* essays (1766, 1767) on politics, education and religion. He dedicated the second of the two *Crito* volumes to the good people of the twentieth century, blaming the independent people of the eighteenth as much as the King for failing to reform the constitution.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> James Burgh, *Youth's friendly monitor: being a set of directions, prudential, moral, religious and scientific. First drawn up for a farewell present, by the master of an academy near London, to his pupils on their removal from under his care. To which is prefixed an account of the extraordinary proceedings of some persons which occasioned the publication of this tract, contrary to the author's original intention. Together with Theophilus, a character worthy of imitation* (London, 1754). *The art of speaking* (London, 1761); I have used *The art of speaking* (Baltimore, 1804).

<sup>3</sup> James Burgh, *The dignity of human nature* (London, 1754); I have used *The dignity of human nature*, A New Edition, 2 vols. (London, 1767), I: iv.

<sup>4</sup> James Burgh, *Remarks historical and political, collected from books and observations. Humbly presented to the King's most excellent Majesty* (1762), British Museum, King's Manuscript 433, 59-70.

<sup>5</sup> James Burgh, *Crito, or, essays on various subjects*, 2 vols. (London, 1766-1767), II: 18-19.

In the meantime, Burgh published the *Settlement of the Cessares*, an account of a people in South America based loosely on a current legend and more closely on Thomas More's *Utopia*. The Cessares' Settlement is a Protestant community which follows a non-doctrinal, revealed and natural religion, and provides toleration for Catholics. The community is established on an agrarian and remains non-commercial by law. All political authority in the Settlement rests ultimately with the people. The constitution is mixed. It provides for an hereditary Governor who holds executive power limited by law, a Senate, elected for life, which shares legislative power with the Governor, and the people themselves, who retain some power to remove both the Governor and the Senators. There is provision for alteration of electoral districts to accommodate population increases. Lesser constitutional officers called Inspectors, elected on a rotating basis, are responsible for supervision of public manners and morals.<sup>6</sup>

Burgh is best known today for the three volume *Political disquisitions* (1774-1775). This is the elaborate commonplace and reference book he published in the period of increasing domestic and colonial agitation and instability just before the declaration of independence by America. Burgh charged political leaders with corruption, criticized the system of representation and the very settlement of the constitution itself, and warned the people to be watchful of their liberties. In constructing *Political disquisitions* Burgh relied heavily on quotations from others, many of them, like Harrington, Toland, Trenchard and Gordon, and Bolingbroke, figures in the commonwealth and country opposition; from them he collected examples of virtue and government worthy of imitation. Not so apparent in *Political disquisitions* is Burgh's own rationalist argument that all legitimate political authority derives from the people, that sovereignty always remains in the people, and that the people retain a right to exercise the sovereign power to correct their elected representatives and to alter the form of government. Burgh recommended that in 1775 an association to restore the constitution was a necessary and appropriate expression of the people's uncorrupted virtue and sovereign power, and a device for their preservation of liberty.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> James Burgh, *An account of the first settlement, laws, form of government, and police of the Cessares, a people of South America; in nine letters from Mr. Vander Neck, one of the senators of that nation, to his friend in Holland, With notes by the editor* (London, 1764), 15-16, 24-26, 38-50, 52-55.

<sup>7</sup> *Political disquisitions: An enquiry into public errors, defects, and abuses calculated to draw the timely attention of government and people to a due consideration of the necessity, and the means, of reforming those errors, defects, and abuses; of restoring the constitution, and saving the state*, 3 vols. (London, 1774-1775; reprint edn., New York, 1971).

Burgh was a modern Whig. He belonged to a London scientific and political club called the Honest Whigs, and in *Political disquisitions* he said he wrote as an Independent Whig.<sup>8</sup> But he was a modern Whig in the sense he did not see ownership of land as a necessary ground of personality, and he was comfortable in the commercial world and with the values it entailed.<sup>9</sup> In *The art of speaking* he said 'politics now turn' on an educated class of men who go into parliament, the ministry, commerce, and the law. In the King's manuscript, the *Crito* essays and *Political disquisitions* he said Britain's fortune was no longer simply in the land. She had become a commercial nation, which her parliamentary representation ought to show. '[I]t is ... chiefly from the middle rank that you may look for a sense of return and kindness, or any thing worthy or laudable[.]' he wrote in *The dignity of human nature*. And in the *Crito* essays, at the end of an attack on the education provided for Emile by Rousseau, he said the nobility and gentry no longer presented a distinguishing character; they had fallen into betting and bribing and place-catching. The bourgeoisie - and bourgeoisie is Burgh's term - 'especially the younger, who have had the happiness of a better education, than those of the last generation, behave as the nobility and gentry, if they understood themselves would do.'<sup>10</sup>

Several times Burgh had special praise for the way commercial men handled their own and public affairs, and for the forms of their business associations. In *Britain's remembrancer* he praised the four hundred London merchants who, seeking to avoid a financial panic at the time of the 'Forty-Five', had agreed in association among themselves to support public credit by accepting notes at face value. He praised them for their association and their particular stand, and also as a perfect example of the

<sup>8</sup> Burgh, *PD*, I: xvi. Verner W. Crane, 'The Club of Honest Whigs: Friends of Science and Liberty', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, 23 (Apr. 1966): 210-233.

<sup>9</sup> For the modern Whigs see J.G.A. Pocock, 'Varieties of Whiggism from Exclusion to Reform: A History of Ideology and Discourse', in Pocock, *Virtue, commerce, and history* (Cambridge, 1985), 215-310.

<sup>10</sup> Burgh, *Speaking*, 6-7; *Remarks*, 59-70; *Crito*, II: 23-25; *PD*, I: 22-62; *DHN*, I: 179; *Crito*, I: 159.



people's exercise of their own power and authority.<sup>11</sup> He praised, too, the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, formed in 1754 by The Reverend Stephen Hales and William Shipley along with others of the nobility, clergy, gentlemen and merchants. He compared the economy and efficiency of the Society with the waste and corruption of the government, and he criticized the government for allowing itself to be outdone by a private society in honouring the discovery of things useful in the arts, manufactures and commerce.<sup>12</sup>

At first glance James Burgh seems to be an easy study. Caroline Robbins includes him in her survey of seventeenth and eighteenth century commonwealthmen, and says that *Political disquisitions* 'is perhaps the most important political treatise which appeared in England in the first half of the reign of George III.' Bernard Bailyn and Gordon Wood, both principal students of the American Revolution, tie Burgh to the schools of the British country and commonwealth opposition and report that he was a popular source of support for the American ideology of virtue and liberty. Colin Bonwick, too, concerned with the transformation of British radical thinking in the presence of American events, names Burgh as part of the transatlantic network of political radicals for whom America was an asylum of liberty. John Cannon identifies Burgh as an important figure in the history of parliamentary reform. In the course of considering the development of extra-parliamentary organization, and the association device, in particular, Eugene Black links Burgh's own association to the development of political parties and interest groups, while Herbert Butterfield and T.M. Parssinen recognize in it a coercive, popular sanction and an instrument for the popular exercise of sovereignty. Isaac Kramnick emphasizes the Lockean background and basis of Burgh's

<sup>11</sup> Burgh, *BR*, 40; see also, *PD*, III: 431-432. For the associations of 1745 see William Maitland, *The history and survey of London from its foundation to the present time*, 2 vols. (London, 1756), I: 634-654; Tobias Smollett, *The history of England, from the Revolution to the death of George II*, 5 vols. (Edinburgh, 1805), III: 159; A Citizen of Westminster, *The folly and danger of the present associations demonstrated: With some proposals for rendering that zeal for liberty, which appears in all ranks of people, of real use and advantage to the public* (London, 1745); Rupert C. Jarvis, *Collected papers on the Jacobite risings*, 2 vols. (Manchester, 1972), chapter 20; Nicholas Rogers, 'Popular Disaffection in London during the Forty-Five', *The London Journal* 1, no.1 (May 1975), 5-27; Rogers, 'Resistance to Oligarchy: The City Opposition to Walpole and his Successors, 1725-47', in *London in the age of reform*, ed. John Stevenson (Oxford, 1977), 1-29.

<sup>12</sup> Burgh, *Remarks*, 79; *Crito*, I: 37; II: 221. For the Society see D.G.C. Allan, 'The Society of Arts and Government, 1754-1800', *Eighteenth Century Studies* 7, no.4 (Summer 1974), 434-452.

criticisms of unequal representation and mechanism for reform.<sup>13</sup>

In fact, Burgh is not so simple a figure at all. He presents serious problems of interpretation, though he presents opportunities as well. The difficulty with most of what has been written about Burgh is not that it is wrong, but that it is limited; and because it is limited, it is misleading. There has been scarcely any attempt to read Burgh beyond *Political disquisitions* and, once the nature of many of his sources is noted, scarcely any sustained analysis of the important points and argument he did make, even in *Political disquisitions*. There has certainly been no real consideration of the nature and sources of Burgh's political rationalism, or of association in his own rationalist terms, or of the rational moral universe within which he located the political order and which is the subject of much of *The dignity of human nature*.

So far as the problems of interpretation are concerned, there is, first, the matter of organization and style. There is very little of an obvious system in Burgh's work. It is true that he sometimes saw himself principally as a compiler of information for others, as he did in the King's manuscript and *Political disquisitions*. But, if Burgh thought he compiled information on or around a common theme, it is not at all clear that he was consistent. Compiling for others, he often identified his sources. Speaking in his own voice in *The dignity of human nature*, for example, he often did not, although his debt to others was just as great. In addition, there is the very real possibility that Burgh did not always understand what he wrote or compiled.

Second, there is the problem of inconsistency. Though in *Britain's remembrancer* Burgh praised the merchants for their virtuous and patriotic acts, he also urged the gentry to lead the nation to virtue by associating to live themselves in virtue, on their estates. Though he spoke clearly on behalf of commercial men, he also established the Cessares on an agrarian basis. Though he praised the spirit of liberty epitomized in slave revolts, he also said the way to attack idleness in the poor was to set them to work, for a time, 'for the benefit of great trading, or manufacturing companies'. And, though he urged the people to associate, he also

<sup>13</sup> Caroline Robbins, *The Eighteenth Century Commonwealthman* (Cambridge, Mass., 1959), 363-368, and passim; the quotation is p.365. Bernard Bailyn, *The ideological origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), passim. Gordon S. Wood, *The creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (Chapel Hill, 1969), passim. Colin Bonwick, *English radicals and the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, 1977), passim. Eugene Black, *The Association* (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), 279. Herbert Butterfield, *George III, Lord North and the People, 1779-1780* (London, 1949), 263. T.M. Parssinen, 'Association, Convention and Anti-Parliament in British Radical Politics, 1771-1848', *The English Historical Review* 88, no.348 (July 1973), 514-533. Isaac Kramnick, 'Republican Revisionism Revisited', *American Historical Review* 87 (Mar. 1981), 640-642.



thought the King might lead the association.<sup>14</sup>

Finally the problem of locating Burgh in relation to other significant political individuals and groups. Around 1754 he was associated with the Princess Dowager and Leicester House. The Reverend Stephen Hales, whose eye had caught one of Burgh's earlier publications, introduced him to the Princess. *The dignity of human nature* is the product of conversations the Princess organized, and Burgh attended, to discuss religion after the posthumous publication of Bolingbroke's work on Deism. It was the Princess and Hales who later asked Burgh to prepare some remarks for the new King.<sup>15</sup> Burgh's regular concern for the reformation of manners, his interest in employing informants for the sake of reform, his connection with Hales, and some resemblance between his Settlement of the Cessares and the Georgia colony in North America place him in the tradition of the societies for the reformation of manners and the charity movement, whose influence, incidentally, has been thought to have waned by the 1730s.<sup>16</sup> His plea for arbitration to replace adjudication in commercial cases places him close to the Wilkites, and his great interest in the rights of electors and the extra-parliamentary association of electors, as well as the recall scheme of the Cessares, tie him to both the Wilkites and the Tories who had adopted a populist stance and organized societies of independent voters earlier in the century.<sup>17</sup> In the 1760s and '70s, when he was living at Newington Green and meeting with the Club of Honest Whigs, Burgh counted Richard Price and

<sup>14</sup> Burgh, *PD*, III: 220-221, III, 432-433.

<sup>15</sup> Burgh, *Crito*, I, 20-21; II, 208.

<sup>16</sup> T.C. Curtis and W.A. Speck, 'The Societies for the Reformation of Manners: A Case Study in the Theory and Practice of Moral Reform', *Literature and History* 3 (1976), 45-64. Francis Moore, *A voyage to Georgia. Begun in the year 1735* (London, 1744), printed in Georgia Historical Society, *Collections*, I, 79-152.

<sup>17</sup> John Brewer, 'The Wilkites and the Law, 1763-1774: A Study of Radical Notions of Governance', in *An ungovernable people*, eds. John Brewer and John Styles (New Brunswick, 1982), 128-171, 333-342; Brewer, 'English Radicalism in the Age of George III', in *Three British Revolutions: 1641-1688, 1776*, ed. J.G.A. Pocock (Princeton, 1980), 323-367. Linda Colley, 'Eighteenth-century English Radicalism before Wilkes', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 31 (1981), 1-19. Nicholas Rogers, 'Popular Protest in Early Hanoverian London', *Past and Present* 79 (May 1978), 70-100; Rogers, 'The Urban Opposition to Whig Oligarchy 1720-1760', in *The origins of Anglo-American radicalism*, eds. Margaret Jacob and James Jacob (London, 1984), 132-148; Rogers, 'Resistance'.

Benjamin Franklin among his close friends.<sup>18</sup>

Burgh raises several issues which deserve closer study. His literary career may, as Carla Hay suggests, reflect an increasing radicalization. Certainly, J.G.A. Pocock's analysis of the varieties of Whiggish response to agrarian and commercial personality and values suggests ways to reconcile Burgh's agrarian Cessares with the urban and commercial readers of *Political disquisitions*, and the leadership of a patriot prince with the leadership of the associated people of Britain.<sup>19</sup> Burgh's analysis of parliamentary representation demonstrates the variety and complexity of reform positions in 1774, and the need for still more detailed work on the parliamentary reform movement and on the origins of the principles which informed the different reform proposals. Perhaps more interesting is the relation Burgh suggests between the humanism and reform of Thomas More and both the societies for the reformation of manners and later urban, radical reform movements, or the relation he suggests between More, the societies for the reformation of manners, and the colonization of Georgia. It is impossible now to do more than note these concerns.

On the other hand, it is possible to go well beyond the identification and characterization of Burgh's critical radicalism, that is, his opposition to the corruption of British politics in the language of the country and commonwealth opposition. In spite of the problems involved in construing his texts, it is possible to consider what evidence Burgh provided of another, a constructive radicalism, and to organize the evidence in a fairly systematic manner in order to see that his constructive radicalism entailed a conception of the complete freedom and responsibility of the individual moral judgement, will, and action, and a justification of association as a means through which men may perform their duties and sustain a rational moral universe. It is convenient to begin where others have begun, with *Political disquisitions*, first to note Burgh's critical posture, his position on representation, and the historical sources of association, and then to take up association in Burgh's own rationalist terms. From there, it is necessary to recognize what only Staughton Lynd has recognized, that Burgh located the rational political order within a larger rational moral order, and to analyze both the nature of that order and the sources behind

<sup>18</sup> For the literary cooperation of Burgh and Franklin see the (perhaps) jointly authored 'The Colonist's Advocate', printed in *Benjamin Franklin's letters to the Press, 1758-1775*, ed. Verner W. Crane (Chapel Hill, 1950), 167-209, 285-288. Carla H. Hay, 'Benjamin Franklin, James Burgh, and the Authorship of "The Colonist's Advocate" Letters', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, 32, no.1 (Jan. 1975), 111-124.

<sup>19</sup> Carla H. Hay, *James Burgh: spokesman for reform in Hanoverian England* (Washington, D.C., 1979); Hay, 'The Making of a Radical: The Case of James Burgh', *The Journal of British Studies* 18, no.2 (Spring 1979), 90-117. Pocock, 'Varieties'.

it as Burgh presented them in *The dignity of human nature*.<sup>20</sup>

## II

*Political disquisitions* appeared in the midst of increasing British, American, and especially London metropolitan discontents over taxation, representation, and the general corruption and lack of accountability of ministries and parliaments. It was published by Edward and Charles Dilly, London booksellers personally and professionally associated with the most radical portion of the London opposition and with America.<sup>21</sup> It is in three volumes; the second and third volumes begin with an important epigraph taken from the second century Stoic Hierocles:

After treating of our duty to the *Gods*, it is proper to teach that which we owe to our *Country*. For our Country is, as it were, a *secondary* God, and the first and greatest *Parent*. - It is to be *preferred* to Parents, Wives, Children, Friends and all things, the Gods only excepted. - And if our Country perishes, it is as impossible to save an *Individual*, as to preserve one of the fingers of a mortified hand.<sup>22</sup>

Burgh brought out the first volume of *Political disquisitions* early in 1774. He wrote as an Independent Whig, on the nature and abuse of representative government. He said he did not plan a system of politics; but in a free country everyone ought to judge in politics, and he did want to explain the solid political principles which should inform judgement. And the fact was, government under the Hanoverians was as unrepresentative and arbitrary as it had been under the Stuarts. Parliament abused its privileges and denied its responsibility to the people while electors remonstrated and petitioned to no avail. Ambitious and avaricious ministers with enormous financial resources and a variety of posts to offer in the army, navy, church, and customs bribed and enslaved the government - so called - of king, lords, and commons, and debauched the people's virtue. Excises accumulated, taxes were misapplied, and the public's money was wasted. Commerce was harmed, the nation was in

<sup>20</sup> Staughton Lynd, *Intellectual origins of American Radicalism* (New York, 1969), passim.

<sup>21</sup> L.H. Butterfield, 'The American Interests of the Firm of E. and C. Dilly, with their Letters to Benjamin Rush, 1770-1775', *Bibliographical Society of America, Proceedings* 45 (1951), 283-303.

<sup>22</sup> The fragment from Hierocles' book on moral duty is in Ioannes Stobaeus, *Florilegium*, ed. Augustus Meineke, 4 vols. in 2 vols. (Lipsiae: Sumptibus et typis B.G. Teubneri, 1855), II: nos. 34, 35, 61-62. See the brief comments on Hierocles in Eduard Zeller, *Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy*, 13th edn., rev. Wilhelm Nestlé, trans. L.R. Palmer (London, 1955), 270-271.

debt, and public credit was in danger. What is more, the colonies were angry.<sup>23</sup>

At the end of September 1774, hoping to undercut the growing strength of the opposition and to install a parliament able to handle the crisis in America, the King and the North Administration called a general election for October. The Society of the Supporters of the Bill of Rights, which had first organized in support of John Wilkes after his exclusion from his parliamentary seat for Middlesex in 1768, ran its first national campaign, with candidates pledged to work for shorter parliaments, an end to placemen, a fair and equal system of parliamentary representation, and a change in colonial policy, especially the policy of parliamentary taxation.<sup>24</sup> Burgh published the second volume of *Political disquisitions* during the campaign. He condemned the 'arts of corruption', the arts, that is, of pensions, places and bribery. He condemned too, the practice of maintaining a standing army, and argued that, unlike a popular militia, a standing army gives a ministry false confidence to pursue oppressive measures: '[T]here is no end to observations on the difference between the measures likely to be pursued by a minister backed by a standing army, and those of a court awed by the fear of an *armed people*.'<sup>25</sup>

The Bill of Rights candidates suffered a substantial electoral defeat. Burgh published his third volume early in 1775. On the first page he talked about the execution of Charles I. 'Has ambition raised a tyrant, a *Caesar*, or a *Charles* to despotic power?' 'The sword of a *Brutus*, or the axe in the hand of the man in the mask, in a moment sets the people free.' Or perhaps an aristocracy has 'seized the liberties of a country - as at Athens.'

A bold Thrasylbulus may be found, coming upon them in their secure hour, shall, by means perhaps seemingly inadequate, blast all their schemes, and overthrow the edifice of a tyranny they had set up, burying them in its ruins.<sup>26</sup>

Later he said that so long as the people themselves continue capable of

<sup>23</sup> Burgh, *PD*, I: 400-407.

<sup>24</sup> Bernard Donoghue, *British politics and the American Revolution* (London, 1964), 179-180. Ian Christie, 'The Wilkites and the General Election of 1774', *The Guildhall Miscellany* 11, no.4 (1962), 155-164. On London and America see Bonwick, *English radicals*; Paul Langford, 'London and the American Revolution', in *London in the age of reform*, ed. John Stevenson (Oxford, 1977), 55-78; John Sainsbury, 'The Pro-Americans of London, 1769-1782', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, 35, no.3 (July 1978), 423-454.

<sup>25</sup> Burgh, *PD*, II: 131; 476-477.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, III: 1-2.



liberty, their ruin will never come.<sup>27</sup> He pressed the people to associate. By parish and county, Burgh wrote at the end of *Political disquisitions*, the people of England, Scotland, Ireland and America ought to form themselves into a Grand National Association for Restoring the Constitution. And in association they ought to secure the public credit, determine their own sense on public affairs, present petitions to parliament signed by a majority of the people of property, and 'raise, and have in readiness, the strength of the nation, in order to influence government, and prevent mischief.'<sup>28</sup>

The language of the country and commonwealth opposition - the anti-corruption and anti-administration posture, the concern for shorter parliaments and more frequent elections, the juxtaposition of the liberty supported by an armed citizen militia and the tyranny supported by a standing army - are all here in Burgh's critical assessment of the situation in 1774 and '75. Add to this the fact that all of the criticisms are incorporated in and supported by elaborate quotations from country and commonwealth authors. It is scarcely surprising that Robbins, Bailyn, Wood, Pocock and others have identified Burgh simply with the civic humanism of the country and commonwealth opposition.

There is, however, another side to *Political disquisitions*, a constructive side, with suggestions of more system than perhaps even Burgh thought he had. Notwithstanding his historical sources, notwithstanding his critical handling of corruption and historical decline, Burgh's politics were rational. 'I was sure there was a right and wrong in government, as in other things... I was certain, there was a true and false in politics as in all other objects of human understanding.'<sup>29</sup> Moreover, Burgh saw the rational political order simply as one part of the larger rational moral order. '[V]ice prevailing would destroy not only a kingdom, or an empire, but the whole moral dominion of the Almighty throughout the infinitude of space.'<sup>30</sup>

The corruption and abuse Burgh identified in government were, in fact, a secondary problem, the effect of a fundamental defect in the constitution itself. The defect was in the system of representation the constitution incorporated, and in the very principle of sovereignty it was thought the constitution entailed. At the beginning of *Political disquisitions* Burgh wrote, 'All lawful authority, legislative and executive, originates from the

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., III, 291.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., III, 434.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., I: Sig. A<sub>3</sub>

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., II: 2-5.

people.' The people's safety, property, happiness and so much personal liberty as is consistent with the general good, are the ends of government. The power of government and governors is delegated and limited. The consent of everyone, or of the majority, through representatives when the territory or population is great, is necessary to any law which binds the people. 'And happy is that people, who have originally so principled their constitution, that they themselves can without violence to it, lay hold of its power, wield it as they please, and turn it, when necessary, against those to whom it was entrusted.'<sup>31</sup>

Burgh had two very clear targets of criticism in *Political disquisitions*. One was Judge William Blackstone, author of the *Commentaries on the laws of England*. Blackstone had said, 'There is hardly a free agent to be found, but what is entitled [sic] to vote in some place or other in the kingdom.' Furthermore, he had said that the sovereign power in the nation was wholly contained in the king, lords and commons, taken collectively, and that the sovereign power could do no wrong.<sup>32</sup> And Burgh responded that it was absurd to think that the people of Great Britain were somehow annihilated or absorbed into parliament, or that their voice could be heard only in parliament. '[W]hy may we not say, that [the people] have a sovereign, absolute, and uncontrollable right to change or new-model their government as they please?'

[S]aving the laws of prudence, and of morality, the people's mere absolute, sovereign will and pleasure is a sufficient reason for their making any alteration in their form of government. The truth is, therefore, that the learned Judge has placed the sovereignty wrong, viz. in the government, whereas it should have been in the people next, and immediately under God.<sup>33</sup>

Burgh's second target was the moderate Whigs of the Revolution, and their very understanding of the Revolution itself. There was a radical group at the time of the Convention who argued that the desertion of the King was enough to dissolve the constitution in all its parts and that the Convention was the constituent assembly of the nation, an extraordinary assembly which represented the people's fundamental authority to constitute a new government along whatever lines they saw fit. More moderate Whigs prevailed, though. The Convention decided that it was a

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., I: 2-5.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., I: 80, quoting William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the laws of England*, 4 vols. (Oxford, 1765-1769); reprint edn., Chicago, 1979), I: 166 (Burgh gives the citation as I: 172); III: 276, referring to *Commentaries*, I: 237-238 (Burgh gives the citation as I: 244).

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., III: 277-278.



parliament, and the first Parliament of William and Mary recognized the Convention's acts as ordinary law. The people's whole authority was no more than that of their representatives in parliament. Then, for another quarter century, when Revolution Principles remained unsettled, moderate Whig leaders sought to discredit and smooth over the popular and revolutionary implications of 1688. They argued the absence of any breach in the historical constitution, and carefully, if not altogether successfully, they distinguished their own acts from the embarrassingly similar acts of the triers and executioners of Charles I.<sup>34</sup> But Burgh, whose bibliography shows that he had looked over the popular tracts printed during and in the wake of the Revolution and collected in *Somers* and *State tracts*, and who did not find in Charles' death a problem, said that 'King William's convention-parliament showed an unpardonable negligence', and the 'promoters of the revolution lost the opportunity'. He said that

In planning a government by representation, the people ought to provide against their own *annihilation*. They ought to establish a regular and constitutional method of acting by and from *themselves*, without, or even in opposition to their *representatives*, if necessary. Our ancestors therefore were provident; but not provident enough. They set up parliaments, as a curb on *kings* and *ministers*; but they neglected to reserve to themselves a regular and constitutional method of exerting their power in curbing *parliaments*, when necessary.<sup>35</sup>

In contrast to Blackstone, Burgh provided an extensive evaluation of the structure and operation of the system of unequal parliamentary representation and several recommendations for its repair. He found no consistency in either the principle or practice of representation as it was currently organized. Elections were infrequent. The franchise and number of electors varied from electoral district to electoral district. However committed Englishmen in ancient times may have been to a constitution of liberty and a just representation in government, he said, 'parliamentary representation on its present foot' is 'inconsistent with liberty[.]' 'For a people governed contrary to their inclination, or by persons, to whom they have given no commission for that purpose, are, in the properest sense of the phrase, *an enslaved people*[.]'<sup>36</sup>

<sup>34</sup> For discussions of the moderate and radical Whigs during and after the Revolution see Mark Goldie, 'The Roots of True Whiggism, 1688-94', *History of Political Thought* 1, no.2 (Summer 1980), 195-236; J.P. Kenyon, *Revolution Principles* (Cambridge, 1977), especially chapters 2-5,7; Lois Schwoerer, *The Declaration of Rights, 1689* (Baltimore, 1981), especially chapter 8.

<sup>35</sup> Burgh, *PD*, I: 6.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, I: 26;25.

Burgh recognized that to some extent the problems with the representation were understandable. All constitutions change over time, he said, and in this respect the British constitution was no different. Time and events had pushed and pulled the system of representation into the irregular shape it now had. Sometimes kings had extended the privilege of representation to boroughs; sometimes boroughs had preferred to give up representation rather than take on the cost of sending members to parliament. In some boroughs the population had declined, leaving them particularly susceptible to control in the court interest, while at the same time the population of large urban areas had increased, leaving them with a wholly insufficient representation. Moreover, Britain was no longer a nation simply of landed estates. She was a commercial nation, and men held their wealth in merchandise, manufactures, and stocks. Because of the unequal representation in urban areas, in particular, the commercial, manufacturing and monied interests did not send members to parliament in their due proportion. Burgh calculated that a mere 5723 borough votes could elect 254 out of the total 558 members of parliament for England and Scotland, this in a nation with a population estimated at 5 million for England and 1.5 million for Scotland, and with males of voting age, that is 16-56, estimated at 1.25 million for England and 300,000 for Scotland. London, with a legal electorate estimated at 8,000, to say nothing of the substantially greater number of males of voting age living there, sent only 4 members to parliament.<sup>37</sup>

Burgh stated clearly that he preferred that the suffrage be based on personality. The poor, he said, who contribute to the government in the substantial indirect taxes they pay on a variety of necessary articles of consumption, have both interests and rights which they could better protect with a vote.

Every man has a life, a personal liberty, a character, a right to a religious profession and worship according to his conscience, etc. and many men, who are in a state of dependence upon others, and who receive charity, have wives and children, in whom they have a right. Thus the poor are in danger of being injured by the government in a variety of ways.<sup>38</sup>

However, because many thought it wrong to grant a vote to a man who was financially dependent on another, Burgh was willing to concede his preference, and suggested three other franchise and electoral reforms which would still make the representation more equal than it was, and the

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, I: 23-24, 36-62. Burgh drew the calculations from Browne Willis, *Notitia Parliamentaria: or, An history of the counties, cities and boroughs in England and Wales ...*, 3 vols. (London, 1715-1750).

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, I: 37.

government more responsible to the public. These were schemes to award the franchise on the basis of either householder or taxpayer status within reformed and equal electoral districts, and a third - of the imperfect schemes, the one Burgh said he preferred - to leave the question of the franchise undecided, but to eliminate the separate members for cities, boroughs, Cinque Ports, and universities, and to apportion the 513 members for England and Wales among the counties in proportion to the counties' contributions to the public expense.<sup>39</sup>

In the face of the moderate Whigs' and Blackstone's theory that sovereign authority rested in the king, lords and commons, collectively taken, and Blackstone's claim that the sovereign could do no wrong, Burgh offered the association. The association represents the permanent and unsundered sovereignty of the people out-of-doors, and is a specific mechanism for the people's exercising their sovereign authority to curb their representatives in parliament.

At first, Burgh would seem to have presented association as a device familiar to the British from their own history. The British did understand association. It was the special union men constituted for some extraordinary purpose by pledging themselves to each other and to the mutual accomplishment of their sworn end. The idea for the first English association came from Sir Williams Cecil, Principal Secretary to Elizabeth I, in 1569. Cecil suggested that, in order to organize support for the Queen in the face of threats on her life and of constitutional and religious instability, the English adopt the example of an earlier French association initiated by the Prince of Condé in support of Charles IX and religious liberty. In 1584, following the discovery of several plots against the Queen, and in the midst of increasing concern for the Protestant succession in the event of her death, the English government adopted a Bond of Association as official policy. The adoption took a dual form; the association of 1584 was first a sworn union for private revenge against anyone who threatened or took the life of Queen Elizabeth, then confirmed by Act of

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., I: 38-39.

Parliament.<sup>40</sup>

After 1584 Englishmen turned to association in times of constitutional crisis, when there was a threat to the regime in power, for instance, or a partial or complete disintegration of constitutional authority. John Pym urged the formation of associations to defend the Protestant religion in 1621 and 1642. Parliament recommended at the outset of the Civil Wars that counties join in association for their mutual defence. During the Exclusion Crisis, the Commons debated a bill to constitute an association of Protestant subjects to defend the King and the Protestant religion, and to prevent the Duke of York from succeeding to the crown. Bishop Burnet drew up an association in 1688 to bind men in their engagement to Prince William. Parliament created a national association to stand by the King in 1696, in the face of a threatened Jacobite invasion. The Americans associated in 1774 and the London Association organized in support of the American cause in 1775. The London Association stressed the traditional character of what it was doing: '[M]any sincere Friends of Liberty, conformable to ancient usage, have associated, in support and maintenance of the principles confirmed' at the Glorious Revolution and

<sup>40</sup> The French version of Condé's Association is printed in D.F. Secousse, *Mémoires de Condé, servant d'éclaircissement et de preuves à l'histoire de m. de Thou, contiennent ce que s'est passé de plus mémorable en Europe*, 6 vols. (Londres: et se vend à Paris, chez Rollin, Fils, 1743-1745), III: 258-262; the English version of Condé's Association is *The Treaty of Thassociation [sic] made by the Prince of Condee, together wyth the Princes, Knyghtes of thorder [sic], Lordes, Capitaines, Gentlemen, & others of al estates which be entred, or hereafter shall entre into the said Association, for to mainteine the honour of god, the quiet of the Realme of Fraunce, and the state and lybertie of the Kyng under the gouernance of the Quene his Mother who is authorized thereunto and establyshed by the Estates* (London: Printed by Henry Sutton for Edward Sutton, 1562). For the reception of Condé's Association in England see Conyers Read, *Mr. Secretary Cecil and Queen Elizabeth* (New York, 1953), 239-260; Great Britain, Public Record Office, *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign Series, of the reign of Elizabeth*, 1561-1562, ed. Joseph Stevenson (London, 1866), nos.1013,1043. For Cecil's 1569 suggestion see Read, *Mr. Secretary Cecil*, 452-453. For the adoption of the Association of 1584 see Conyers Read, *Lord Burghley and Queen Elizabeth* (New York, 1961), 293,299-305. The private Bond of Association is printed in T.B. Howell, comp., *A complete collection of state trials and proceedings for high treason and other crimes and misdemeanors from the earliest period to the year 1783, with notes and other illustrations*, 21 vols. (London, 1816), I: 1162-1164; the statutory form of the Association; *An Act for provision to be made for the surety of the Queen's Majesty's most Royal Person, and the continuance of the Realm in peace*, 27 Eliz. I, c. 1, *The Statutes of the Realm*, eds. A. Luders, Sir T. Edlyn Tomlins, J. France, W.E. Taunton and J. Raithby, 9 vols. (London, 1810-1822), IV, pt.1: 704-705.



again at the accession of the House of Brunswick.<sup>41</sup>

In 1775 it may have been possible to argue in favour of association not only on traditional grounds but also on the grounds that the line of associations represented so many precedents in the progressive constitutionalization of the device. But Burgh would have had the people go still further than the precedents allowed. For no association for the support of the constitution or the regime, however much it drew on the support of all the ranks, and whether sanctioned by an act of parliament or not, had ever been initiated outside the ranks of the traditional leaders of the nation. Burgh thought the King might lead an association; he did not require it. He did identify his association with earlier English associations, but he also, at great length, identified it with slave revolts, confederacies, 'Catholic leagues, protestant leagues, the *Hanseatic* association, the solemn league and covenant', and with rebellions against tyranny and oppression, ancient and modern.<sup>42</sup> For Burgh, association was an expression of the same popular and spiritual strength those movements displayed, and of the popular and sovereign authority he said was the rational basis of legitimate government.

The constructive aspect of Burgh's radicalism extends beyond his statement that he was a rationalist in politics, and beyond the fact that he understood association in rationalist terms, to include a more complete explanation of the operation of the free sovereign in the rational world. To appreciate this constructive radicalism fully, it is necessary, in some coherent and systematic way, to bring Burgh's statement of his political rationalism, that there is a true and a false in politics as in all other matters of the human understanding, together with his statement about the moral dominion of the Almighty throughout the infinitude of space, and with the

<sup>41</sup> S. Reed Brett, *John Pym, 1583-1643: The Statesman of the Puritan Revolution* (London, 1940), 42,228, passim. *Journal of the House of Lords*, V: 331, quoted in Clive Holmes, *The Eastern Association in the English Civil War* (Cambridge, 1974), 62. *The history and proceedings of the House of Commons from the restoration to the present time* [also called *Commons Debates*], 14 vols. (London: Printed for Richard Chandler, 1742). II: 13-30. Gilbert Burnet, *The history of my own time*, 2nd edn., enl., with notes by the Earls of Dartmouth and Hardwicke, Speaker Onslow, and Dean Swift, 6 vols. (Oxford, 1833), III: 336-337. Great Britain, *An Act for the better security of his Majesty's royal person and government*, 7, 8 Will. III, c.XXVII, *Statutes at large*, IX: 442-448. The American Association is printed in *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1783*, 34 vols. (Washington D.C., 1904-1937), I: 75ff. Circular Letter of the London Association, printed with Lord-Viscount Robert Molesworth, *The principles of a Real Whig, contained in a Preface to the Famous Hotoman's Franco-Gallia, written by the late Lord-Viscount Robert Molesworth; and now reprinted at the request of the London Association* (London, 1775), 22; Langford, 'London and Revolution'; Sainsbury, 'Pro-Americans'.

<sup>42</sup> Burgh, *PD*, III: 431.

quotation about duty from Hierocles which opens the second and third volumes of *Political disquisitions*. For Burgh saw association as a way for men to perform their rational moral duties and maintain not only the constitution of Great Britain but also the moral dominion of God. The way to accomplish this is to take up *The dignity of human nature*, which contains Burgh's more extended discussion of moral duty and the universal rational order.

### III

While *The dignity of human nature* contains Burgh's more extended discussion of the rational moral universe and of the nature and place of moral duty within the universe, it does not contain a discussion wholly coherent in and of itself. What *The dignity of human nature* provides is enough material to initiate and focus an examination of the background sources which alone disclose Burgh's meaning.

Burgh wrote in *The dignity of human nature* that man is a rational being who exists in two different states, an embodied, or earthly state, and a spiritual. The body perishes, but the spirit is immortal. In the embodied state man has a will and is capable of action, by which he may make himself and his fellows happy. He is, by nature, fitted for social virtue. There is a dignity appropriate to his embodied human nature, which prudence and knowledge can enhance, as they bring 'improvement and embellishment of life'. Still, Burgh wrote, 'there is nothing truly worthy of our attention, which does not some way stand connected with futurity'. The spiritual state is a 'more extensive future society' in which beings will be perfected by virtue and universal benevolence; 'every individual will be connected with the whole, and the whole with every individual. So that there will be no detached or separate beings.' Although there is a dignity appropriate to the embodied state, and although improvement and happiness are possible in this state, the improvement is a qualified or limited improvement, and the embodied life is really a life of discipline and a 'school of affliction' in which man practices, learns to consider himself part of a whole, and begins to enlarge his mind to an extensive benevolence. His various 'connections' and 'relations' with his fellows in this life of discipline provide him occasion for the exercise of his 'different duties resulting from them' and for 'watchfulness, and diligence, and a due exertion of every noble power of the mind.'<sup>43</sup>

The Creator of the world is a Supreme Being who is 'independent, necessarily existent, unchangeable, eternal, immense', a 'universal mind', the 'foundation, or substratum of infinite space, duration, power, wisdom, goodness, justice, and every other possible perfection'. Infinite mind is without 'parts, bounds, limits, or defects'. It is the uncaused

<sup>43</sup> Burgh, *DHN*, I: 2-3; II: 2,273,95,211-212,37.



cause, the preserver of all things; it exists 'from all moments of eternity to all moments of eternity', and is 'at once and for ever fully master' of every point of immensity and every moment of eternity. This Being pervades all matter, but is unaffected by all matter.<sup>44</sup> His mind holds

a treasure of an infinity of truths, that he has ever had at all moments from all eternity, and ever will to all eternity have in his view, and in actual contemplation, all things that ever have existed, that do now, or ever shall exist, throughout infinite space and duration, with all their connexions, relations, dependencies, gradations, proportions, differences, contrasts, causes, effects, and all circumstances of all kinds, with the ideas of all those things which are merely possible, or whose existence does not imply a contradiction, though they have never actually existed, with all their possible relations, connexions, and circumstances, whose idea is conceivable. In one word, the Divine mind must comprehend all things that by their nature are capable of being known, or conceived.<sup>45</sup>

This brief summary will have to suffice as an introduction to a complicated reconstruction of Burgh's cosmology, epistemology of morals, and theory of moral action. Though the summary suggests interesting problems regarding futurity and the attributes of God, this is not the place to address them. The key notions to keep in mind during the course of the reconstruction are: that man has a will, is capable of action and is fitted by nature for social virtue; that man has various connections and relations with his fellows from which duties follow; and that the Divine mind is a treasure of, among other things, all things that ever have existed, together with their connections and relations, and of ideas of things that are possible, with their possible connections and relations. Burgh drew his system, which it is possible to reconstruct in a way which discloses the meaning of these notions, from the middle Stoic ethical theory of Cicero, the Platonist cosmological and epistemological theory of Ralph Cudworth, and the hybrid Platonist-Stoic ethical theory of Samuel Clarke. It is a system in which the acts the middle Stoics considered appropriate for men of imperfect wisdom, whose obligation was to protect and support their country, are transformed into perfect and rational moral duties by their being derived from and located in a rational and Platonist cosmos whose internal relations consist, in part, in social and moral relations which, in the free performance of their duties, men maintain.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., II: 34-35.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., II: 28-29.

Burgh devoted a large portion of *The dignity of human nature* to a detailed list and examination of the duties men owe to God, others and self. Of course, the formula of duties to God and others is the same one Hierocles used in his admonition to duty. In his discussion of the duties men owe to others, Burgh said there is a general benevolence everyone owes to others who share in the same human nature, for the sake of the very existence of society. And, 'besides the general benevolence we owe to all our fellow creatures, ... we owe particular duties to particular persons, according to the relations and connexions we have with them. This propriety is founded in the nature of things and is self-evident.'<sup>46</sup>

Burgh did discuss the particular and reciprocal duties of parents and children, husbands and wives, masters and servants, teachers and students. However, he continued after his mention of benevolence to say that the most important of the particular social duties is patriotism, or the duty to country. 'The virtue of patriotism is most dispensible in persons in high stations, whose rank gives them an opportunity of being of important service to the public interest.' Nevertheless, the virtue of patriotism is appropriate to everyone, and 'every person has it in his power to serve his country less or more'.<sup>47</sup> Burgh set the rightful performance of duty to country against the present moral and political corruption of Britain.

Is it not notorious, that the virtue of public spirit is become little else than a subject of ridicule? That venality has poisoned all ranks, from the bribed voter in a country-borough, upwards to the candidate for a place in the great assembly of the nation? The enormous expenses bestowed, and horrible perjury committed, in carrying elections; with the numerous controverted elections which are from time to time the subject of examination before the house; and the variety of regulations found necessary to be made for restraining bribery and corruption (though the most essential regulation, I mean, of voting in all cases by ballot, which the wise states of antiquity found necessary, has not been tried) all this shews too flagrantly, to what a fatal extent this ruinous and destructive mischief reaches. Nor is there any hope of an effectual cure for the evil, while such a pernicious maxim in politics as the following is held, I had almost said established; that it is lawful to bribe for the good of the nation (as they very improperly speak) in order to be on even terms with the enemies

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., II: 194.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., II: 195,198.

of the nation. The Jacobite, or Tory party (say our politicians) will get themselves elected into parliament by bribery: Why must not the gentlemen of revolution-principles endeavour to defeat them by the same means?<sup>48</sup>

Burgh did not indicate this, but the source of his material on duty, and Hierocles' source as well, is the *De Officiis* of Cicero. Cicero modelled *De Officiis* after an earlier treatise on duty by the middle Stoic Panaetius. Before Panaetius, Stoics had sought to explain the perfect moral acts of a wise man, and to understand them in terms of man's intellectual nature, the wise man's mental state, and the relation of both to an overall cosmic nature or reason. Panaetius and Cicero, concerned for the moral predicament of men of imperfect wisdom, focussed instead on acts undertaken by such ordinary men, the so-called second best or intermediate acts appropriate to man understood in his social rather than cosmic nature, acts considered and approved for their social result. The term *officia*, from the Greek *kathekonta*, is best translated as 'appropriate acts'; by the eighteenth century it had come to be rendered as 'duties'.<sup>49</sup>

Cicero wrote that there is a comprehensive bond, founded in effect, reason and speech, which unites men together in a universal, common humanity. Within the common bond are 'many degrees of closeness or remoteness in human society'. There are, for example, relations of tribe, between husband and wife, and between parents and children.<sup>50</sup> For the ordinary man, for the man of imperfect wisdom, the highest wisdom is that which involves 'knowledge of things human and divine, which is concerned also with the bonds of union between gods and men and the relations of man to man'.<sup>51</sup> And those duties are highest which proceed from the social instinct and are connected with social obligation. There are gradations of duty, Cicero said, 'so well defined that it can easily be seen which duty takes precedence of any other: our first duty is to the immortal gods; our second, to country; our third, to parents; and so on, in

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., II: 199-200.

<sup>49</sup> For Stoic ethics in general, and the middle Stoic ethical doctrines of Panaetius and Cicero, see G.B. Kerferd, 'Cicero and Stoic Ethics', in *Cicero and Virgil*, ed. John R.C. Martyn (Amsterdam, 1972), 60-74; I.G. Kidd, 'Stoic Intermediates and the End for Man', in *Problems in Stoicism*, ed. A.A. Long (London, 1972), 150-172; I.G. Kidd, 'Moral Actions and Rules in Stoic Ethics', in *The Stoics*, ed. John M. Rist, *Stoic philosophy* (Cambridge, 1969), especially chapter 10; R.G. Tanner, 'Cicero on Conscience and Morality', in *Cicero and Virgil*, 87-112.

<sup>50</sup> Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De Officiis*, trans. Walter Miller (Cambridge, Mass., 1913), I. xvi-xviii. 50-59; the quotation is I. xvii. 53.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., I. xliii. 153.

a descending scale, to the rest.' <sup>52</sup>

In *The dignity of human nature*, when Burgh set everyone's rightful performance of duty to country against the moral and political corruption of Britain, he presented, at the least, the middle Stoic theory of acts appropriate to ordinary men of imperfect wisdom, men understood in their social nature, and acts considered and approved for their social result. In *Political disquisitions*, when he set the passage on duty from Hierocles against the same moral and political corruption of Britain, he also presented, at the least, the middle Stoic theory. And when he began *Political disquisitions* - which has as its principal charge to men that they associate - with the admonition to duty from Hierocles, he recommended association, at the least, as a way in which ordinary men could fulfil the duty to country.

In fact, Burgh went beyond the middle Stoic theory of acts appropriate to men of imperfect wisdom and appropriate for their effect in maintaining the social order. Rather, he said in *Political disquisitions*, '[V]ice prevailing would destroy not only a kingdom, or an empire, but the whole moral dominion of the Almighty throughout the infinitude of space.' And he transformed the middle Stoic theory of acts appropriate to men of imperfect wisdom understood in their social nature into a theory of rational and perfect moral duties grounded in reason. He did this by joining the middle Stoic theory of appropriate acts to the Platonist cosmological and epistemological theory he took from Ralph Cudworth and to the hybrid Platonist-Stoic ethical theory he took from Samuel Clarke. Once again, Burgh did not say what his sources were. But in this case he did provide a hint in the texts he recommended in the course of study portion of *The dignity of human nature*. He recommended Ralph Cudworth's *Eternal and immutable morality* as an excellent moral treatise, and he said that '[h]e who has digested Dr. Clark's [sic] noble work will hardly have recourse to Cicero, Of the nature of the Gods, for just ideas of the Supreme Being, and a rational scheme of religion.'<sup>53</sup> To understand the structure of Burgh's rational moral universe, the fact that, for him, the connections and relations of men were not simply social connections and relations, rooted in human affect, but also real and immediate objects of the understanding, inherent in the very rational nature of things, and how, following Clarke, Burgh added the performance of duty to this rational, relational, moral system, turning appropriate acts to rational and perfect moral duties, it is necessary to go back to Cudworth and Clarke.

The Cambridge Platonist Ralph Cudworth published *The true intellectual system of the universe* in 1678; the *Treatise concerning eternal and immutable morality*, to which Burgh referred, appeared posthumously, in

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., I. xlv. 160.

<sup>53</sup> Burgh, *DHN*, I: 258,278.



1731. In both, Cudworth wanted to refute the philosophers and scientists, Hobbes, for example, who argued that an atomical or mechanical necessity pervades mind and matter, and theologians, especially Calvinist theologians, who argued that right and wrong are dictates of God's positive command. He sought instead, in a fashion and for reasons he considered to have been Plato's own, to show that there is an active aspect to mind, and that moral right and wrong are founded in the very nature of things.

Cudworth argued that there are three distinct operations which bring the mind to knowledge. The body receives information passively, through sense impressions from the external world. Then the mind, or soul, which is joined to the body in a vital union, actively recognizes that something has happened in the body's bare reaction.<sup>54</sup> From these two operations the mind gains information about individual material things which can be experienced in their particularity, but it gains no knowledge. An active part of the mind, or soul, which is not related to passion or sense impression, and which in its operation is independent of external objects, understands things not in their particularity but in their universality, by means of intelligible forms, that is, 'Ideas vitally protruded or actively exerted from within [the soul] it self.' In this manner the mind forms ideas of the relations between and among things; it composes wholes out of parts, or comprehends parts in their conjoined wholeness. For Cudworth, moral truth, justice and a commonwealth were wholes, or matters of relation which the mind actively composes and comprehends.<sup>55</sup> To the truth inherent in these relations, the mind freely assents, as it does to the truth in an axiom of geometry. Moreover, Cudworth argued, the mind of God is the archetype of the relational system called the cosmos, by which the mundane world, including all of its relations, even its moral relations, is a representation. And 'the modes of all Subsistent Beings, and the relations of things to one another, are immutable and necessarily what they are, and not Arbitrary, being not by will but by Nature.'<sup>56</sup>

Cudworth's picture of the mundane world as a system of relations, including moral relations, the whole a representation of the mind of God, grounded in the very nature of things, and known and assented to freely by an active mind of man, provides only a part of what is necessary to an understanding of Burgh's rational moral universe and theory of rational moral duties. Clarke's hybrid ethical theory provides the rest. To the moral relations Cudworth considered, in what he thought were Platonist terms, to be inherent in the nature of things, and real objects of the understanding, Clarke joined the human social relations in their variety

<sup>54</sup> Ralph Cudworth, *A Treatise concerning eternal and immutable morality* (London, 1731), III. 1. 2-4.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, IV. 1. 1; IV. 2. 1; IV. 2. 8-10.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, I. 2. 2.

from which Cicero derived appropriate moral acts. In doing this Clarke turned the acts appropriate to men of imperfect wisdom into the perfect duties of rational men to act in conformity with universal reason.

Samuel Clarke delivered the Boyle Lectures in 1704 and 1705; they were published as *A demonstration of the being and attributes of God and A discourse concerning the unchangeable obligations of natural religion*. Like Cudworth, Clarke wanted to show that the individual will is free - his opponents here were Hobbes and Spinoza - and to found moral obligation in the very nature of things, not in the positive will of God. Like Cudworth, he took morality to be a matter of natural relations, akin to geometrical relations, known in the same way, and requiring the assent of all rational beings, God and men, to their necessary truth. God, Clarke said, is self-existent, intelligent, and free, yet always confirms His divine will to the 'eternal and unalterable *Relations, Respects, or Proportions* of things, with their consequent *Agreements or Disagreements, Fitnesses or Unfitnesses* which absolutely and necessarily Are in themselves[.]'<sup>57</sup> He easily satisfied himself that God both could endow and did endow man, His creation, with freedom. Satisfied that man does have freedom, Clarke was not interested in a detailed discussion of the human mind, or in the question of whether freedom is to be understood as related to an active part of mind. He took it for granted that there is more to mind than sense, and, while rejecting the possibility of mind's having innate ideas of natural and moral truth, quickly arrived at the conclusion that

the differences, relations, and proportions of things both natural and moral, in which all unprejudiced Minds thus naturally agree, are certain, unalterable, and real in the things themselves[.]<sup>58</sup>

From the fact of natural and moral relations which inhere absolutely and necessarily in the very nature of things, which are real objects of the understanding, and to which free and rational God and men naturally assent, Clarke moved to explain what precisely the moral relations are. He spoke in Stoic and Ciceronian terms about the natural and universal human society, rooted in affect, the 'Foundation, and Preservation, and Perfection of which universal Friendship or Society, is *mutual love and benevolence*.'<sup>59</sup> He said that a 'Rule of Right or Equity' obliges everyone who shares in the human bond to observe the correct proportion or

<sup>57</sup> Samuel Clarke, *A demonstration of the being and attributes of God and A discourse concerning the unchangeable obligations of natural religion, and the truth and certainty of the Christian revelation in A discourse concerning the being and attributes of God, the obligations of natural religion, and the truth and certainty of the Christian revelation*, 10th edn. (London, 1749), *Obligations*, 185-186.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 193.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 207-208.

relation to children, parents, masters, servants, magistrates, citizens, and foreigners; that is, to practice duties 'among all Mankind, in their several and respective Relations, through the whole Earth[.]'<sup>60</sup> And he set the rightful performance of duty against the corruption which results from 'perverse and unaccountably false opinions' and 'monstrous evil customs and habits.'<sup>61</sup>

[T]he universal confusion of right and wrong, and the general neglect of all the Duties arising from mens several Relations one to another; is the greatest and most unnatural corruption of God's Creation, that 'tis possible for depraved and rebellious Creatures to introduce[.]<sup>62</sup>

Clarke took the relations Cicero said comprise the various aspects of the natural social bond, and from which Cicero derived appropriate moral acts, to be identical to the moral relations Cudworth said are inherent in the nature of things. He transformed the middle Stoic ethical theory of acts appropriate to men of imperfect wisdom, men understood in their social nature, and acts considered and approved for their social result, into a hybrid Platonist-Stoic theory of rational and perfect moral duties of men who in their rational nature, assent naturally to the truth inherent in itself and in the universal order, and who, in the rightful performance of their duties, maintain that order.

Burgh relied on Cudworth as much as on Clarke, and he was not so ambitious or clear as either. What they accomplished, especially Clarke, he continued. In *The dignity of human nature*, a practical handbook, after all, Burgh supplied detail, as Cicero had, to identify the variety of social relations and the moral duties deriving from them. But, following both Cudworth and Clarke, he located his theory of moral duty within an elaborate rationalist cosmology and epistemology. And he meant, precisely as Clarke meant, that when men fulfil their duties they maintain the true relations of society and cosmos.

#### IV

There is a critical and a constructive side to the radicalism of James Burgh. In the civic language long employed by the country and commonwealth opposition, he catalogued the corruption of parliaments and ministries, the neglect by parliaments of the popular will, and the threats posed to liberty by a standing army. He criticized, too, the organ-

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 204.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 202.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 204-205.

ization and operation of the system of parliamentary representation and the theory of sovereignty which placed reform beyond the self-organized and self-directed control of the people out-of-doors. Against the moral and political corruption of Britain, and against the theory that the people's will is wholly contained in that of their representatives in parliament, Burgh set association. Association is a mechanism for the people's constructive exercise of their will and power against the corruption of politics and their representatives in parliament. It is an expression of the unlimited, unsundered, and popular sovereign authority Burgh said is the rational basis of legitimate government. And it is a way in which men actively fulfil the rational and perfect moral duty to country which Burgh, following Clarke, and joining the middle Stoic and Ciceronian ethical theory of appropriate acts to Ralph Cudworth's Platonist cosmological and epistemological theory, said was necessary to maintain the rational and moral order of God.

Columbia University



Martin Fitzpatrick

Joseph Priestley's *A farewell sermon 1794*<sup>1</sup> forms part of an ambitious series of facsimile reprints of texts representative of the age of revolutions and romanticism. Each text is provided with a brief introduction, by Jonathan Wordsworth, the general editor of the series, explaining its contemporary significance. This particular volume does not contain Priestley's parting sermon, which was preached on 30 March 1794, but his Fast sermon. *The present state of Europe compared with antient prophecies; a sermon preached at the Grave Pit Meeting in Hackney 28 February, 1794*. However, it includes a preface in which Priestley explained his reasons for leaving England; this constitutes a defence of his conduct and a farewell. Besides the Fast sermon, the volume includes Priestley's *Letters to the members of the New Jerusalem Church* (1791). This is a more substantial work than the sermon, and like so many of his publications, demonstrates Priestley's immense energy, industry and intellectual curiosity together with a commitment to essentially simple religious tenets. Its production was rudely interrupted by the Birmingham Riots, in which all his books relating to the writings of Swedenborg were either destroyed or rendered useless. Priestley was due to read the manuscript of the letters to the Swedenborgian minister in Birmingham on 15 July 1791.<sup>2</sup> The riots precluded this candid occasion. Fortunately, Priestley had taken a copy of the first draft of his manuscript using the copying machine of Bolton and Watt<sup>3</sup> and he was able to reconstruct the *Letters* from that.

Priestley's discussion of Swedenborgianism provides an insight into the mental world which both he and Baron inhabited. Priestley made a genuine attempt to understand Swedenborg's ideas, and although he confessed there were certain things about them which puzzled him he provided a clear exposition of the essentials: the belief that the spiritual sense of the scriptures was specially revealed to Baron Swedenborg; that God became Christ at the incarnation; that the last judgement occurred in 1757; that the spiritual kingdom of Christ began on 19 June 1770; that

<sup>1</sup> Joseph Priestley, *A farewell sermon 1794*, Woodstock Books, Oxford, 1989, £21.00.

<sup>2</sup> The Swedenborgian New Jerusalem Church in Birmingham was one of the first Swedenborgian Churches to be established in England. This is unsurprising given the complex and lively nature of popular religion in Birmingham at this time. See John Money, 'Joseph Priestley in cultural context: philosophic spectacle, popular belief and popular politics in eighteenth-century Birmingham,' *Enlightenment and Dissent*, no.7 (1988), 'Part One', 68-72; *ibid.*, no.8 (1989), 'Part Two', 76-89.

<sup>3</sup> Described by Professor Robert Schofield as 'a method of copying letters and other writings, using gelatinous ink and then placing, on top of the original, damp, unsized paper on which even pressure was applied until the ink came through'. See his, *The Lunar Society of Birmingham. A social history of provincial science and industry in eighteenth-century England* (Oxford, 1963), 154-155.

angels reside in the affections of men and women and that temptation is a struggle between one's good and bad angels; that men and women in heaven have spiritual bodies and that the marriage of spiritual souls was possible, and indeed that the best features of earthly existence were replicated in heaven. All these things Priestley took seriously, and he proceeded to make a number of objections to them. Swedenborg's insistence that heaven was open only to those who believed in the sole divinity of Christ offended against Priestley's belief that 'if the temper of the mind be right, no error of judgement will exclude any man from heaven'.<sup>4</sup> The metaphysician in Priestley found it impossible to come to terms with Swedenborg's notion that no distinction is to be made between *substance* and *property*. Swedenborg literally believed that 'God is love' whereas for Priestley that statement can only be understood figuratively.<sup>5</sup> However, the main thrust of Priestley's attack is in a rather different direction. He stressed the crucial importance of a literal understanding of revelation. He saw only difficulties in Swedenborg's spiritual interpretation of the Bible which he saw as a barrier to the development of a general agreement on the meaning of revelation. Noting that even the literal meaning was a source of disagreement, Priestley insisted on the importance of seeking the literal meaning in 'the plain and usual acceptance of words...'<sup>6</sup> and that any spiritual sense must be consistent with a literal sense.<sup>7</sup> In this way he was able to show the deficiencies of Swedenborg's use of scripture, by, for example, showing how Christ taught that marriage was an earthly institution. Typically, Priestley believed that reason and revelation were in harmony on this issue for marriage was intended for procreation.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, we can see how in his criticism of Swedenborg, Priestley was stating the essentials of liberal Protestantism, with its characteristic conjunction of scriptural sufficiency, doctrinal economy and metaphysical simplicity: 'when ordinary means are sufficient, it is not in the usual plan of providence to have recourse to extraordinary ones'.<sup>9</sup> We can also see the limitations of such religious views which at times appear exceptionally earthbound. Thus, Priestley objects to the Swedenborgians' symbolic interpretation of Christ's forty days on earth after the resurrection. His view was that forty days were necessary in order for Christ to make a sufficient number of appearances to his disciples 'in order to give them the most compleat satisfaction

<sup>4</sup> *Letters to the Members of the New Jerusalem Church*, 3-4, 64. Swedenborg's intolerance was no doubt highlighted for Priestley by the fact that he specifically stated that Socinians and Arians were bound for hell.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 44-45.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 57. It should be noted that Swedenborg believed that the literal meaning was the basis of the spiritual and celestial meaning of revelation; *ibid.* 18.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

concerning the resurrection of their master'.<sup>10</sup> Yet his fundamental objection to Swedenborg lay not in the imaginative nature of his religiosity, rather it lay in the fact that the constructs of his imagination lacked the confirmation of independent testimony, or the verification of miracle. Without that confirmation or verification, Swedenborg's ideas were the stuff of dreams and not divine revelation: '*seeing an angel in a dream, is nothing more than dreaming he saw an angel*', unless, of course, others also saw the same angel.<sup>11</sup> Priestley believed that all the components of Swedenborg's visions were intelligible as dreamlike rearrangements of existing knowledge. They lacked the authenticity of originality.<sup>12</sup> If only the Swedenborgians could be persuaded out of their dreamland, they would realize that really they were Unitarians like Priestley, with whom they already had many things in common, including a belief in the corruptions of Christianity!

Although Priestley had spent some time demonstrating the limitations of Swedenborg's apocalyptic views, and had shown some puzzlement at his account of the timing of the last judgement, he was certainly not opposed to the belief that they were living in extraordinary times. His Fast sermon showed that his own sad history in the early 1790s had not diminished his belief in God's providence and the significance of revelation in portending His future dispensations. Indeed, it is tempting to suggest that his own sufferings and the turbulent times unbalanced Priestley's mind. Certainly his own circumstances did lead him to brood on the significance of revelation. Had he left for America voluntarily in more peaceful times, his Fast sermon would have had a very different character. However, Priestley in a sense anticipated the criticism of those who might think that he had become unhinged by noting towards the end of the sermon that he had said similar things much earlier in his career, notably in his *History of the Corruptions of Christianity*.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, since the sermon was preached on the day appointed for a General Fast his attention naturally focused on current events. The sermon provides an excellent exposition of his view of the apocalyptic texts. From his review of them, it follows inexorably, that if they are to be believed, then at some time in the future, something terrible was going to happen to the corrupt earthly powers which would be swept away with the inauguration of the millennium by the Second Coming of Christ. At that point, all Christ's Kingdom would become of this world. It would be, unlike all previous kingdoms, a 'kingdom of truth and righteousness'.<sup>14</sup> Priestley exercised

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 54-55.

<sup>13</sup> *The present state of Europe compared with antient prophecies; a sermon preached at the Gravel Pit Meeting in Hackney 28 February, 1794*, 27.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 3-5. It would, nonetheless, be a kingdom 'adapted to answer the purpose of them [existing kingdoms], but in a much better manner'.

a modicum of caution in forecasting when it would occur. He did not indulge in lengthy mathematical calculations to name the year, as Newton and Whiston had done. According to him, even Christ did not know when the millennium was to come; it was 'enough for us to know the certainty of these great events'.<sup>15</sup> The message of the sermon was 'be prepared'. Priestley moreover did not try to identify specific events as signifying the oncoming destruction of earthly kingdoms. He did not think that the events in France actually indicated that the Second Coming was already taking place. What he did say was that he thought that the Revelation xi. 3 which foretold the downfall of the tenth part of the city applied to France and presaged the complete downfall of the city at the Second Coming.<sup>16</sup> This was hardly original, for David Hartley had said the same in his *Observations on Man* in 1749, the relevant parts of which Priestley added as an appendix to his sermon.<sup>17</sup> Priestley does not exult in the recent events, rather he reminds his audience that 'All those who appear on the theatre of public affairs, in the field, or in the cabinet, both those whom we praise, and those whom we blame, are equally instruments in his hands, and execute all his pleasure'.<sup>18</sup> This, however, hardly endeared him to the powers that be, for he made it clear that he thought that their days were numbered. It was undoubtedly Priestley's consistent attack on the alliance of Church and State combined with his apocalyptic diagnosis of it as the mother of all corruption which made him an object of patrician and popular obloquy. In his moving review of his conduct which prefaced the sermon, although he was less than candid in describing his political activities, he was right to suggest that it was his 'open hostility to the doctrines of the established church, and more especially to civil establishments of religion whatever' which was his 'real crime'. He had always been rather naive to think that such attitudes had no political implications, and this naivety is seen in the preface in his narrow view of the political. Although it is debatable that he was an enemy to the constitution in the narrow sense that he was an antimonarchical republican,<sup>19</sup> it is certainly true that he was an enemy to the constitution in its broader sense as a constitution in *church* and state. Whereas his publications and activities which were political in the strictly secular sense of the term formed a relatively minor part of his writing and activity, there is hardly a work of his which does not at some point argue that the triumph of truth (in all its forms) would bring down the corrupt establishments in church and state. Priestley's failure to see that almost all

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 26-27.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 42-44.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>19</sup> That case has been made most plausibly by Jenny Graham in the two previous numbers of this journal.



of his works contained political statements shows his weakness as a politician and political philosopher. He can, therefore, hardly be blamed for belatedly learning a little caution in one of his last acts on English soil and omitting from the roll-call of his political works his anonymous *Political Dialogue*. Had he chosen to acknowledge it at the moment of his departure, he would have made the situation more dangerous for the Dissenters in England by fortifying the prejudices of the critics of Dissent who treated them all as republicans. Fear of such prejudices was clear enough even before the Birmingham Riots,<sup>20</sup> and had been much exacerbated since. Priestley knew that constitutionally he was apt to be too hasty, and he often asked his friends to vet his publications. His Fast sermon was one such. Published at a highly sensitive time, it was important that there would be no rumour-mongering as to what he had said in his sermon. However, his friends could not control his tongue. William Smith's eldest daughter recalled how her father on taking his leave of Priestley, said, 'We shall soon see you here again', to which Priestley replied, 'Or I you in America'. Patty's mother immediately enjoined her, 'now mind you never repeat that', and she never did.<sup>21</sup> These were dangerous times, and William Smith within a few months would find himself closely questioned by the Privy Council over the treasonable activities of Rev. William Jackson. Benjamin Vaughan, who was questioned with him, emigrated to America shortly afterwards. In these tense and difficult circumstances many besides Priestley turned their minds to the possibility of a transformation of the world through providential intervention. As Jonathan Wordsworth remarks, 'it is now difficult to enter into such thinking'. But we must make the effort. Although there were many who were ignorant, indifferent or simply sceptical of forecasts of the future based on revelation, such beliefs were deeply rooted in the culture of eighteenth-century England. They had both popular and intellectual appeal. Every time Handel's Messiah was performed, the audience was reminded of what would happen 'at the last trump'. It was an exciting prospect and despite the tribulations it might lead to, it was one which fascinated many, especially when the times seemed to fit. One of the most popular and long lived works of the century was Thomas Sherlock's, *A letter from the Lord Bishop of London to the clergy and people of London and Westminster on occasion of the late earthquakes* (1750). This was being republished by the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge as late as 1807. Although such providentialism was not to the taste of Enlightenment thinking, the

<sup>20</sup> See 'To the people of England. An address of the committee from the Protestant Dissenters appointed to conduct the application to parliament for the repeal of the Test Laws', May 1790, in T.W. Davis ed., 'Committees for the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts', *London Record Society Publications*, XIV (1978), pp.59-60.

<sup>21</sup> Cambridge University Library, Papers of Willima Smith, MS. 7621, Box 2, 'Notes dictated in an old age by Patty Smith, eldest daughter of William Smith. Copied from a big notebook of hers', ff. 27-28, 46-47. Priestley left a 'disagreeable impression' on Patty as 'offhand assuming'.

Enlightenment did not succeed in resolving the dilemmas involved in the attempt to find an enlightened understanding of revelation. Generally speaking, it failed to provide an interpretation of the Bible which was both historically plausible and rational. Priestley had proceeded some way down the road towards a solution of such problems by offering historically informed interpretations of the Bible; in so doing he was prepared to offer figurative and metaphorical explanations of texts. However, he used such skills in destroying received doctrine rather than as a way of creating a new understanding of revelation.<sup>22</sup> At the heart of his enterprise was the isolation of a core of agreed literal truth. Herein he believed he would find a harmony between reason and revelation. This method was more successful with the New Testament than with the Old, and it could hardly cope with the apocalyptic texts. In his confrontation with Swedenborg one sees the weaknesses as well as the strengths of Priestley's method; in the search for the meaning of the apocalyptic writings he had something to learn from the flights of fancy of the Swedish mystic.<sup>23</sup>

M Fitzpatrick  
The University of Wales  
Aberystwyth

<sup>22</sup> A good example of his methods can be found in his treatment of texts concerning the doctrine of atonement in Part Two of his *History of the Corruptions of Christianity* (1782). An effective discussion of the problems of Priestley's assumptions and methodology can be found in M. Canovan, 'The Irony of History: Priestley's Rational Theology', *The Price-Priestley Newsletter*, no.4 (1980), 16-25.

<sup>23</sup> A sympathetic account of Swedenborg's ideas can be found in Wilson Van Dusen, *The presence of other worlds. The psychological/spiritual findings of Emanuel Swedenborg* (London, 1975). The significance of Swedenborg's ideas for western spirituality is finely demonstrated by C. McDannell & B. Lang in *Heaven. A history*. (New York, 1990), 181-227.

Jeremy Black

A hitherto unknown attempt to create a general fund for the defence of European Protestantism is revealed in a letter of 1725. The letter was sent to the leading British minister, Sir Robert Walpole, by Frederic Thom, the London envoy of the Duke of Brunswick - Wolfenbüttel. The letter, dated 8 July 1725, was sent from London. It is now among Walpole's letters in the Cholmondeley Houghton Collection in Cambridge University Library. The full reference is correspondence, number 1232. Due to wartime destruction of the Lower Saxon archives in Hanover there is no evidence concerning the appeal by the Protestant representative at the Imperial Diet in Ratisbon/Regensburg - the Corpus Evangelicorum - to George I. As Elector of Hanover, George had a claim to effective headship of the German Protestants, since the nominal head of the Corpus Evangelicorum - Augustus II, Elector of Saxony, had converted to Catholicism in order to gain the Polish throne. 1725 was a highpoint in early eighteenth-century confessional tension.<sup>1</sup> The signature in the spring of secret agreements between Charles VI of Austria and Philip V of Spain, known collectively as the First Treaty of Vienna, had led to fears of a secret Catholic league that would seek to extirpate Protestantism. Rumours of a secret clause in favour of the Jacobite claimant to the throne of Britain - James III - increased these fears.<sup>2</sup> The malevolence of Catholicism was held to be demonstrated by the 'Thorn massacre' of late 1724, the judicial execution of a number of the leading Protestant citizens of the town of Thorn in Polish Pomevania following religious tension in

<sup>1</sup> J. Black, 'The Catholic Threat and the British Press in the 1720s and 1730s', *Journal of Religious History* 12 (1983), 376. For the role of religion in foreign policy, Black, *British Foreign Policy in the Age of Walpole* (Edinburgh, 1985), 118-37.

<sup>2</sup> Extract of dispatch of Benjamin Keene, British Consul at Madrid, 15 June (new style 1726, Cambridge University Library, Cholmondeley Houghton Manuscripts, papers 26/23; R.R. Sedgwick (ed.), *Some materials towards memoirs of the reign of King George II by John, Lord Hervey* (3 vols., London, 1931), I, 58; (J. Ralph), *A critical history of the administration of Sir Robert Walpole* (London, 1743), 408; G. Syveton, *Une cour et un aventurier au XVIII siècle: le Baron de Ripperda* (Paris, 1896) and the review by E. Armstrong, *English Historical Review* 12 (1897), 796-800; P. Fritz, *The English ministers and Jacobitism between the rebellions of 1715 and 1745* (Toronto, 1975), 134; *The Post-Man and the Historical Account* 1 June 1725; *Whitehall Evening Post* 3 June 1725; *London Journal* 5 June 1725.

the town.<sup>3</sup> There is no evidence that Thom's letter led to any moves. It is however interesting evidence of the perception of confessional threat, of the role of George I as a protector of embattled Protestantism, which was seen in particular in his championing of the rights of the Protestants in the lower Palatinate in the early 1720s,<sup>4</sup> and of the interest in the mid-1720s in a Protestant League, an interest that reflected Anglo-Prussian relations and greater British interest in Germany and in international Protestantism following the Hanoverian accession. The letter is printed as in the original.

'The Evangelical Body of Ratisbon, having made the first address to His Britannick Majesty, for making a general collection, all the other Protestant powers wait impatiently for your excellency's favour, that it may be first begun in England; and they will immediately give the like orders to follow that example in their respective countries.

'It is not to be expressed, how much the Protestant religion in general suffers by the delay of this collection; and it's to be feared, that if a beginning is not very soon made, the Roman Catholicks will obtain their aim, which is to destroy all Protestants living in their dominions.

'Such a fund, which lately hath been agreed upon by the Protestant powers, for the preservation and propagation of the faith, would be much more dreaded by the Roman Catholicks, than a powerful

<sup>3</sup> *London Journal* 13 Feb., 13,20 March. 1725; *The Protestant Intelligence* 13 Feb. 1725; Broglie, French Ambassador in London, to Morville, French foreign minister, 19 Feb. (new style) 1725; Chammorel, French Chargé d'Affaires in London, to Morville, 2 Ap. (new style) 1725, Paris, Quai d'Orsay, Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Correspondance Politique, Angleterre, 350 fo.145,276; Fiorelli, Venetian Secretary in London, to the Senate of Venice, 4 May (new style) 1725, Venice, Archivio di Stato, Lettere, Ministri, Inghilterra, 96 fo.41.

<sup>4</sup> George Whitworth, envoy in Berlin, to George Tilson, Under Secretary in the Northern Department, 16 May (new style) 1720, Public Record Office, State Papers(hereafter PRO) 90/12; Count Albert, Bavarian envoy in Paris, to Baron Malknecht, Bavarian foreign minister, 29 June (new style) 1721, Munich, Bayerischer Hauptstaatsarchiv, Kasten Schwarz 17076; K. Borgmann, *Der Deutsche religionsstreit der jahre 1719-20* (Berlin, 1937); H. Schmidt, *Kurfürst Karl Philipp von der Pfalz als Reichsfürst* (Mannheim, 1963), 114-49; Thom to George I, 9 Jan. 1724, Petition on behalf of oppressed Protestants of Empire, PRO.35/48, fo.25.



army; for they do very well know, that were it not for the many such funds among them, their religion could neither be maintained, nor encreased, as it's seen by daily experience. As there is no country in the world, where the Protestants and Roman Catholicks are more intermixed, and where there is a greater number of persons oppressed for the Protestant cause, than in Germany, so the Protestant Princes have been necessitated to form such a wholesome scheme. And as the interest of the Protestant religion is generally the same among the Protestant powers, so the honour of the German Princes is no more concerned, than that of the other Protestant powers, in saving such of their brethren, as are likely to be wholly destroyed by the Roman Catholicks.

'This collection, being general, and the principal sum thereof being to remain forever, will put an end to all other private collections that may be solicited by particular provinces and churches; and, that fund, being once established upon a sure foot, and well administred, many pious and charitable persons will be thereby encouraged to encrease the same, and to make it considerable by their liberalities and charitable bequests.

'The money, which shall be raised in England, is to remain in the publick funds at London; and I don't question, but a great part of what shall be raised in other countries will also be sent hither. There is nothing more to be wished, but that so great and noble a scheme may be put in speedy execution, under your excellency's protection. This will add to the glory of your ministry, and be a grateful memorial to latest posterity.'

University of Durham

## RICHARD PRICE AS A MAN OF ACTION

Alan Ruston

The impression that we have of Richard Price, both from his writings and his preaching as well as his portraits, shows a courageous but contemplative man, who needed a calm and settled existence to achieve his life's work. His attitude, in later life at least, seems to have been summed up in his letter to Lord Lansdowne of 23 September 1787:

A disposition grows upon me to be encumber'd by everything, and perfect tranquility and rest are becoming more and more necessary to me.<sup>1</sup>

D.O. Thomas adds:

According to George Cadogan Morgan, Price never enjoyed a strong constitution ... but by careful management, by the adoption of "a simple and regular course of life", by the use of exercise - he was particularly fond of riding - and by the cultivation of a calmness of mind, his health had considerably improved.<sup>2</sup>

However, in a blanket search of the *Gentleman's Magazine* for an entirely different purpose, I came across the following reference in the issue of September 1773, page 460, which puts him in an entirely different light. It should be remembered that Price was aged 50 when this event took place.

"Historical Chronicle: Monday 26 September

In the afternoon of this day, a man decently dressed was seen floating down the New-River, near Newington-green, by a gentleman who was fishing, and Reverend Dr Price. The gentleman threw his line, and the hook fastened in the man's cloaths but broke in bringing him to land, on which Dr Price observing the poor man just sinking, jumped into the river and brought him out. In less than a quarter of an hour he came to himself, so far as to be able to say who he was and where he lived. He said he had no intention to drown himself; that he had pulled off his hat and wig, was stooping down to wash his face and head, and accidentally slipped in."

<sup>1</sup> Richard Price's Journal, 1787-1791, deciphered by Beryl Thomas, with introduction by D.O. Thomas, *National Library of Wales Journal*, Vol. XXI, No. 4, Winter, 1980, 371.

<sup>2</sup> Price's Journal, 374.

What a human and engaging picture we have here of Price, saving someone's life quietly and without fuss, and then probably walking home wet through.

Oxhey, Herts

**D W Bebbington**, *Evangelicalism in modern Britain. A history from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), xi+364pp., £35.00/£11.95.

'Surely no man ever had a mind so full of facts and so void of ideas.' We are not here concerned with the justice or otherwise of James Denney's verdict upon J.G. Frazer. We simply wish to point out that in Dr. Bebbington's latest book there are facts a-plenty, but they are skilfully deployed to illuminate ideas.

Dr. Bebbington sets out to provide a comprehensive account of a movement within British Christianity which has hitherto been neglected. More particularly, he wishes to show how Evangelicalism has shaped, but has first been shaped by, its historical and cultural environment. He suggests that conversionism, activism, biblicism and crucicentrism 'form a quadrilateral of priorities [more than one priority?] that is the basis of Evangelicalism.' The four concepts are carefully discussed, and we then pass to an account of the early Evangelical movement (1734 onwards). Dr. Bebbington describes the community life of the Evangelicals; he notes their social composition, remarking upon the importance of the place accorded to women; and he elucidates the several strands within the movement: Calvinism and Arminianism; Anglicanism and Dissent; and its Scottish varieties. He is especially concerned to show both the continuity of Evangelicalism with its Puritan past, and the place of such newer influences as High Church spirituality, the Moravians, and the modern call to mission. The factor common to the latter is the doctrine of assurance, which had undergone a significant shift of emphasis resulting from the sensationalist epistemology of the Enlightenment.

Dr. Bebbington is, with good reason, in the camp of those revisionists who hold that 'Evangelicalism was accepted along with many characteristic traits of the Enlightenment. Its emergence was itself an expression of the age of reason.' He notes both the continuing Puritanism of the Strict Baptists, and the impact in Scotland - not least upon Thomas Chalmers - of the common sense philosophy of Reid and his successors. The 'optimism of grace' and the modification of High Calvinism were among other results of the Enlightenment. The theological influence of Jonathan Edwards is properly, if briefly, brought out. The pragmatic spirit, the literary awareness, the humanitarian concern and the political interests of early Evangelicals are passed in review.

A constellation of impulses produced a change of direction in Evangelicalism *circa* 1830. Mission strategy, the revival of interest in Calvinism associated with the Haldanes and Henry Drummond, the contribution of Edward Irving, the impact of Romanticism, the growth of millennialism, concern with the advent hope, changing views of biblical inspiration - these were among the factors making for change. Doctrinal



modifications in the wake of Erskine of Linlathen, J. McLeod Campbell and F.D. Maurice pleased some and alarmed others; and Irving's catholic experiment had a considerable influence upon many. Evangelicals found themselves in opposing camps on the Church-State issue, and they managed to irritate one another within such co-operative movements as the Evangelical Alliance. Anti-Catholicism became especially pronounced in some Anglican circles. The word which sums up the changed spirit and attitudes is 'Romanticism'.

Turning to Church and society, Dr. Bebbington discusses the 1851 Census, social class, the relative weakness of organized atheism, revivalism, philanthropy, education, and that Evangelical lifestyle which zealously sought to eradicate those sins of which it disapproved. The best is made of the Evangelical contribution to scholarship, and the theological Down Grade receives due mention.

The later nineteenth century was productive of Keswick and holiness teaching - to which Wesleyanism, Quaker spirituality, the Brethren and the Anglican Mildmay Circle were variously related, as were the American revivalists, Moody and Sankey. In the 1920s the [relative] unity of Evangelicalism was broken by 'liberal' theology, the 'higher criticism' of the Bible, and by disagreements over biblical inerrancy. Some Evangelicals pursued liturgical interests, while others felt that ritualism was coming too close to home. Science and Religion, the use of leisure, the social witness of the Church - these were all areas within which Evangelicals could, and did, divide.

So to the charismatic movement, the Oxford Group, the emphasis upon self-fulfilment in the 1960s, the ecumenical movement, the revitalization of Evangelical scholarship, the Reformed and sectarian wings of Evangelicalism, and, finally, to a brief concluding chapter on this diverse but significant movement.

Our rapid sketch does scant justice to Dr. Bebbington's well-packed volume. We must, however, pass to some comments on an ascending scale of seriousness. First, there is material here to ease the reader's journey: the clergyman who was converted whilst preaching his own sermon; the image of Adam Clarke playing marbles; W.E. Orchard's 'wet' recommendation, 'On Ash Wednesday morning, say to your wife, "My dear, is there any virtue you would like me to acquire?"'

Well-provided though we are with information, at certain points we should like to know more: the results of the lack of Evangelical attention to those doctrines (including the Trinity) which were *not* emphasized by them; the varied motivations towards, and responses to, the establishment of ministerial training colleges; the often conservative and sometimes reactionary influence of the considerable amount of lay preaching which

was undertaken; the Evangelical enthusiasm for merchandising the gospel; the impact of such large-circulation papers as *The Christian Herald*; the Gospel Standard Baptists in relation to 'duty faith'; the anti-'decisionist' Evangelicals; the post-1960 Reformed Baptists. If the minimal influence in Britain of Kuyper and Dooyeweerd (both of whom escape the index) is to be noted, we need to be told a little more about their position(s). And there is more to be said concerning Wesley's divergence from Lockean epistemology, and concerning the distinction to be drawn between the rationalistic and the Evangelical Arminians.

Next, there is the matter of balance. We have a good deal on Irving, much less on McLeod Campbell; the W. Robertson Smith case is mentioned, but not that of Dods and Bruce later, or of Samuel Davidson earlier; the Oxford Group receives considerable attention, Evangelical attitudes towards ecumenism too little.

Certain statements give one pause. For example, 'at the beginning of the nineteenth century Independent ministers were trained not in theology or Greek, but simply in preaching'. But they were trained in all of these at that period if the written accounts of the work of Edward Williams and James Bennett at Rotherham, Fletcher and Hope at Blackburn, Simpson at Hoxton, Bull at Newport Pagnell, and Pye Smith and Hill at Homerton are to be believed. Again, emphasising the Incarnation as the heart of Anglican theology is to overlook others - not least his *Lux Mundi* colleagues - who were already doing this. Yet again, is it possible, as has sometimes been alleged, that Alexander Kilham's Methodist New Connexion policy was inspired as much by the Presbyterian church order which surrounded him during his formative years as by the egalitarianism of the French Revolution? Granted that Dr. Bebbington says only that Kilham was inspired 'in part' by the latter; was Presbyterianism another part?

Dr. Bebbington does well to remind us that the biblical inerrancy debate is a relatively recent phenomenon. He does not altogether convince us that Evangelicalism became unduly adapted to the high culture of the 1960s - a large number of Evangelicals stood sturdily against that culture. He makes good his case that Evangelicalism is in important respects a product of the Enlightenment. One of the lessons of this book is that labels such as 'Evangelicalism' can obscure more than they reveal. However, Christianity has no monopoly of labels. Dr. Bebbington attaches the philosophical label 'empiricist' to Locke. But Gilbert Ryle declared that 'Most of the doctrines which an Empiricist (as ordinarily defined) should hold are strenuously denied by Locke.' Food for thought...

It takes a certain courage to chart the choppy waters of Evangelicalism. Those prejudiced against the movement will not be able to understand Dr.

Bebbington's balanced, eirenic approach. From within the movement some will question his 'soundness'. We may expect to learn about the reviewers of Dr. Bebbington's stimulating book!

Alan P F Sell  
The University of Calgary

John Dinwiddy, *Bentham* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1989), [8], 132.

John Dinwiddy's aim in this short book is twofold: to set out Jeremy Bentham's basic ideas on morals, law, politics, economics and social policy and to show that there is a high degree of consistency in his treatment of these subjects. To these avowed intents there may be added a third, less explicitly stated, of commending Bentham's approach, rescuing his reputation from inaccurate or ungenerous criticism, and estimating, if only briefly, his contribution to the history of political thought.

In a relatively small compass Dinwiddy has skilfully condensed a great deal of information drawn from a detailed acquaintance with Bentham's voluminous published works and extensive correspondence, and in doing so has provided an excellent introduction to Bentham's thought, especially for those who are likely to find it congenial.

Dinwiddy defends Bentham against those who have misrepresented him. He demonstrates convincingly that Bentham was not unaware of the importance of distinguishing psychological explanations of how men behave from normative recommendations as to how they should behave, and he demonstrates too that Bentham did not commit the fallacy of assuming that the latter can be derived logically from the former.

Dinwiddy deals sympathetically with the difficulty many have discovered in trying to reconcile psychological egoism with an ethic based upon the greatest happiness principle, of showing how men who are constrained to act in accordance with their perceptions of their own interest can have an obligation to maximize the happiness of those around them. The two principles can be reconciled, according to Bentham, by showing that the best way of securing the good of the community is by bringing the individual to pursue his own real interest. Hence the importance of education, of demonstrating to the public how by acting rationally they can best serve themselves and the public. Underlying this approach is the assumption that there is a real coherence of interests: that the individual in pursuit of his own interest accurately perceived will act in accordance with the interests of his fellow men and of society as a whole.

There is, however, another way of reconciling private and public interest: by attaching such inducements to the promotion of the public good and such penalties to anti-social behaviour that the individual will out of his own perceived self-interest conform to the policies that promote the public interest. This, according to Dinwiddy, is how Bentham thought the greatest happiness principle should be used: by the Legislator to devise those inducements and inhibitions that will lead the individual to act in accordance with the public interest. Underlying this approach is the assumption not that there already exists a coherence of interests but that



one needs to be created by altering the individual's dispositions in such a way that he will conform to what is perceived to be in the public interest. It is clear that utilitarianism in this form justifies those in authority seeking to make the people do what they want them to do by the use of rewards and punishments. It is not difficult to see that where there is no real coherence of interests, it can be made to justify practices that many will experience as oppression.

Dinwiddy brings out the ways in which Bentham was a reformer, but he does not attempt to justify what is crucial to the defence of utilitarianism, namely the defence of it as a 'critical morality'. As a moral philosopher Bentham was not primarily concerned to show the principles that informed the moral judgements made by his contemporaries. He was more concerned to lead men to change their moral judgements and act in accordance with principles that could be defended rationally, and this he chose to do not simply by showing how this or that moral judgement could be improved upon but by advocating a principle that should be used as the sole foundation of a comprehensive moral system. Bentham was a moralist who sought to intellectualize morality by showing how it can be derived from one single practical principle. Now, in the hands of a moral and social reformer the question 'What good does it do?' is a powerful tool. In the spirit of the Enlightenment, Beccaria used it to great effect in criticizing penal regimes in the Italy of his day. It required traditionalists to seek, in Burke's phrase, 'the reason latent in the prejudice'. Superficially that would seem to lend colour and plausibility to the aim of using the consequentialist principle as the foundation of a progressive morality, but there is all the difference in the world between using it as a critical tool to clear away irrational policies and making it the sole foundation of a 'critical morality'. There are eminently good reasons for justifying practical policies that are not to be found in the beneficial consequences of adopting them.

Not long after the publication of this book Bentham scholarship was robbed of one of its most distinguished luminaries by the tragic and untimely death of its author. This and Dinwiddy's other works will remain a monument to one whom the history of political thought could ill afford to lose.

D O Thomas  
The University of Wales  
Aberystwyth

Peter A Schouls, *Descartes and the Enlightenment* (Edinburgh: University Press, 1989), pp.194, £25.00.

First the facts. Only three of the eight chapters, which amounts to less than a quarter of the book, explicitly relate Descartes to the eighteenth century. The 'Enlightenment' is the French Enlightenment; its three representatives are Condillac, D'Alembert and Condorcet; the first two receive relatively little treatment. These are facts, not criticisms, and the author alerts us to them.

The aim is to establish within these limits the affinities between Descartes and Enlightenment thought. It is proposed that if we retain a trinity of persons influencing the Enlightenment, Bacon or Leibniz must go and Descartes join Newton and Locke as leading influences. But the book is not about three persons but about three themes - freedom, mastery and progress. These are central in Descartes, central in the Enlightenment and compatibly embody that key idea, autonomy. Because the centrality of the themes and representative nature of the thinkers may be taken for granted as far as the Enlightenment goes, an exposition of Descartes occupies the bulk of the book. In establishing the role of these three themes in Descartes' thought, an important claim emerges about the relation of will to reason. Schouls argues for the primacy of the will in Descartes: his magnificent claims for reason presuppose the fundamental character of the freedom of the will and this is a widely ramified claim as a discussion of the literature from the *Discourse* right through to the *Treatise on the passions* reveals. The author uses distinctions in the notion of freedom to make good this contention. While Cartesian mastery and progress are explained in terms of the relation of reason and will, it is the three specific themes, not that particular philosophical infrastructure, that bears the weight of comparison.

The case for this interpretation of Descartes is nicely made out. Certainly if one attends less to the Cartesian metaphysic, less, even, to the detail of the method, and more to the spirit and mood of his writings, the importance of both mastery and progress emerges. Descartes does indeed begin to cut an Enlightenment figure. The relation of free will and reason involves logical issues best left aside in these pages. Those, however, who emphasise that behind the epistemological concerns of the Enlightenment there are fundamental anthropological ones that have to do with volition even more than with reason, will find the author's case *re* Descartes especially interesting. One remark is in order on the exposition of Descartes. Schouls argues that 'there remains an unresolved tension in Descartes' position between, on the one hand, the doctrine of an autonomous will and, on the other hand, the dogma of an authoritative reason.' (p.99). However, 'authoritative reason' is apparently threatened from another end, too. In *The principles of philosophy*, Descartes claims 'that the natural light is to be trusted only to the extent that it is compatible

with divine revelation' ending the first part of this work with a significant paragraph that tells us: '...Although the light of reason may, with the utmost clarity and evidence, appear to suggest something different, we must still put our entire faith in divine authority rather than in our own judgement.'<sup>1</sup> Even when these words are read strictly in context, those whose confidence in reason has been boosted by the Cartesian enterprise hitherto may be forgiven annoyance at this turn of conceptual events. By reminding natural light that it will not count for much when the sun comes out, it promises to create some embarrassment for 'authoritative reason'. It is not superfluous to note this. For in context, its real upshot is to make *revelation* precarious by decking it in the garb of an intruder and here we seem to be actually closer to the Enlightenment than we are in the case of, e.g. Locke.

It is the matter of Locke which brings us to a weakness in the author's thesis on Descartes and the Enlightenment. A careful reading of it will reveal that Schouls actually wants to accord a measure of precedence to Descartes over Locke and others as regards influencing the Enlightenment. Quite understandably, he does not have the space to compare Descartes in detail to rival influences. But he should have reminded us of Condorcet's relative placing of Descartes and Locke in the *Sketch for an historical picture of the progress of the human mind*, the key text for Schouls' thesis. Condorcet indeed has a high place for Descartes but he stresses that Descartes let his imagination lead him away from the path on which he rightly, and pioneeringly, struck out. It was Locke who brought us back with his analysis of ideas, their sensational basis and their relation to words. Locke exhibited in the process the limits of human understanding. Condorcet finds no fault with Locke where he does with Descartes. In the main, Schouls seems to me to offer a strong case for his way of relating Descartes to the Enlightenment and for his general conclusion, but such a strong claim as made on p.174 ('...Descartes is the most important formative influence on eighteenth century French thought.') should have been squared with Condorcet's comment on Locke and Descartes.

With this book, Schouls has done us a service and those who want to distance Descartes from the Enlightenment will have to reckon significantly with it. Having written previously a work on Descartes and Locke it is fitting to hope that the author will find time to write a third, pursuing Locke and the Enlightenment. To be sure, it will be no trivial pursuit.

Stephen Williams  
United Theological College  
Aberystwyth

<sup>1</sup> Citations are from paragraphs 28 (p.203) and 76 (p.221) of the translation of this work in Cottingham, Stoothoff and Murdoch (eds.), *The philosophical writings of Descartes* (CUP, 1985), vol.i.

We have received the following communication from Mr Geoffrey Carnall:

Some time ago my wife picked up an odd volume of Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees*, and we found after buying it that it had once been owned by Joseph Priestley. I enclose a copy of the bookplate (*plate a*). It is pasted over another, which also is Priestley's. I am puzzled by the intention of the design and should be most grateful for any suggestions which the readers of *Enlightenment and Dissent* might have to throw light on the subject.

Since Mr Carnall first wrote, he has received further information from Maria Twist, of the Birmingham City Library, which also possesses a copy of the bookplate. She informed Mr Carnall that the Franks collection of bookplates in the British Museum (Department of Prints and Drawings) describes two Joseph Priestley bookplates, the one pictorial and the other heraldic. She also sent a copy of an entry in a Catalogue of Old and Rare British and American Bookplates (Ex Libris), offered for sale c. 1905 by Chas. A. Massey of London, which contained the following entry:

1844 Priestley - Joseph Priestley, *pictorial, name above water, trees ferns etc. around*, SIGNED ALLEN, FCT. BIRMINGHAM., £1.1s.  
This is believed to be one of the plates of the Philosopher and Theologian of Pennsylvania.

Unlike other entries in the catalogue the Priestley bookplate is undated. The fact that it was pasted over the heraldic bookplate plate suggests that it was a later bookplate. The descendants of Priestley continued to use the heraldic bookplate. *Plate b* is the bookplate of Joseph Rayner Priestley, Joseph Priestley's grandson, and is identical to the heraldic book plate in the Mandeville volume except for the extra initial and comes from the family copy of Sir Walter Scott's *Waverley Tales*, volume 51, *Tales of a Grandfather* (published by Samuel H. Parker, Boston for Desilver, Thomas and Co., Philadelphia, 1836) which was very kindly donated to the editor by Mrs Albert W. Johnson Jr.

We would be very interested in any information about the history and meaning of these bookplates. If you wish to communicate directly to Mr Carnall, his address is: University of Edinburgh, Department of English Literature, David Hume Tower, George Square, Edinburgh, EH8 9JX.

Martin Fitzpatrick



*Joseph Smalley.*

