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# Enlightenment and Dissent

No. 12 1993



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## Editorial

We have great pleasure in announcing that two well known experts in the field of eighteenth-century studies have accepted invitations to join our advisory editorial board: Professor James Dybikowski and Professor Iain McCalman.

Professor Dybikowski, an early supporter of the journal and a contributor, is at the University of British Columbia. He is the author of a wide range of publications, in classics, history and philosophy and has recently published under the auspices of the Voltaire Foundation the definitive study of the Welsh thinker, David Williams, entitled *On burning ground: An examination of the ideas, projects and life of David Williams* (1993) - reviewed in this volume.

Professor Iain McCalman is Associate Director of the Humanities Research Centre at the Australian National University, Canberra. He is author of the widely acclaimed *Radical underworld: Prophets, revolutionaries, and pornographers, 1795-1840* (Cambridge, 1988, Oxford pbk. 1993). He edited *Horrors of slavery, the life and writings of Robert Wedderburn* (Edinburgh and Newhaven, 1993), and is currently editing *The age of romanticism and revolution: An Oxford companion to British culture*.

We look forward to a long association with these distinguished scholars.

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



Pamela Clemit

Despite the steady growth of interest in William Godwin's philosophical and fictional writings in recent years, his educational theory has received scant attention. In particular, there has been little interest in *The Enquirer* (1797) as a work in its own right, although it has been recognized as an important influence on Godwin's most famous pupil, Percy Bysshe Shelley.<sup>1</sup> Yet *The Enquirer*, a collection of essays on education, manners, and literature, marks a turning-point in Godwin's career. In it he develops and modifies the views put forward in successive editions of *An enquiry concerning political justice* (1793, 1796, 1798); and, through his increased attention to individual experience, prepares for his later biographies and novels.

Like *Political Justice*, *The Enquirer* is based on the traditions and assumptions of eighteenth-century Rational Dissent. In *Political Justice*, Godwin depicts the individual as a rational agent motivated by a duty to seek out objective truths in the moral and political realm.<sup>2</sup> In Part I of *The Enquirer*, he extends these views to the child: he wants to develop a mode of education which will foster the child's autonomy. Indeed, *The Enquirer* can be seen as an extended revision of a specific chapter in the first edition of *Political Justice*, Book I, chapter iv, in which Godwin listed as the three principal causes of moral improvement: literature, education and political justice - which he defined as 'the adoption of any principle of morality and truth into the practice of a community'.<sup>3</sup> He placed a limited value on education, and dropped the chapter altogether in 1796. In *The Enquirer*, however, he returns to all three areas, as indicated by the subtitle, *Reflections on education, manners and literature*.

Godwin returned to education at a time of growing disillusion among radical intellectuals at the failure of their political hopes. Many who had initially welcomed the French Revolution were dismayed at its later excesses; and from mid-1792 onwards the British government introduced a series of measures designed to stop the spread of radicalism.<sup>4</sup> In the face of these events, Godwin maintains a radical optimism. In the preface

<sup>1</sup> Timothy Webb, *The violet in the crucible: Shelley and translation* (Oxford, 1976), 21-2; Michael W Hyde, 'Notes on Shelley's Reading of Godwin's *Enquirer*', *Keats-Shelley Journal* 31 (1982), 15-24; Pamela Clemit, 'Shelley's Godwin, 1812-1817', *Durham University Journal*, 85 (NS54), No.2 (forthcoming, July 1993).

<sup>2</sup> Mark Philp, *Godwin's Political Justice* (London, 1986), *passim*.

<sup>3</sup> Godwin, *An enquiry concerning political justice and its influence on general virtue and happiness* (1793), ed. Mark Philp, of *The political and philosophical writings of William Godwin*, 7 vols., (gen. ed. Mark Philp), (London, 1993), 5:14.

<sup>4</sup> Albert Goodwin, *The Friends of Liberty: The English democratic movement in the age of the French Revolution* (London, 1979), *passim*.

to *The Enquirer*, he announces a significant redirection of political energy which is designed to appeal to those who, like himself, were committed to individual reform rather than to collective action. He argues that the temporary defeat of reforming ideas should be viewed positively, since it gives scope for a reevaluation of reforming aims. Casting himself as the rational enquirer of his title, he distances himself from both the impetuosity of the 'friends of innovation' and the 'barbarism' of the opponents to reform.<sup>5</sup> 'With as ardent a passion for innovation as ever' he turns to intellectual cultivation as a means of 'assisting others, if possible, in perfecting the melioration of their temper', being convinced that 'the cause of political reform, and the cause of intellectual and literary refinement, are inseparably connected' (p.79). Moreover, his newly 'patient and tranquil' reforming spirit extends to matters of everyday social contact and 'personal manners' (p.79). In addition, this new emphasis on individual experience provides the work's structural principle: Godwin rejects the method of systematic enquiry pursued in *Political Justice* in favour of 'an incessant recurrence to experiment and actual observation' (p.77).

Thus Godwin returns to education as a means of accelerating progress of mind. The benefits of a good education are strikingly evident in his contrast between 'the man of talent and the man without', each of whom sets out to walk from Temple Bar to Hyde Park Corner:

The dull man goes straight forward; he has so many furlongs to traverse. He observes if he meets any of his acquaintance; he enquires respecting their health and their family. He glances perhaps the shops as he passes; he admires the fashion of a buckle, and the metal of a tea-urn. If he experience any flights of fancy, they are of a short extent; of the same nature as the flights of a forest-bird, clipped of his wings, and condemned to pass the rest of his life in a farm-yard. On the other hand the man of talent gives full scope to his imagination. He laughs and cries. Unindebted to the suggestions of surrounding objects, his whole soul is employed. He enters into nice calculations; he digests sagacious reasonings. In imagination he declaims or describes, impressed with the greatest sympathy, or elevated to the loftiest rapture. He makes a thousand new and admirable combinations. He passes through a thousand imaginary scenes, tries his courage, tasks his ingenuity, and thus becomes gradually prepared to meet almost any of the many-coloured events of human life. He consults by the aid of memory the

<sup>5</sup> Godwin, *The Enquirer: reflections on education, manners and literature* (1797), ed. Pamela Clemit, in *Political and philosophical writings*, 5: 78. References are by page number to this edition.

books he has read and projects others for the future instruction and delight of mankind. If he observes the passengers, he reads their countenances, conjectures their past history, and forms a superficial notion of their wisdom or folly, their virtue or vice, their satisfaction or misery. If he observe the scenes that occur, it is with the eye of a connoisseur or an artist. Every object is capable of suggesting to him a volume of reflections. The time of these two persons in one respect resembles; it has brought them both to Hyde-Park-Corner. In almost every other respect it is dissimilar. (pp.95-6)

In its deliberately provocative emphasis on subjectivity, this passage seems a long way from Godwin's early faith in reason as the sole motive to action. Three aspects of this account of the man of talent shed light on Godwin's developing educational theory: first, his behaviour shows the mental alertness that a good education can produce; second, his powers of sympathy and imagination reflect Godwin's revised ethical position, in which he acknowledged feeling, and not reason, as the basis for moral judgements; third, he has gained this enlarged mental capacity through reading literary works: the passage occurs in an essay on the benefits of an early taste for reading.

Godwin sets out the basis for his view of education as a vehicle for improvement in the first four essays in *The Enquirer*, on genius and talents. He follows Locke's view of the mind as a *tabula rasa* in his emphasis on the malleability of the child's mind (pp. 111-12, 88). However, unlike Locke in *Some thoughts concerning education* (1693), Godwin is not especially interested in educating the sons of gentlemen.<sup>6</sup> Instead he pursues the egalitarian implications of Locke's theory of mind. Although Godwin allows that there may be slight differences between individuals at birth, he claims that genius is principally a product of 'incidents of a certain sort in early infancy' (p.88). Similarly, he acknowledges the existence of hereditary characteristics, but denies their importance. A child cannot be wise at birth, Godwin argues, but he may have a 'predisposition to wisdom' (p.92), a quality which is shared by nearly every child, whether it be the child of a peasant or the future author of *The history of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire* (1776-88). Subsequent differences are produced by external circumstances: while the 'promise of understanding' in the peasant child is obliterated by social oppression, the 'intuition of genius' in Gibbon was nurtured by his youthful isolation in Switzerland (pp. 89, 93). The practical implications of this egalitarian outlook are seen in the essay 'Of the Study of the Classics', where Godwin argues that classical learning should not be

<sup>6</sup> John Locke, *Some thoughts concerning education* (1693), in *The works of John Locke*, 9 vols. (London, 1824), VIII: 205.

restricted to the children of men of letters: 'Though our children should be destined to the humblest occupation, that does not seem to be a sufficient reason for our denying them the acquisition of some of the most fundamental documents of human understanding.' (p.105)

Godwin is more interested in the process by which future Gibbons may be formed, than in the end-product, the 'useful' citizen which Joseph Priestley, for example, saw as the goal of education.<sup>7</sup> Priestley, a leading Dissenting controversialist and the author of several pamphlets on education, was a tutor at Warrington Academy during the 1760s, where he helped to establish the new curriculum which made it a centre of religious, political, and cultural debate.<sup>8</sup> However, Godwin's view of educational goals is not as overtly programmatic as Priestley's. Like the man walking to Hyde Park Corner, Godwin is less interested in destinations, than in what happens along the way.

Thus he emphasizes the primary importance of an 'awakened mind': 'It is of less importance, generally speaking, that a child should acquire this or that species of knowledge, than that, through the medium of instruction, he should acquire habits of intellectual activity' (p.85). Here Godwin shares Richard Price's view, in *Observations on the Importance of the American Revolution* (1785), that the business of education 'should be to teach how to think, rather than what to think'.<sup>9</sup> Price goes on to say: 'education ought to be an initiation into candour, rather than into systems of faith, and ... should form a habit of cool and patient investigation, rather than an attachment to any opinions.'<sup>10</sup> The principle of 'candour', central in Dissenting thought, might best be defined as a disposition to form fair and impartial judgements in all affairs, and it forms the basis of Godwin's emphasis on the duty of private judgement in *Political Justice*. This duty is now extended to the teacher/pupil relationship, as Godwin's discussion of the principle of 'reverence' shows:

There is a reverence that we owe to everything in human shape. I do not say that a child is the image of God. But I do affirm that he is an individual being, with powers of reasoning, with sensations of pleasure and pain, and

<sup>7</sup> Joseph Priestley, *Miscellaneous observations relating to education...to which is added, An essay on a course of liberal education for civil and active life* (Bath, 1778), xiii.

<sup>8</sup> Anthony Lincoln, *Some political and social ideas of English dissent, 1763-1800* (Cambridge, 1938), 91-4.

<sup>9</sup> Richard Price, *Observations on the importance of the American Revolution, and the means of making it a benefit to the world* (1785), in *Richard Price: Political Writings*, ed. D O Thomas (Cambridge, 1991), 137.

<sup>10</sup> Price, *Political Writings*, 138.

with principles of morality ... . By the system of nature he is placed by himself; he has a claim upon his little sphere of empire and discretion; and he is entitled to his appropriate portion of independence. (p.119)

To get a sense of Godwin's radicalism in claiming that a child has an entitlement to a portion of independence, we might compare his concept of reverence with Locke's use of the same term. For Locke, reverence is 'that awe which is necessary' in a child towards a parent: parents should continually force a compliance of will 'till awe and respect be grown familiar, and there appears not the least reluctance in the submission, and ready obedience of their minds.'<sup>11</sup> By contrast, Godwin defines reverence as a reciprocal quality based on openness in all dealings: it is 'the consideration and deference that man owes to man; nor is the helplessness of childhood by any means unentitled to the benefit of this principle' (p.119).

Godwin's educational theory is further enriched by changes in his ethical position. In the second and third editions of *Political Justice* he placed increasing emphasis on the role of sympathy and feeling in moral judgements.<sup>12</sup> In *The Enquirer* he claims: 'Man has not only an understanding to reason, but a heart to feel' (p.214). And he repeatedly emphasizes the moral importance of the imagination: 'One of the best practical rules of morality that ever was delivered is that of putting ourselves in the place of another, before we act or decide any thing respecting him' (p.209). In his subsequent educational writings, notably the preface to *Bible Stories* (1802), a children's book intended for use in schools, and *Letter of advice to a young American* (1818), a pamphlet for young adults, Godwin tends to equate the imagination and the moral sense.<sup>13</sup>

Godwin's essay on public and private education reflects this new emphasis on sympathy. Moreover, the value of sympathy is endorsed by his mode of writing. Drawing on his recent experience of writing *Caleb Williams* (1794), his celebrated first-person narrative of tyranny and persecution, he adopts the child's point of view to convey the experience of systematized tyranny. Thus in private education, the reader shares the pupil's sense of demoralizing isolation: 'the most wretched of all slaveries is that which I endure alone ... . Under this slavery the mind pusillanimously shrinks. I am left alone with my tyrant, and am utterly hopeless and forlorn' (p.108). Surrounded by companions at school, by contrast, 'I do not feel annihilated by my condition, but find that I also am something. I adjust the account in my own mind with my task-master, and say, Thus far you may proceed; but there is a conquest that you

<sup>11</sup> Locke, *Works*, VIII: 91, 36.

<sup>12</sup> Philp, *Godwin's Political Justice*, 142-53, 202-9.

<sup>13</sup> See Godwin, *Political and philosophical writings*, 5: 313-14, 320-1.



cannot achieve' (p.108).

Neither of these modes of education seems conducive to progress of mind. In 'Of the Communication of Knowledge', Godwin goes on to present an alternative system which is based on the desire of the learner. Here the instructor's main task is to instil the motivation for learning, and then to resolve any difficulties that arise in the course of study. Such a method, Godwin declares, would dissolve the present disparity between teacher and pupil, with its inevitable collapse into a master/slave relation: 'Strictly speaking, no such characters are left upon the scene as either preceptor or pupil. The boy, like the man, studies because he desires it. He proceeds upon a plan of his own invention, or which, by adopting, he has made his own. Every thing bespeaks independence and equality' (pp. 115-6). The type of pedagogical relationship Godwin advocates here is brought home by his attack on Rousseau's educational treatise, *Emile* (1762), as upholding a system of 'fictitious equality ... a puppet-show exhibition, of which the master holds the wires' (pp.131,126). In *Emile*, typically the teacher constructs a problem and encourages the pupil to discover a preconceived solution. 'Let him [the pupil] always believe he is the master, and let it always be you who are', Rousseau urges the teacher: 'He ought not to make a step without your having foreseen it; he ought not to open his mouth without your knowing what he is going to say'.<sup>14</sup> Godwin, however, rejects this manipulative procedure and insists that the teacher set the example of frankness to the pupil. For Godwin the true object of education was not to 'render the pupil the mere copy of his preceptor', as in Rousseau's prescriptive system, but to 'produce in him an improvement which was out of the limits of his lessons' (p.143) and thus to advance the general progress of mind. This can be achieved only through a pedagogy based on 'generous reciprocity' between equals (p.124).

Although Godwin is primarily concerned with equality in teacher/pupil relations in these essays, by implication he also presents a new model for other social relationships. It is no accident that his discussion of the principle of 'reverence' appears in an essay called 'Of Cohabitation', which is concerned with the obstacles to equality arising when pupil and tutor live under the same roof. Extending this argument, Godwin claims that excessive familiarity has an equally baneful effect on adult relations. He deplores the tendency to 'treat adults of either sex, when upon a footing of undue familiarity, our wife or our comrade, in a great degree as we do children' (p.120), and argues that we should be at all times prepared to act with the same restraint that operates in more formal situations. The importance of 'manners' in Godwin's revised programme for intellectual and moral reform is made explicit in his essay 'Of Politeness', where he

<sup>14</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile: or, on education* (1762), trans. and ed. Allan Bloom (Harmondsworth, 1991), 120.

divides the exercise of morality into two parts: the 'greater morality' involved in public actions by exceptional individuals, and the 'lesser moralities' which everyone has an opportunity to practice in daily social contact (p.222). It is the field of the lesser moralities, notably politeness, that gives all individuals the opportunity to exercise sincerity and impartiality, principles associated in Godwin's earlier writings with the term 'political justice'. Here Godwin's concern with the minute details of social interaction which afford scope for benevolent activity looks forward to his *Memoirs of the author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1778), which, as well as being a lovingly individualized portrait of Mary Wollstonecraft, gives an account of an exemplary relationship based on egalitarian principles.<sup>15</sup>

Godwin's new emphasis on the importance of books, especially plays, poems, and works of fiction, again reflects his modified ethical position. This is a further divergence from Locke, who places 'learning' as only the fourth aspect of a gentleman's education - after 'virtue, wisdom, breeding' - and from Rousseau, who says that *Emile* must avoid books in his early childhood and learn from the 'book of nature' instead.<sup>16</sup> For Godwin, however, early reading plays an essential role in fostering habits of mental activity, as his example of the man of talent shows. By contrast with his views in 1793,<sup>17</sup> Godwin now elevates books above conversation as a means of improvement. He describes a well-written literary work as the depository of 'the maturest reflections, or the happiest flights, of a mind of uncommon excellence', which fosters a spirit of emulation in the reader: 'I find myself a sort of intellectual camelion, assuming the colour of the substances on which I rest' (p.96). In conversation, by contrast, 'the life's blood of truth is filtrated and diluted, till much of its essence is gone' (p.236). Here Godwin echoes Milton's comment in *Areopagitica*, 'a good Booke is the precious life-blood of a master spirit', and Godwin's view of books as active agents of reform owes much to Milton's vigorous argument against literary censorship.<sup>18</sup>

In fact, Godwin's most detailed discussion of imaginative literature, 'Of Choice in Reading', is modelled in part on *Areopagitica*, a work which was often quoted by radicals of the early 1790s in their arguments

<sup>15</sup> See Godwin, *Memoirs of the author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1778), in vol.1, ed. Mark Philp, of *The collected novels and memoirs of William Godwin*, gen. ed. Mark Philp, 8 vols. (London, 1992), 128.

<sup>16</sup> Locke, *Works*, VIII: 128; Rousseau, *Emile*, 116,160.

<sup>17</sup> See Godwin, *Political and Philosophical Writings*, 3: 14-16.

<sup>18</sup> Milton, *Areopagitica: A speech of Mr John Milton for the liberty of unlicenc'd Printing to the Parliament of England* (1644), in vol.II, ed. Ernest Sirluck, of *The complete prose works of John Milton*, gen. ed. Don M Wolfe, 8 vols. (New Haven and London, 1953-82), 493.

for freedom of expression. Perhaps this is why several reviewers of *The Enquirer* refused to endorse the principle of free choice in reading.<sup>19</sup> In a secularized version of Milton's argument against licensing, Godwin claims that authoritarian control of the child's reading retards his development as a rational being. Rather than consigning the individual to what Milton calls 'a perpetual childhood of prescription',<sup>20</sup> Godwin highlights the need to break free from 'the prejudices of the nursery' (p.140), and to have confidence in the child's inherent powers of discrimination. Free choice in reading is thus a matter of 'reverence', of respecting the child's freedom 'to act from himself' (p.143), which will lead to autonomy in adulthood.

The special power of imaginative literature is to liberate the individual from prescription and prejudice by holding out an image of potential for improvement. According to Godwin, the best imaginative compositions present an exalted image of the reader's capacities; they 'raise my ambition, expand my faculties, invigorate my resolutions, and seem to double my existence' (p.141). Moreover, he sees literature as a means of forwarding general improvement. Of Milton and Shakespeare, he says:

The poorest peasant in the remotest corner of England, is probably a different man from what he would have been but for these authors. Every man who is changed from what he was by the perusal of their works, communicates a portion of the inspiration all around him. It passes from man to man, till it influences the whole mass (p.141).

Here, imaginative sympathy is the key not only to individual improvement, as in the account of the man of talent, but it also provides a means of transmitting knowledge through the generations.

*The Enquirer*, then, is a transitional work. As well as consolidating the arguments of *Political Justice*, it prepares for a new phase in Godwin's intellectual development, in which the imagination plays a pivotal role. After 1797, Godwin's interest in the formation of individual personality becomes central, and he moves into the realms of biography and fiction. Beginning, only a year later, with the *Memoirs of Mary Wollstonecraft*, this interest culminates, at one level, in the *Life of Geoffrey Chaucer* (1803), a massive biographical work in which he studies the mind of Chaucer in terms of the totality of environmental influences to which he was subject from birth. It is only in fiction,

<sup>19</sup> *Analytical Review* 25 (April 1797), 402; *Critical Review*, 2nd ser., 20 (May 1797), 62; *Monthly Review*, 2nd ser., 23 (July 1797), 294; *British Critic*, 11 (January 1798), 25-6.

<sup>20</sup> Milton, *Complete Prose*, II: 514.

however, through the use of the first-person narrative, that Godwin finds a form adequate to pursue the insights formulated in *The Enquirer*.

University of Durham

ADVOCACY OF THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE CHURCH  
FROM THE STATE IN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY  
ENGLAND: A COMPARISON OF A NONJUROR AND A  
NONCONFORMIST VIEW

Robert D Cornwall

Americans continue to argue the merits and definition of the separation of church and state two centuries after the ratification of the Constitution. England still has an established church some three centuries after the passing of the Act of Toleration of 1689. Issues of religious liberty, coercion of belief, state interference in religious affairs, all remain hot topics in the academic and popular presses. When we look back historically at the development of the church in England during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it appears that all episcopalians affirmed the unity of church and state and that the traditional Dissenters (Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Baptists) opposed it. Yet this was not always the case.

The writings of the Nonjurors, a movement of High Churchmen who found themselves exiled from their church after the Revolution of 1688-89, belie this view of Anglican history. These High Church adherents of the doctrines of divine right monarchy, indefeasible hereditary succession, nonresistance, and passive obedience, found themselves excluded from the established church because they refused to renounce their allegiance to James II after the king was expelled from England by the forces of William and Mary. In the wake of this political upheaval a small group of churchmen began to develop a comprehensive theory of church-state separation.<sup>1</sup> Yet this theory differs markedly from that espoused by Nonconformists, for the Nonjurors were not children of the Enlightenment but ideological and theological descendants of William Laud and Restoration divines such as Henry Hammond, John Pearson and Jeremy Taylor. They held strongly to the doctrines of apostolic succession and the necessary unity and catholicity of the English church. Prior to the Glorious Revolution these future Nonjurors did not shrink back from suppressing religious dissent and many were virulent opponents of the Nonconformists.<sup>2</sup> In spite of their heritage they became strong proponents of the church's autonomy from state control. They became outspoken opponents of the erastianism they believed dominated the church of that age.

<sup>1</sup> Paul Kleber Monod, *Jacobitism and the English people 1688-1788* (Cambridge, 1989), 17-19, 144-45. John Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England 1646-1689* (New Haven and London, 1991). Robert D Cornwall, *Visible and Apostolic: The constitution of the church in High Church Anglican and Non-juror Thought, 1689-1745* (Newark, 1993). Henry Broxap, *The later Non-jurors* (Cambridge, 1924). John Findon, "The Non-jurors and the Church of England 1689-1716" (Oxford, D Phil, 1978).

<sup>2</sup> Mark Goldie, "The Theory of Religious Intolerance in Restoration England", in *From persecution to toleration: The Glorious Revolution and religion in England*, Ole Peter Grell, Jonathan Israel and Nicholas Tyacke, eds. (Oxford, 1991), 333-34, 359-60. Spurr, *Restoration Church of England*, 105-233.

The Nonjuror appeal for ecclesiastical autonomy stands in contrast to the High Church embrace of church-state unity pictured by J P Kenyon and B R White. Kenyon writes that "one important aspect of High Church propaganda was a passionate reaffirmation of the idea that the church was the state, and the state the church, that politics were religious and religion political".<sup>3</sup> B R White also has given the High Church position an erastian tint, stating that the High Church and Tory antagonism toward the Dissenters derived from a "deep, underlying conviction that the state was only safe, and the position of the gentry only secure, when there was one church in the land, safely domesticated and under control."<sup>4</sup>

Though High Churchmen did insist on the religious foundations of political discourse, and they were much less likely than Whigs or Latitudinarians to see politics as being a secular matter, it would be wrong to say that all High Churchmen believed church and state were one entity. Mark Goldie has correctly outlined an alternative view of High Church political theology, insisting that a "two societies doctrine" formed the basis of High Church ecclesiology and political theology. Clear examples of such a view prior to the Revolution of 1689 are tracts by John Kettlewell (1681) and Simon Lowth (1685). Both men were deprived in 1691 for refusing to take the oaths to William and Mary. Even Henry Sacheverell, a High Church Tory and a proponent of the union of church and state, did not believe that the church was subservient to the state. Kenyon does admit that Sacheverell viewed church and state as equal partners, but White presents the church as essentially a domesticated creature of the state. While High Churchmen from George Hickes to Sacheverell presumed that the state should be the "nursing father" or protector of the rights of the church, they also insisted that the state should keep its distance from issues of internal religious government.<sup>5</sup> The Nonjurors' need to defend their separation from the established church, and more pointedly, their adherence to the cause of the deprived bishops, led Nonjurors such as Charles Leslie, Henry Dodwell and George Hickes to enunciate the

<sup>3</sup> J P Kenyon, *Revolution principles: The politics of party 1689-1720* (Cambridge, 1977), 86.

<sup>4</sup> B R White, "The Twilight of Puritanism", in *From Persecution to Toleration: The Glorious Revolution and Religion in England*, Grell, Israel, and Tyacke, eds., 330.

<sup>5</sup> Mark Goldie, "The Nonjurors, Episcopacy and the Origins of the Convocation Controversy", in *Ideology and conspiracy: aspects of Jacobitism, 1689-1759* (Edinburgh, 1982), 15-35. Kenyon, *Revolution Principles*, 86, 92. John Kettlewell, *The measures of Christian Obedience* (London, 1681), 135-36. Simon Lowth, *Of the subject of church power, in whom it resides* (London, 1685), 6, 162-63. Henry Sacheverell, *Political union* (London, 1710), 9. Cf. J C D Clark, *English Society 1688-1832* (Cambridge, 1985), 123-27. Cornwall, *Visible and Apostolic*, chap. 4.



doctrine of ecclesiastical independence.<sup>6</sup> Though the Nonjurors became a “nonconformist sect”, in the sense that they no longer conformed to the state church, they differed markedly from other dissenters in England. In order to better understand the Nonjuror position it would be helpful to compare the views of a Nonjuror apologist with those of a Dissenter on the question of church-state separation. Any number of documents could be chosen, but for the purposes of this essay we will compare Thomas Brett’s (1667-1744), *The independency of the Church upon the state as to its pure spiritual powers* (1717), with three tracts written by Micaiah Towgood (1700-1792), a prominent eighteenth-century Presbyterian pastor and educator.<sup>7</sup> These tracts date from well after the Revolution of 1688-1689, but the piece by Thomas Brett points to the continued vitality of the Nonjuror position even after the failure of the Jacobite rebellion of 1715.

### Foundations of the Nonjuror Position

Thomas Brett was a latecomer to the Nonjuror cause. He converted to the Nonjurors only after George I ascended the English throne in 1714. Though he had originally conformed to the established church after the Revolution, he found the oath of abjuration against the Stuart claim to the English throne imposed at the dawn of the Hanoverian era incompatible with his religious and political beliefs. In spite of his late conversion to the cause, he quickly climbed the ladder of leadership, being consecrated bishop in 1715 by the Nonjuror primus, George Hickes. Brett would later become a leading figure in the Usages controversy that ultimately led to the division and demise of the Nonjuror movement. The Usages controversy resulted in part from differences of opinion over the authority

<sup>6</sup> [Henry Dodwell], *The doctrine of the Church of England concerning the independency of the clergy on the lay powers, to those rights of theirs which are purely spiritual, reconciled with our Oath of Supremacy and the lay-deprivations of the Popish Bishops at the beginning of the Reformation* (London, 1697). George Hickes, *The constitution of the Catholic Churches, and the nature and consequences of schism* (London, 1716). [Charles Leslie], *The case of the Regale and of the Pontificate stated, in the relation of a conference concerning the independency of the church as to her purely spiritual power and authority* (London, 1700).

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Brett, *The independency of the church upon the state as to its pure spiritual powers* (London, 1717). [Micaiah Towgood], *The Dissenting Gentleman's answer to the Reverend Mr White's three letters* (London, 1746); [Micaiah Towgood], *The dissenting Gentleman's second letter to the Reverend Mr White, in answer to his three letters* (London, 1747); Towgood's third letter is found in Micaiah Towgood, *A dissent from the Church of England fully justified: and proved the genuine and just consequence of the allegiance due to Christ, the only lawgiver in the church*, 4th ed. (Boston, 1768). Michael R Watts, *The Dissenters: From the Reformation to the French Revolution* (Oxford, 1978), 466. Cf. [Daniel Defoe], *The case of the Protestant Dissenters in England fairly stated* (London, 1716). [Daniel Defoe], *Christianity no creature of the state* (London, 1717).

of the church to make changes in doctrine and practice demanded by the traditions of the church.<sup>8</sup>

For the Nonjurors, advocacy of the independence of the church from the state was a political necessity. Their public adherence to the Stuart cause meant the loss of their positions in the state church. Responses by Nonjuror apologists, such as Henry Dodwell, Charles Leslie and George Hickes, to the state deprivation of the Nonjuror bishops and clergy laid the foundations for a distinctive Nonjuror ecclesiology. Although Thomas Brett's *Independency of the church upon the state* appeared relatively late in Nonjuror history, it provides a comprehensive picture of the Nonjuror position. By 1717, however, a new threat to the High Church movement emerged with the Bangorian controversy. Brett's treatise sought to defend the Nonjurors against the charge that the Nonjuror doctrine of ecclesiastical independence was a “popish” doctrine. He wrote in response to what he believed was an erastian spirit in the church. As he wrote, the Bangorian controversy, involving the Latitudinarian Bishop of Bangor, Benjamin Hoadly, erupted. The controversy led finally to the dismissal of the High Church dominated Convocation of Canterbury. It began with Hoadly's infamous sermon “The Nature of the Kingdom, or Church of Christ”, which was preached before King George I on 31 March, 1717. This sermon, along with his *Preservative against the principles and practices of the Nonjurors both in church and state* (1716), was seen by High Churchmen as a direct challenge to the ecclesiastical foundations of the church, including apostolic succession and the episcopate. To Nonjurors Hoadly's works seemed tainted with a bias toward state control of the church. Though Brett did not refer to Hoadly, it is highly likely that the Bishop of Bangor's exploits prodded him to take up his pen. In contrast to Hoadly, Brett strongly affirmed the High Church belief that Christ had given the church complete authority over the affairs of the Spirit. He affirmed and expanded on the Nonjuror belief that church and state were two independent and equal entities, each with its own divinely ordained government.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Broxap, *Later Non-Jurors*, 18-63. Robert D Cornwall, “The Later Non-jurors and the Theological Basis of the Usages Controversy”, *Anglican Theological Review*, 75 (Spring 1993): 166-86.

<sup>9</sup> Brett, *Independency of the church*, iii, 38-40. Thomas Brett, *Dr Brett's vindication of himself from the calumnies thrown upon him in some late newspapers, wherein he is falsely charged with turning papist* (London, 1715), 23. Benjamin Hoadly, *A preservative against the principles and practices of the Nonjurors both in church and state* (London, 1716). Benjamin Hoadly, “The Nature of the Kingdom, or Church of Christ”, in *The works of Benjamin Hoadly, DD*, 3 vols. (London, 1773), II, 402-9. Goldie, “Origins of the Convocation Controversy”, 18-20. W A Speck, *Stability and strife: England, 1714-1760* (Cambridge, Mass., 1977), 94-96. Norman Sykes, *Church and state in England in the XVIIIth Century* (Cambridge, 1934; reprinted, Hamden, CT, 1962), 290-94.

## Foundations of the Nonconformist Position

Though by the middle of the eighteenth century the Nonconformist churches had long been excluded from the ruling elite, this had not always been true. The idea of an established church was far from being an exclusively Episcopalian concept. Attempts had been made during the English Revolution of the 1640s and 1650s to institute a state church under Presbyterian auspices. Likewise, the established church in Scotland after 1691 adopted a Presbyterian polity and Scottish episcopalians thereby became dissenters. Some Dissenters, such as Richard Baxter, continued to affirm the advantages of a state church late into the seventeenth century. Dissenters of Baxter's persuasion followed him in pursuing a bill of Comprehension, which would make it possible for Presbyterians and some Congregationalists to re-enter the Church of England by modifying the episcopate to assuage the consciences of the Presbyterians.<sup>10</sup> Other Dissenters, however, believed that such an alliance between church and state would have dire consequences for both parties, and pushed instead for full religious liberty. Micaiah Towgood is a representative of this latter group. Educated in Dissenting academies, he held pastorates in a number of Presbyterian congregations. He wrote the three responses to John White, Curate of Nayland, while at Crediton in the 1740s. Later he would help establish the Exeter Academy, which he served as professor of biblical exegesis. Though a firm advocate of the biblical message, his Christology was Arian.<sup>11</sup>

Although the government granted toleration to the Dissenters in 1689, Dissenters continued to be excluded from government service and the universities, since the restrictions imposed by the Test and Corporation Acts remained in place. While freedom of worship and protection of the persons and property of orthodox Protestant Dissenters was decreed, Dissenting congregations were required to register with the government, subscribe to the doctrinal elements of the Thirty-nine Articles, take an oath

<sup>10</sup> William M Lamont, *Richard Baxter and the millennium* (Totowa, NJ, 1979), 1-2, 6-9. Norman Sykes, *From Sheldon to Secker: aspects of English church history 1660-1768* (Cambridge, 1959), 83-87. Roger Thomas, "Comprehension and Indulgence", in *From uniformity to unity 1662-1962*, Geoffrey Nuttall and Owen Chadwick, eds. (London: SPCK, 1962), 192-95. Isabel Rivers, *Reason, grace and sentiment: I, Whichcote to Wesley* (Cambridge, 1991), 90-108. Watts, *Dissenters*, 223-27, 251-52.

<sup>11</sup> [Towgood], *Dissenting Gentleman's answer*, 13-15. Watts, *Dissenters*, 466. *Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. "Micaiah Towgood". Rivers, *Reason, grace and sentiment*, 165-73. Cf. [Defoe], *Christianity no creature of the state*, 12. [Daniel Defoe], *Case of the Protestant Dissenters*, 4.

of allegiance to the monarch, and declare their opposition to the doctrine of transubstantiation. Additional restrictions were placed on the Dissenters in 1711 when Parliament outlawed Occasional Conformity and in 1714 when it passed the Schism Act, which required the licensing, by the bishop, of the Dissenters' academies. Both acts were repealed in 1719. Thus the practice of occasional conformity continued to provide a way around the barriers to public office. Occasional conformity involved the reception of the Eucharist in the Anglican church, the recipient would then receive an affidavit, qualifying him for office. Yet, High Churchmen and Dissenters alike condemned the practice. Micaiah Towgood decried the practice as a "prostitution" of the sacrament, while Henry Sacheverell, a rabid Tory and High Churchman, accused the Dissenters of using the sacrament to undermine the Anglican church.<sup>12</sup>

As we compare these tracts one by a Nonjuror bishop, and the others by a Nonconformist minister, we will seek to understand how these two very different men understood the relationship of church and state, the effects of their possible alignment, and discern at what points, if any, church and state could cooperate. Each pole will be contrasted, showing where they agreed and where they disagreed. Though they agreed on the principle of separation, they had very different visions of what ecclesiastical autonomy entailed.

## Relationship of Church and State

An erastian tone dominated the eighteenth-century English church. Most Anglicans viewed church and state as two inseparable entities, united in a common purpose. This had been established doctrine as far back as, if not before, the beginning of the seventeenth century, with the publication of Richard Hooker's *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*. Both High Churchmen, such as Henry Sacheverell, and Latitudinarians, such as Benjamin Hoadly, affirmed the close relationship of church and state.<sup>13</sup> Thomas Brett and Micaiah Towgood, on the other hand, were representatives of

<sup>12</sup> G V Bennett, "Conflict in the Church", in *Britain After the Glorious Revolution, 1689-1714*, Geoffrey Holmes, ed. (New York, 1969), 161-66. Sykes, *Sheldon to Secker*, 89-96. Watts, *Dissenters*, 165-66, 263-67. [Towgood], *Dissent from the Church of England*, 149. Cf. [Daniel Defoe], *Case of the Protestant Dissenters*, 8. [Daniel Defoe], *An enquiry into the occasional conformity of Dissenters, in cases of preferment* (1701), 21-25. Sacheverell, *Political union*, 20, 24.

<sup>13</sup> Goldie, "Origins of Convocation Controversy", 15-16. Goldie, "Religious Intolerance", 332-33. John Marshall, "The Ecclesiology of the Latitude-men 1660-1689", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 36 (July 1985): 407-427. Speck, *Stability and strife in England, 1714-1760*, 94-95. Sykes, *Church and State in England*, 2-3. Norman Sykes, "Benjamin Hoadly, Bishop of Bangor", in *The social and political ideas of some English thinkers of the Augustan Age*, F J C Hearnshaw, ed. (New York, 1923), 139-40. Hugh Trevor-Roper, "Toleration and Religion after 1688", in *From persecution to toleration*, Grell, Israel and Tyacke, eds., 389-91.



factions that strongly opposed the erastian cloud that hung over the English church. Although their circumstances were quite distinct, both men offered strong rebuttals to the existing conditions of their churches.

Thomas Brett understood church and state to be "two independent powers", one spiritual and the second temporal. Each citizen was subject to the proper authority in the temporal and spiritual spheres. He insisted that the two powers could coexist peacefully as long as each stayed within its proper bounds and did not interfere in the affairs of its opposite. Though both societies were divinely ordained, the church had a special commission from Jesus Christ. This commission gave the church the responsibility for the spiritual care of Christ's people. Brett affirmed the catholic doctrine of apostolic succession, a doctrine that undergirded the Nonjuror claim to be the only true national and episcopal church in England. Like all Anglicans he rejected Papal supremacy, and he believed that the contemporary bishops represented Christ and his apostles as governors of the church in England. Yet, he also insisted that the king did not have supremacy over the church. Invoking primitive precedent, he insisted that the western church had been independent of the state for three centuries prior to the conversion of Constantine and remained as such long afterward.<sup>14</sup>

Brett strongly resented Henry VIII's claim to supremacy over the church. Whereas Brett claimed that Thomas Cranmer believed that the pagan Roman emperor Nero was by virtue of his office the head of the church, Brett could not envision anyone but a Christian as head of the church. Thus, Brett asserted that if the king was the supreme head of the church, "then it is impossible that the church should subsist without the king; for no body, and such the Scripture tells the church is, can subsist without its head".<sup>15</sup> To him, political control of the church placed the church in a perilous situation, since the monarch's religious allegiance could not be made completely certain. James II's Catholicism and George I's Lutheranism were certainly on his mind as he wrote. The fact that their religious convictions differed from those of the church they headed was a troubling thought. Though he strongly believed in the autonomy of the church he still held that there was only one true church in England and that was the church that adhered to episcopal government. As a

<sup>14</sup> Brett, *Independency of the Church*, 2-3, 38-40, 43, 54. Thomas Brett, *An account of church government and governours*, 2nd ed. (London, 1710), 15. Hickes, *Constitution of the Churches*, 63-64. Cf. Goldie, "Origins of the Convocation Controversy", 18-19.

<sup>15</sup> Brett, *Independency of the church*, 14, 20-21. Peter Newman Brooks, *Cranmer in Context* (Minneapolis, 1989), 104-5.

Nonjuror, he took the additional step of limiting the true episcopal church to that community of faith not dominated by the government.

Brett did recognize the state's jurisdiction over "bodies, lives and estates", but he made it clear that the church had spiritual power over the "souls of the people". Nonjurors continued to be strong proponents of the doctrines of divine right monarchy and passive obedience long after 1689, but they combined these views with an advocacy of divine right episcopacy to provide the foundation for the independence of the church from the state. Though Brett had originally acquiesced to the change in monarchs in 1689 his conversion to the Nonjuror position in 1715 resulted from his refusal to take the oath of abjuration renouncing the dynastic claims of the Stuarts in favour of the Hanoverians. It is in the context of this affirmation of the divine origins of the English government that Brett differentiated between church and state. The independence of the church did not, in his mind, rule out the establishment of the church. The government, if it chose to do so, could back a particular church or religion with civil law. The magistrate also had the right to decide what, if any, temporal revenues would be given to the churches. He underscored, however, the notion that state establishment did not make a religion either true or false. If it did, he insisted, "Popery" would be the true religion in France and Spain and Islam in Turkey and Persia. Still, though church and state had entered a mutually beneficial arrangement, the church remained a separate entity with regard to its spiritual commission.<sup>16</sup>

Brett vigorously denied the charge that his advocacy of two separate powers was "popish". Unlike the Roman Church, or at least his understanding of the Roman position, he did not assert the temporal primacy of the church over the state. For him, the Roman doctrine was simply erastianism turned upside down. He sought, therefore, to pursue a middle course, one that affirmed the independent integrity of each sphere of authority. In fact, Brett wrote that Rome itself had destroyed the primitive autonomy of the church by joining with the secular authorities to suppress other rival bishops. The true independence of the church, in his mind, did not lead to "popery", but instead, it undermined popery. "Popery", he insisted, "is built upon the destruction of provincial synods, which was the highest standing authority of the Church till the Patriarchs first and then the Popes usurped upon them."<sup>17</sup>

Micaiah Towgood, as a Presbyterian, did not see the need to defend

<sup>16</sup> Brett, *Independency of the church*, 115-17. Brett took a similar view even before becoming a Nonjuror, as is evidenced in his *Account of church government*, 14-15. Cf. Broxap, *Later Nonjurors*, 18-29. Monod, *Jacobitism and the English People*, 17-19. Daniel Szechi, *Jacobitism and Tory Politics 1710-1714* (Edinburgh, 1984), 48-49.

<sup>17</sup> Brett, *Independency of the church*, 4-5, 90. Brett, *Dr Brett's vindication of himself*, 23-25. Cf. [Roger Laurence], *The Bishop of Oxford's charge considered* (London, 1712), 6-7.

his position against the charge of being an adherent to a Roman Catholic doctrine. Instead, he was the accuser, calling for an end to discrimination and persecution on religious grounds. Towgood also defined the church as a divine institution, and he insisted that the only true lawgiver and king in this church was Christ himself. He contrasted the true Church of Christ with that of the Church of England, the latter being a civil establishment. He wrote that while the Church of Christ was "founded upon the *Scriptures*, as the only authentic rule of its doctrines and worship, the Church of England is a civil establishment, founded upon *Acts of Parliament*". In the Church of England the king, not Jesus Christ, was the "chief cornerstone".<sup>18</sup>

For Nonconformists, such as Towgood, the state could not, with any rectitude, exert control over the church. Though he professed his allegiance to the king, who provided him with protection and civil blessings, he did not equate this allegiance with subjection to the state in religious matters. He insisted the Christianity forbade "obedience to *civil governours* in things of a religious nature" (Matthew 23: 8-9). The Christian was to call no one father or master, that is, he or she is to "acknowledge no authority or jurisdiction of *any* in matters of religion", for Christ alone is law-giver and master, with all Christians standing on "equal foot". A tract attributed to Daniel Defoe states similarly that neither the nature and purpose of Christianity, nor the "manner of its promulgation", that is, the mission given by Christ to his disciples, provided evidence of any link between Christianity and the state. For both Nonconformist authors, the difference between the two institutions rested on the question of dominion; whereas the temporal rulers exercised dominion over their subjects, God alone had rule over the Christian religion. Anyone who claimed to have dominion over someone's religious conscience usurped the rights of God and of Christ. Such an explicit statement of individualistic and voluntaristic religion differed markedly from Brett's catholic and hierarchically governed notion of Christianity. Towgood's assertion of Christ's sole rule over the church was very close in content to the views expressed by Bishop Hoadly, to whom Towgood, in fact, appealed for assistance. Though the appeal to Christ's authority did call into question state control, it also had the tendency to undermine all human authority in the church and undergirded freedom of conscience.<sup>19</sup>

Towgood was a Nonconformist because he was "convinced of its lawfulness and expedience; that 'tis a *debt* I owe to God, to *Liberty*, to *Truth*, and an act of homage and allegiance due to Christ, the *only* law-giver and

<sup>18</sup> [Towgood], *Dissenting Gentleman's answer*, 14-21.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-2, 13-18. [Towgood], *Dissenting Gentleman's second letter*, 88. Hoadly, "Nature of the Kingdom", 2: 402-9. Cf. [Defoe], *Christianity no creature of the state*, 4-5. Brett, *Independency of the church*, 10-12.

King in the Church". Neither church nor state could decree beliefs or practices that contrasted with what he found in Scripture, and in Scripture he found the commands of Christ, the church's one law-giver and king.<sup>20</sup>

Each of the two authors had a different focus. Thomas Brett emphasized the institutional church and the legal autonomy of its rulers, the bishops. He did not, however, embrace full religious tolerance or religious pluralism. Micaiah Towgood, on the other hand, stressed the sole authority of Christ over the church and the freedom of the individual to accept or reject that rule. Matters of indifference, that is matters left undefined in Scripture, should be left to the individual to decide upon.

### Effects of a Relationship between Church and State

Towgood believed that the merger of church and state led to the usurpation of Christ's prerogatives by self-styled "supreme heads" of the church. State control left the church open to the threat of being forced to teach things that Christ had not commanded or taught and placing before the people terms of communion and religious rites that Christ had not required. The result was that the Church of Christ and the established Church of England were two different societies. As a Dissenter, Towgood insisted that his allegiance could only be to the Church of Christ. Therefore he was within his rights to protest the claims of anyone who professed to being the head of the church.<sup>21</sup>

Not only did the state's usurpation of Christ's prerogatives lead to uncalled for intervention in the religious life of the church, but it also led to the subversion of the church itself. It meant that the church was dependent upon the state for its authority. For instance, ordination, supposedly a prerogative of the bishops, was ultimately derived from the king or queen and exercised at his or her pleasure. Excommunication also rested in state hands, with the magistrate able to revoke the spiritual censures imposed by bishops and archbishops. Kings and queens, according to Towgood, could even excommunicate, suspend, or deprive an individual from their place in the church, or "by proclamation only, without the least confession, humiliation, or satisfaction for their offence, pardon and restore *excommunicated persons*, the vilest offenders to the church's bosom again". Further, the state could use the sacred rites of the Lord's Supper for political purposes, thus prostituting them for a secular purpose. In calling for the repeal of the Test Act, Towgood noted that the Act required men to come to the Lord's Supper in order to retain their civil offices. This meant that the minister was unable to refuse even the "most veteran debauchee" who demanded this sign of Christian fellowship. His rebuttal to Mr White, his Anglican respondent, insisted that if White was truly concerned about the honour of his church, then he would call for the

<sup>20</sup> [Towgood], *Dissenting Gentleman's answer*, 1-3.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 30-31.



repeal of this law that had opened up the floodgates of the church to the "dregs of the human race".<sup>22</sup> Ultimately the real bishops of the church were the king and Parliament. King and Parliament alone had the authority to decide matters of worship, doctrine and polity, even as to who would be admitted to the episcopacy and priesthood. The Church of England, therefore, was a "Parliamentary Church: that it is not properly an ally, but a mere creature of the State. It depends entirely upon the acts and authority of Parliament for its very essence and frame". Thus, even if the bishops and clergy found the decrees of Parliament repugnant, they could do nothing about them.<sup>23</sup>

Though the state might use the church for its own purposes, Towgood questioned whether the state even needed the church for its survival. Whereas the Church of England claimed to be an essential part of the constitution, Towgood responded by asking: if the church and its liturgy and hierarchy disappeared, would the monarchy be overthrown, the courts of law closed, parliament shut down, and commerce and trade stagnate? He called such beliefs "romantic and absurd". In fact, Towgood pointed to the Scottish Nonjurors, whom he called "inveterate enemies of our happy civil constitution, and have risen in impious rebellion against his present majesty". These were people who held the same beliefs and affirmed the same polity as those in the Church of England, yet they had risen against the state and, in league with papists, had attempted to "subvert the Protestant religion and liberties".<sup>24</sup> As for the importance of the episcopal polity to the security of the state, Towgood was quick to remind his readers that the established church in Scotland was Presbyterian, and as such it was just as much a part of the British Constitution as the episcopal Church of England.<sup>25</sup>

Thomas Brett also dealt with the debilitating effect of state domination of the church. He raised the question of the clergy's pride and ambition. Though a High Churchman himself, Brett did acknowledge that many of the charges made by critics of the church were justified. He condemned those clergymen who sought to gain the "highest stations of the Church by flattering the civil powers". The content of this flattery, however, was the endorsement of the view that both civil and spiritual power derived from the magistrate. The clergy believed in this way in order to receive the earthly treasures and honours that "pious and religious princes" had "settled on the Church". He did not rule out the reception of temporal benefits, but he did reject the idea that self-government had been exchanged for these earthly benefits. In no way should the fact of state protection be taken to mean that ecclesiastical authority devolved from the

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 10-11, 27-29. [Towgood], *Dissenting Gentleman's second letter*, 35-36.

<sup>23</sup> [Towgood], *Dissenting Gentleman's answer*, 10-12.

<sup>24</sup> [Towgood], *Dissenting Gentleman's second letter*, 38-39.

<sup>25</sup> [Towgood], *Dissent from the Church of England*, 276-78.

state.<sup>26</sup>

Though Brett was not as pessimistic about the relationship between church and state as Towgood, he warned against church and state being so intermingled that they ended up usurping each other's authority. Brett believed that these kinds of problems had emerged during the English Reformation. Cranmer, he said, had equated the necessary graces for both civil and sacred office, thus giving the king the same rights as the bishops to ordain priests and deacons. According to Brett's alarming scenario, the state then became the source of ecclesiastical authority, something that he refused to endorse. While he acknowledged the right of the magistrate to remove civil benefices attached to the episcopate, the magistrate had no right either to give or take away spiritual authority. To separate oneself from one's proper ecclesiastical governor, which had occurred in the deprivation of the Nonjuror bishops, was schism, and the church that existed in schism was without effectual ministrations until the breach was healed.<sup>27</sup> For Brett this meant that the established Church of England could not provide efficacious sacraments to the people. Thus, valid sacraments could be received only from Nonjuror priests.

Brett wrote a considerable distance from the affairs of the last decade of the seventeenth century. All of the deposed Nonjuror bishops had passed away and the emotional energy expended by Henry Dodwell in his defence of the deposed bishops is absent from Brett's work. Though he denounced the depositions, something he did not do prior to his conversion to the Nonjurors in 1715, his understanding of the nature of the church itself had not changed dramatically.<sup>28</sup> Whereas Towgood was concerned about the state imposing on the church items of belief and practice that at best were *adiaphora*, Brett was interested in preserving the authority of the church as an episcopal institution. While Towgood called for liberty of conscience, Brett affirmed the right of the church to determine matters of belief, even when they lay outside the purview of

<sup>26</sup> Brett, *Independency of the church*, 125. [Defoe], *Christianity no creature of the state*, 13.

<sup>27</sup> Brett, *Independency of the church*, 14-18, 115. Thomas Cranmer did in fact hold the king's authority in spiritual matters in high regard. He affirmed the king's authority, as supreme head of the English church, to license him to serve as archbishop and fulfil his spiritual duties in the church. Brooks, *Cranmer in context*, 25-26, 31, 104-5.

<sup>28</sup> Brett, *Account of church government*, 34-38. See the earlier works of Henry Dodwell for a more passionate discourse on the relationship of the state to the church: [Dodwell], *Doctrine of the Church of England* (1697); [Henry Dodwell], *A defence of the vindication of the deprived bishops* (London, 1695); [Henry Dodwell], *A vindication of the deprived bishops* (London, 1692). Cf. Findon, "Nonjurors and the Church of England", 158-59, 170-72. Sykes, *Church and state in England*, 286-87.

Scripture.<sup>29</sup>

### Cooperation between Church and State

Though both men were concerned about the effects of church-state cooperation, Brett was much more open to the concept. Brett repudiated the idea that the church's power derived from the state. Instead he insisted that all ecclesiastical authority came from Christ and his Apostles, but mediated to the contemporary church by way of apostolic succession and the episcopacy. Still, the church did not reject the help of the state. Any temporal rewards or punishments annexed to the church's spiritual cause were the prerogative of the magistrate, but they were not considered a necessary element of the church's identity. Whereas Christ had relied on only spiritual authority, something that the clergy were to emulate, the magistrate could decide, as Constantine had in the case of Arius, to back the church's decisions with his authority. The civil authority, however, was limited to attaching civil punishment or encouragement, which was the right of every sovereign whether Christian or not. This did not, however, give the magistrate authority over the spiritual realm, which was entrusted by Christ to the church alone.<sup>30</sup>

While Towgood had great reservations about the cooperation of church and state, he was not beyond considering the inclusion of moderate Dissenters in the Church of England. He claimed that he did not desire to see the destruction of the Church of England; he only wished to see it purged of those things that were contrary to the religion of Christ. Speaking for the Nonconformists he wrote:

We wish to see it establish'd upon the catholic and *broad bottom*, upon which alone it can stand *firm*; even the Scriptural foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being its only Law-giver and King: And not upon the narrow basis on which it now rests; the *Articles, Canons, the Institutions and Inventions* of fallible and weak men; on which it can never be strongly and firmly fixt; which are all, in the Apostle's language, *wood, hay, stubble; whose end is to be burnt!*<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup> [Towgood], *Dissenting Gentleman's second letter*, 39-40. Brett, *Account of church government*, 34-38. On the question of Brett's attitude towards indifferent matters and the authority of the church see Cornwall, "Later Non-Jurors", 166-86; Robert D Cornwall, "The Search for the Primitive Church: the Use of the Early Church Fathers in the High Church Anglican Tradition, 1680-1745", *Anglican and Episcopal History* 59 (September 1990): 308-11.

<sup>30</sup> Brett, *Independency of the church*, 23-24, 28. One does not see in this tract the view, evidenced in Sacheverell's *Political union*, that the fate of both the episcopate and the monarchy was linked.

<sup>31</sup> [Towgood], *Dissenting Gentleman's second letter*, 39.

For comprehension of the Dissenters to work the state church would need to guarantee liberty of conscience and end its insistence on uniformity. The Dissenters, according to Towgood, only wished to be admitted to the church on the same basis that Christ and the Apostles had laid out for the primitive church.<sup>32</sup>

Thomas Brett, operating under the idea that church and state were two equal and distinct powers, maintained that church and state should support each other. Religious liberty was not a concept that concerned Brett. His concept of autonomy was rooted in older and narrower values, not those of the Enlightenment. Church and state might be separate entities, but there still remained only one lawful and true Christian church in England. This church, in his opinion, was episcopal, maintained apostolic succession, and was owed the total allegiance of all true Christians in the country. Whereas Towgood denied that the state had any right to coerce belief, Brett affirmed the state's right and duty to protect the church from danger. Thus, Brett would have been in agreement with High Churchmen who raised the red flag of the danger to the church posed by erastianism and nonconformity. This belief, therefore, gave the government sufficient latitude for coercion. The church supported the civil government by teaching their parishioners the "principles of loyalty and obedience". The church enforced these principles with the threat of damnation for noncompliance. The magistrate, on the other hand, was to "support and protect the church by making laws in its favour, and corroborating her decrees and canons by its temporal authority". As long as each party kept to its own duties there would be no trouble between them. Difficulties arose when the government attempted to minister word and sacrament or decided when and to whom they should be administered. The church, on the other hand, overstepped its authority when it challenged the civil authorities or tried to determine when "civil penalties should be inflicted".<sup>33</sup> Brett's views of the independent integrity of the church differed little from High Churchmen such as Francis Atterbury or Henry Sacheverell. He simply stressed this precept to a greater degree than did his two colleagues within the Church of England.<sup>34</sup>

### Conclusion

Thomas Brett and Micaiah Towgood understood the separation of church and state in two very different ways. Whereas Towgood advocated reli-

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 39-40. For a more pessimistic view of the situation see [Defoe], *Case of the Protestant Dissenters*, 4, 11-12. [Defoe], *Christianity no creature of the state*, 5-6.

<sup>33</sup> Brett, *Independency of the church*, 40. Brett, *Account of church government*, 11-15. The latter document predates Brett's conversion to the Nonjurors, but even then he affirmed the autonomy of the church. [Towgood], *Dissenting Gentleman's answer*, 30-31. [Towgood], *Dissenting Gentleman's second letter*, 39-40. Cf. [Defoe], *Case of the Protestant Dissenters*, 11-12. Goldie, "Religious Intolerance", 333-34, 359-60.

<sup>34</sup> Cornwall, "Visible and apostolic", 133-79.

gious liberty and obedience to Christ and the Scriptures alone, Brett simply desired that the state not interfere in the spiritual affairs of the church. Towgood opposed the practice of occasional conformity because it was the result of laws that made religious profession a requirement for civil office. Brett, on the other hand, as a good High Churchman, valued the Test and Corporation acts, though he denounced the Dissenter's practice of occasional conformity as an abuse of the sacrament. For his part, Brett did not reject the policy of only placing members of the Church of England in government positions. Thus, Thomas Brett did not advocate the complete separation of church and state; instead, he attempted to distinguish between their proper spheres of authority. Church and state were two divinely ordained powers, each with its own divinely appointed governor. This is what Mark Goldie has labelled as the "two societies" doctrine.<sup>35</sup>

These two men operated from two completely different world views. Thomas Brett looked back to the world that existed during the first centuries of the church's existence. He pined for a church that exhibited all of the attributes of the early church, as is evidenced by his involvement in the Usages Controversy that divided the Nonjuror movement. Therefore, ecclesiastical autonomy meant the independence of the church's hierarchy from the control of meddling government officials.<sup>36</sup> Towgood, on the other hand, was more a man of the Enlightenment. Like John Locke before him, he envisioned a voluntaristic and free church, one that recognized freedom of conscience and belief. He insisted that true faith in God could not be coerced.<sup>37</sup>

Thomas Brett's tract more than anything is evidence that though High Churchmen may have embraced Tory or Jacobite political causes, they also sought to protect the Church's integrity as a religious society. Though they might affirm the church's role in supporting the state, they insisted that the church had the right to self-determination, and they would

<sup>35</sup> Goldie, "Origins of the Convocation Controversy", 18-19.

<sup>36</sup> Brett's adherence to primitive tradition is evidenced by his *Tradition necessary to explain the Holy Scriptures* (London, 1718). On the Usages Controversy see Broxap, *Later Non-Jurors*, 35-65; Cornwall, "Search for the Primitive Church", 308-11; Cornwall, "Later Non-Jurors", 166-186.

<sup>37</sup> [Towgood], *Dissenting Gentleman's answer*, 1-3, 8. John Locke, "A Letter Concerning Toleration, being a translation of the *Epistola de Tolerantia*", in *The Works of John Locke*, 10 vols. (London, 1823, reprinted Germany: Scientia Verlag Aalen, 1963), 6: 5-13, 21, 30-33. [Defoe], *Christianity no creature of the state*, 16-17. Watts, *Dissenters*, 466. Eldon J Eisenach, *Two worlds of liberalism: religion and politics in Hobbes, Locke and Mill* (Chicago, 1981), 82-89.

not brook government aggression against the church. Although the Nonjurors were clearly a minority movement, many High Churchmen, Brett included, stayed within the established church but remained uncomfortable with the role that William III and George I played in England's religious life. Brett strongly repudiated the doctrine of royal supremacy that had governed English church life since the Reformation. This anti-erastianism, held by Thomas Brett and his Nonjuror colleagues, provides sufficient evidence that the Nonjurors' exile from the established church and the organs of political power was founded on theological assumptions. It also proves that the eighteenth century English Church was not simply an erastian beast, and signals that there were many people within the ranks of the Church of England who affirmed the theological and spiritual foundations of the episcopal church in England.

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In 1991 the present writer published a study of the Unitarian petition to Parliament of 1792, seeking to place it within a longer-term context as an episode in the theory and practice of religious toleration and in the development of Unitarianism as a distinctive denomination.<sup>1</sup> However, that earlier article did not deal in any depth with the short-term circumstances of 1791-2 in which the petition was formulated, canvassed, supported, presented and rejected. Our perception of those circumstances has been dominated by a welter of evidence which testifies to an intense, widespread and sometimes violent public hostility to Unitarianism.<sup>2</sup> This is both understandable and appropriate; the unpopularity of Unitarians in this period is undoubted, and some of its features in this article. But it is not the whole story. The attention and curiosity which the petition attracted and which is reflected in the newspaper and periodical press as well as in much private correspondence was not all one-sided. The petition had its advocates as well as its critics. Several advantages can follow from an analysis of the public and parliamentary support which it garnered. In the first place, there is something to learn about the nature of the pressure groups, metropolitan and provincial, which supported the petition. Secondly, the numbers of signatures to the petition offer some clues about the grassroots support and the geographical distribution of Unitarianism in the early 1790s. Thirdly, there are several indications as to the parliamentary support available to a religious grouping justly respected for its access to the political elite. Finally, the opportunity exists, albeit on a small scale, for a case-study of the mechanics of a late eighteenth-century petition, with some illustration of the conventions according to which it was conducted and the assumptions which governed its progress.

One obstacle to these inquiries is the absence of a complete record of signatures to the petition. Although the petition itself is printed in the *Journals of the House of Commons*, the documents which accompanied it, bearing the all-important names of the signatories, have apparently not

I wish to thank Mr F C Pipe-Wolferstan of Statfold Hall, Staffordshire, Mr S Whitbread of Southill Park, Bedfordshire, the John Rylands University Library of Manchester, Dr Williams's Library, London, North Yorkshire Record Office and Cambridge University Library for permission to consult and quote from documents in their possession. I am grateful to the British Academy for a grant in support of my research into Unitarianism. My particular thanks are due to Dr David Wykes for helpful comments on a draft of this article and for providing me with many references.

<sup>1</sup> G M Ditchfield, 'Anti-trinitarianism and Toleration in Late Eighteenth Century British Politics: the Unitarian Petition of 1792', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 42 (1991), 39-67.

<sup>2</sup> See David L Wykes, "The Spirit of Persecutors Exemplified": The Priestley Riots and the Victims of the Church and King Mobs', *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society (TUHS)*, XX, No.1 (April 1991), 17-39.

survived.<sup>3</sup> Nor does one find any list of signatories in the press or in the form of pamphlets and broadsheets. Congregation archives too, are rather disappointing in their failure to reveal much about local support for the petition. Other sources, then, must be consulted in the search for that support. The value of the petition as it is printed lies in the clarity with which it expressed its aims. This is salutary, for when urging the Commons to accept the petition on 11 May 1792 Charles James Fox obscured the limited nature of those aims by presenting it in terms of 'the fundamental, unalienable rights of man', with the implication of a massive assault upon Anglican privilege.<sup>4</sup> In fact the petition sought the repeal of clause xvii of the Toleration Act of 1689 (which withheld the benefits of that Act from non-Trinitarians) and the Blasphemy Act of 1698. This is evident, too, in the letters of Theophilus Lindsey, the moving spirit of the Unitarian Society of 1791, from which the petition emanated.<sup>5</sup> Yet though these aims did not go beyond the redress of the grievances of one small religious minority, they strained against the theological and political structure of a state which had made Anglican trinitarianism one of its central pillars. That alone was sufficient to turn the Unitarian petition into a national issue.

The decision to petition Parliament was made by the leading figures of the newly-formed Unitarian Society on 14 April 1791. Lindsey, Joseph Priestley, Samuel Heywood 'and one or two more of us' persuaded a meeting of the Society at the King's Head Tavern in the Poultry to sanction an approach to Fox with the idea.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, before the open split between Burke and Fox, the flight to Varennes and the Birmingham Riots, Lindsey adopted what seems in retrospect an extraordinarily optimistic tone.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, only the shortness of time and an unwillingness to interrupt the progress of the Catholic Relief Bill, then making its way through Parliament, prevented the introduction of the

<sup>3</sup> The petition was addressed to the House of Commons. The presumption has always been that it perished in the fire of 16 October 1834, which 'reduced the two chambers and the Commons' library to smouldering ruin'; J Mordaunt Crook and M H Port, *The History of the King's Works*, VI, 1782-1851 (London, 1973), 532. My searches for the signatures to the Feathers Tavern petition have always met the same obstacle.

<sup>4</sup> *Journals of the House of Commons*, XLVII, 787-9; W Cobbett, *Parliamentary History of England*, XXIX, 1372-81.

<sup>5</sup> John Rylands University Library of Manchester (J.R.L.), autograph letters of Theophilus Lindsey; Lindsey to William Tayleur, 14 April 1791 and 15 Feb. 1792. Cambridge University Library (C.U.L.), Papers of William Frend; Lindsey to Frend, 23 April 1791.

<sup>6</sup> J.R.L. MSS, Lindsey to Tayleur, 14 April 1791.

<sup>7</sup> C.U.L., Lindsey to Frend, 23 April 1791.

petition in the session of 1791.

The public events of the remaining months of that year were, of course, much less favourable from the point of view of the would-be petitioners. Hence, early in 1792, several newspapers reported that the plan, together with any renewal of the campaign for repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, had been abandoned.<sup>8</sup> An exception, however, was the *Norfolk Chronicle or Norwich Gazette* which on 25 February 1792 predicted:

Some persons, desirous to remove the more flagrant grounds of complaint brought forward by the Dissenters, have, however, determined to approach the legislature by the constitutional mode of petition, and to ask the repeal of those two obsolete laws, which render persons writing or speaking against the Trinity, liable to three years imprisonment, to sundry forfeitures, or to other civil disabilities.<sup>9</sup>

Clearly the newspaper was aware of events within the Unitarian Society, where the decisive moves were made in February 1792. The timing is partly explained by the quest of the Birmingham victims for parliamentary compensation and the easy access to the leadership of the Whig opposition enjoyed by the Unitarian elite. Having dined with Fox and Sheridan on 7 February, Priestley reported to William Russell of Birmingham:

They expressed a willingness to do anything that we should wish them to do, but I said that our friends wished that nothing might be done till after the Assizes, and they seemed to think that it was as well to forbear at present. Mr Fox, however, wished that an application might be made for the repeal of the Act of King William against blasphemy, and tomorrow the Unitarian Society are to agree to open a petition to be presented to parliament by as many persons as can readily be found in London or its neighbourhood, to be presented this Session to keep up an attention to the subject, and prepare the way for a more general petition the next year. Mr Dodson has shewn me a draught petition, which I think very proper.<sup>10</sup>

Hence as late as mid-February 1792 several possibilities remained open. It was unclear as to whether or not the petition would be presented in the session of 1792; there was a suggestion that it would be canvassed

<sup>8</sup> *Derby Mercury*, 1 March 1792; *Sheffield Advertiser*, 2 March 1792.

<sup>9</sup> *Norfolk Chronicle or Norwich Gazette*, 25 Feb. 1792.

<sup>10</sup> B.L. Add. MSS., 44992, fo.48, Priestley to Russell, 15 Feb. 1792; see also Add. MSS., 44992, fo.46, Priestley to Russell, 6 Feb. 1792.

only in the London area; and a more ambitious move for a broader toleration was conceived for 1793. However, on 16 February a general meeting of the Unitarian Society resolved most of these issues and decided to go ahead immediately. According to Lindsey, Dodson, assisted by Priestley and 'one other person' (presumably Heywood) had been appointed to submit a petition to the meeting; when they did so, a committee of the Society, chaired by Thomas Brand Hollis, to superintend its organization, was formed. The final decision as to timing was left to Fox, and he quickly indicated his preference for the session of 1792.<sup>11</sup> It soon became evident, too, that the petition would not be confined to London. But the most significant development was the sudden need to provide the parliamentary sponsors with sufficient evidence to convince the House of Commons that public support for the petition actually existed. Yet in view of the disheartening events since the previous April, one might ask what had led the (singularly appropriate) alliance of theologians and lawyers who formulated the petition to suppose that such public support could be found and could be induced to express itself. Here one may legitimately distinguish between two types of support for the petition, potential and actual.

The former is to be located in expressions of opinion not directly related to the petition itself but inspired by allied issues and clearly consistent with its objectives. In 1791-2 there were public meetings and addresses whose participants might realistically be described as potential supporters of the Unitarian petition. The best examples are the expressions of sympathy with Priestley after the Birmingham Riots. His *Appeal to the public on the subject of the riots in Birmingham* lists a series of addresses offering him succour and encouragement. Seven were from France, including one from the Academy of Sciences at Paris, and were perhaps of doubtful value in the current climate of British politics.<sup>12</sup> But the version of the *Appeal* in Priestley's *Works* lists 15 such addresses from counties and towns in England.<sup>13</sup> The pamphlet version of the *Appeal* prints some of these addresses and adds several others from Priestley's congregation, the New Meeting, Birmingham.<sup>14</sup> Part II of the

<sup>11</sup> J.R.L. MSS, Lindsey to Tayleur, 15 Feb. 1792; Lindsey to John Rowe, 6 March 1792.

<sup>12</sup> J T Rudd, ed., *The theological and miscellaneous works of Joseph Priestley*, 25 vols., (London, 1817-1832), XIX, 355n.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* They were from Great Yarmouth; Maidstone; Old Meeting, Birmingham; Leeds; West Riding of Yorkshire; Llechryd, South Wales; Derby (Philosophical Society); Exeter; Norwich (Revolution Society); Manchester (Constitutional Society); New College, Hackney; Southern and Western Somerset; Bolton; Bristol and Bath; London (Revolution Society).

<sup>14</sup> Priestley, *An Appeal to the public, on the subject of the riots in Birmingham* (Birmingham, 1791), 129 ff. There are four addresses from the New Meeting and two from the 'young people' belonging to that congregation.



*Appeal* lists two more addresses, making a total of eighteen locations from which they came.<sup>15</sup> It is true that most of these addresses were sent by Dissenters and were thus, in a sense, predictable; the one exception was sent by the Philosophical Society of Derby.<sup>16</sup> But they represented a wide geographical area; to the taunt that no address had come from London, Priestley was able to cite the declaration of the Dissenting Deputies and Delegates signed by Edward Jeffries, their chairman, dated 1 February 1792.<sup>17</sup> Of course, not all of these addresses were in theological harmony with Priestley, but even those which were not expressed support for religious liberty. That from Essex stated 'though we differ from you on a variety of interesting questions, yet we are united by the most ardent wishes to promote the extension of civil and religious liberty, and to encourage that freedom of inquiry which must eventually produce the universal acknowledgement of truth, and the perfection of the human character.'<sup>18</sup> Similar sentiments were expressed at a much more widely publicized meeting of Dissenters of the West Riding of Yorkshire on 1 September 1791.<sup>19</sup> While a correspondent of the *Gentleman's Magazine* saw these addresses as politically subversive, it is hardly surprising that Priestley interpreted them as the work of 'the friends of liberty, civil and religious'.<sup>20</sup> Lindsey saw them as evidence that orthodox Dissenters would join in support for a move against the offending Acts and even hoped for Anglican signatures. Hence, he wrote, the petition was intended that 'such as Calvinists and Churchmen can have no scruple to sign, but the contrary who wish well to religious liberty and free enquiry into the scriptures'.<sup>21</sup>

There were other stirrings. One of Wyvill's correspondents informed

<sup>15</sup> Priestley, *Works*, XIX, 439, 568-9. The two additional addresses were from Essex and the Protestant Dissenting Deputies in London.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 599-600. One member of the Society, the Anglican clergyman Charles Hope, objected to the address because of his political differences with Priestley. He publicized his objections and was consequently expelled from the Society.

<sup>17</sup> Priestley, *Works*, XIX, 438-9. The address from the Deputies is printed, *ibid.*, 568-70 and in *Gentleman's Magazine*, LXII (1792), 567-8.

<sup>18</sup> Priestley, *Works*, I, pt.2, 179-80.

<sup>19</sup> *Gent. Mag.*, LXI (1791), 924-7.

<sup>20</sup> Letter of 'J.M.', *ibid.*, LXII (1792), 124; Priestley, *Works*, I, pt.2, 121. Of course in other cases (such as that of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society) moves for an address to Priestley were unsuccessful, but even there, sentiments consistent with support for the petition were expressed. See Jenny Graham, 'Revolutionary Philosopher: the political ideas of Joseph Priestley (1733-1804)', Part Two, *Enlightenment and Dissent*, No.9 (1990), 32-4.

<sup>21</sup> J.R.L. MSS., Lindsey to Tayleur, 19 Sept. 1791; Scott Collection, Lindsey to Russell Scott, 21 Feb. 1792 (kindly communicated by the Revd Dr H John McLachlan).

him of the formation of a small society at Bath to pursue 'certain political topics' including the heresy laws; David Jones, who succeeded Priestley as minister of New Meeting, Birmingham, and who wrote under the pseudonym of 'The Welsh Freeholder', was a member.<sup>22</sup> A society was founded in Wiltshire under the aegis of the Anglican seceder, barrister and future MP Benjamin Hobhouse; its objective was the repeal of the test laws and one of its first fruits was Hobhouse's *Treatise on Heresy as cognizable by the Spiritual Courts. And an Examination of the Statute 9th and 10th of William III, c.32* (1792).<sup>23</sup> Hobhouse had been a delegate from Wiltshire to the committee for repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts in 1789-90 and in that capacity had, as 'a late convert to the Diss[ente]rs', come to the notice of Richard Price.<sup>24</sup> He quickly became a powerful literary protagonist on behalf of Rational Dissent.<sup>25</sup> There were Dissenting organizations in the Midlands: the 'Deputies of Protestant Dissenters of the three Denominations within the Midland District', formed to promote repeal in 1790, made encouraging noises. On 2 March 1791, at a meeting in the hotel, Birmingham, scene of the ill-fated dinner of 14 July of that year, it joined, via Dodson, with the London Dissenting Deputies in passing resolutions in favour of Catholic relief as well as in deploring all remaining penal religious legislation.<sup>26</sup> Meetings continued into the following year; on 25 April 1792, 'the Ministers, &c, of the three denominations of Dissenters, assembled at Ilkeston', delivered, on behalf of 'the Associated Dissenters in the district of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire, and part of Yorkshire', an address of sympathy to Priestley and a protest against Unitarian grievances.<sup>27</sup> On 9 May 1792, only two days before the petition was debated in the Commons, the annual meeting of 'the Association of Protestant Dissenters of the County of Worcester' at the Lion Inn, Kidderminster, issued an ironical address to members of the established church, quoted with approval the views expressed at the Yorkshire meeting the previous September, and in urging 'wise and temperate reform' clearly took a stand for the cause of the petition.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>22</sup> North Yorkshire Record Office, Wyvill of Constable Burton MSS., ZFW 7/2/77/10, W. Danby to Wyvill, 23 Oct. 1791.

<sup>23</sup> Wyvill MSS., ZFW 7/2/77/4, Hobhouse to Wyvill, 21 Feb. 1792; ZFW 7/2/77/35, Wyvill to Hobhouse, 25 Feb. 1792.

<sup>24</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*, XXI, no.4, Winter, 1980, 393, 412.

<sup>25</sup> Notably in his controversy with Francis Randolph; see his entry in the British Library catalogue of printed books.

<sup>26</sup> John Money, *Experience and identity. Birmingham and the West Midlands, 1760-1800* (Manchester, 1977), 221,239; D.W.L., Odgers MSS., 93 H7.

<sup>27</sup> *Derby Mercury*, 10 May 1792. The address was signed by Rev. George Walker, the chairman of the meeting.

<sup>28</sup> D.W.L., MS. 24.157 (175) iii, Samuel Kenrick to James Wodrow, 2 July 1792.



Similarly, meeting at Wakefield, the 'Associated Presbyterian Ministers in this part of the West Riding', thanked Wyvill for his *Defence of Dr Price and the Reformers of England* (1792) and boldly advocated 'civil and religious liberty' in a way which implied a long-standing commitment.<sup>29</sup>

The continuity of meetings of this kind, from early 1792 to the month of the climax of the petition itself (and even after the parliamentary debate), as well as their number, offered encouragement to Unitarians in London. The Unitarian Society seemed to enjoy a flurry of prosperity, with 155 initial members - individual and congregational - in 1791, and Lindsey sensed a national expansion of Unitarian numbers and meetings in the summer of that year.<sup>30</sup> The Society overlapped, to some extent, with the elite of the Dissenting Deputies. Although the committee headed by Edward Jeffries (himself a founder member of the Unitarian Society) which the Deputies had formed to pursue repeal in 1787-90 disbanded itself, it created a 'permanent' standing committee for England and Wales to promote Dissenters' civil liberties in the new circumstances after the massive parliamentary rejection of repeal in March 1790. Sensitive to charges of ignoring provincial Dissenters, this standing committee consisted of 42 country delegates and 21 from London. It was increasingly dominated by Unitarians and indeed Michael Dodson was its chairman.<sup>31</sup> It survived until 1796 and its most active period was 1790-92. This committee, with its provincial correspondents, and the Unitarian Society with its widely, if thinly distributed adherents, offered the prospect of a network of congregations and individuals from which signatories to a petition might be expected.

At the same time, Christopher Wyvill, still a nationally influential figure, even though his popular heyday at the height of the County Association movement of 1779-80 was long over, published not only his *Defence of Dr Price* but the early volumes of his *Political Papers*. He received many letters of congratulation and agreement from recipients of the former.<sup>32</sup> He intended that the latter, though devoted mainly to parliamentary reform, should 'contain some sentiments on religious liberty which you have heard from me before', since 'our present system of mitigated Intolerance is really injurious to Religion and wrong in point of policy'.<sup>33</sup> There was some encouragement to be drawn from sections of the

<sup>29</sup> Wyvill MSS., ZFW 7/2/72/11, John Ralph (minister of Northgate End chapel) to Wyvill, 18 May 1792.

<sup>30</sup> Ditchfield, 'Anti-trinitarianism and Toleration', 50.

<sup>31</sup> T W Davies (ed), *Committees for Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. Minutes 1786-90 and 1827-8* (London Record Society, XIV, 1978), xii.

<sup>32</sup> Most of them may be found in Wyvill MSS., ZFW 7/2/69 and ZFW 7/2/72.

<sup>33</sup> Wyvill MSS., ZFW 7/2/74/16, Wyvill to William Wilberforce, 18 Jan. 1792.

provincial press.<sup>34</sup> Despite the deterioration in some places of relations between Churchmen and Dissenters following the repeal debate of March 1790, in other places, previously long-established co-operation continued. Unitarians were heavily involved in petitioning against the slave trade in 1792; William Turner of Newcastle, for instance, was particularly prominent in raising funds for the cause.<sup>35</sup> In Manchester, Thomas Barnes of Cross Street Chapel and William Hawkes of Mosley Street Chapel, continued to preach charity sermons in aid of the town's infirmary, dispensary and lunatic asylum in March 1792; these institutions attracted Anglican patronage as well.<sup>36</sup> Lindsey was informed that even in Warwick and Kidderminster, where the impact of the Priestley riots had been directly experienced, local Anglican clergymen had tried with some success to repair relations with Dissenters.<sup>37</sup> At the time of the petition's presentation, the mood of its potential sympathizers was aptly summed up by William Russell. Responding on behalf of 'a general meeting of sufferers' in Birmingham on 22 April 1792 to the address of encouragement from the London Dissenting Deputies, he made specific reference to the offending laws:

We shall cheerfully concur with you in your endeavours to obtain the repeal of all penal statutes in matters of religion, hoping that unanimity in the grand principles of liberty and truth will unite the common body of Dissenters, and that they will persevere in their endeavours till those intolerant and unchristian statutes, which have so long been a disgrace to our code, shall be expunged from it.<sup>38</sup>

The second type of support is to be found in the months February/March 1792 when the petition was launched. It was organized from London and the initiative was almost entirely metropolitan. The central nature of the organization is seen in Lindsey's offer, on behalf of the Unitarian Society, to pay the costs incurred in the collection of signatures by William Turner of Newcastle and Rev. Russell Scott of Portsmouth.<sup>39</sup> But that metropolitan initiative had been stimulated by the expectations created by the meetings, addresses and more informal

<sup>34</sup> Among many examples see especially *York Herald*, 14 Jan. 1792; letters of 'J', 'Observator' and 'Detector' in *Kentish Gazette*, 24, 27 April, 1 May 1792; *Derby Mercury*, 15 March 1792.

<sup>35</sup> G M Ditchfield, 'Manchester College and Anti-Slavery', in Barbara Smith (ed.), *Truth, liberty, religion. Essays celebrating two hundred years of Manchester College* (Oxford, 1986), 195-201; *Newcastle Courant*, 14 Jan., 4 Feb. 1792.

<sup>36</sup> *Manchester Mercury*, 6, 13, 20 March 1792.

<sup>37</sup> J.R.L. MSS., Lindsey to Tayleur, 12 and 19 Sept. 1791.

<sup>38</sup> Priestley, *Works*, XIX, 571.

<sup>39</sup> D.W.L. MSS., Lindsey to William Turner, 14 June 1792; Scott Collection, Lindsey to Scott, 21 Feb. 1792.

communications outlined above. The essential points about the campaign for signatures are, first, that once the decision to apply to Parliament in the 1792 session had been made, signatures were needed at short notice: as Lindsey told Scott, 'You are requested to procure as many names to it, and as speedily as you conveniently can. For the session will be so short that we must make all possible haste to secure a day before the members are retiring into the country.'<sup>40</sup> The obvious way to obtain signatures in these circumstances was to approach well-established Unitarian, or Unitarian-inclined, congregations where such numbers as existed were concentrated and where a well-disposed minister could canvass for them. Secondly, although it went much further than the London area as envisaged by Priestley in mid-February, the petition did not involve a systematic trawl of the whole country - it did not, for instance, seek signatures in Scotland or mention the particularly severe Scottish laws against anti-trinitarianism. Thirdly, although there were no public meetings to publicize the petition (there were, after all, unhappy memories of the hostile response of some Anglican clergy to the repeal campaign early in 1790) the potential for such meetings had already been demonstrated. Had they been called, more signatures to the petition (though of course also more public antipathy) would almost certainly have resulted.

The Unitarian Society acted alone throughout, for, as Lindsey acknowledged, 'it would not have been easy to have brought the Dissenters in general to unite in such an application.'<sup>41</sup> He was referring to Dissenting institutions, not individuals. Although the Dissenting Deputies, in many cases, sympathized with the petition, and although they received a message from a London Baptist congregation (23 December 1791) recommending that the next application to Parliament should be for the repeal of all penal laws against Dissenters, the Deputies as a body gave no formal support to the petition, which does not feature in their minutes.<sup>42</sup> Hence Dodson worked through the Unitarian Society, not through the Deputies' standing committee of which he was chairman. The General Body of Dissenting Ministers expressed a similar aspiration but it, too, remained aloof.<sup>43</sup> Each organization was willing to make general statements of principle, but not to campaign officially on behalf of a Unitarian cause. The reason surely lies in the fact that the majority of ministers and congregations in the London area remained orthodox, and in some cases aggressively so. There is no evidence that the petition was sent to the ministers of orthodox congregations.

<sup>40</sup> Lindsey to Scott, 21 Feb. 1792.

<sup>41</sup> J.R.L., MSS., Lindsey to Tayleur, 14 April 1791.

<sup>42</sup> Guildhall Library, MS. 3083: Deputies of Protestant Dissenters, Minute Books 1732-1909. The entry for 23 Dec. 1791 is at MS. 3083/3, fo.9.

<sup>43</sup> D.W.L. MSS. 38.105 - 38.107: Minute Books of the Body of Protestant Dissenting Ministers of the Three Denominations in and about the Cities of London and Westminster: see especially 38.106, fo. 301.

Despite the appointment of Thomas Brand Hollis's committee, the main burden fell upon three members of the Unitarian Society, who dispatched it to sympathetic ministers. Lindsey covered the south of England, Priestley (based now in Clapham) the North and Midlands and Rev. Thomas Jervis of Holborn 'the west with Chichester',<sup>44</sup> although this division of responsibilities was not strictly maintained. Lindsey gave Scott specific instructions: 'I need not desire you to take all possible care the Petition be not dirtied or creased, and particularly that no copy be taken of it, because it would be very prejudicial to us to have it get into print before presented.'<sup>45</sup> Priestley was equally specific in sending the petition to Rev. John Estlin of Lewins Mead Chapel, Bristol:

By the advice of our friends in the House of Commons, the Anti-trinitarians in London have agreed to present the inclosed petition to Parliament this session, and we hope to have the concurrence of the friends of free inquiry (among whom may be even Trinitarians) in some of the principal towns in the country. I depend upon your activity to get it signed by as many as you conveniently can in Bristol and its neighbourhood, so as to be returned in a fortnight. You will direct that the names be written horizontally, that no vacant spaces be left when the different sheets are pasted together here.<sup>46</sup>

The final form of the petition then, clearly consisted of sheets from various locations assembled in London to form one document, of which, apparently, no copy was taken.

The lack of time and the absence of public meetings restricted the petition's prospects of very extensive support. Wyvill, with excessive pessimism, even thought that a county meeting in Yorkshire in favour of abolition of the slave trade would be 'very poorly attended ... because the Yorkshire Gentlemen have been so much fatigued with public meetings for the last twelve Years, that nothing seems likely to bring them into Action again, for some time, but a national Question, arising on some point of great national importance, respecting War, or the public Liberty'.<sup>47</sup> What support, then, did the petition obtain? Sympathy could be expected from latitudinarian Anglican clergymen like Wyvill (although it is not certain as to whether he actually had the opportunity to sign) and some of their lay associates. While some were repelled by Priestley's Socinianism, others saw moves of this kind as a necessary prelude to lit-

<sup>44</sup> Lindsey to Scott, 21 Feb. 1792.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. This probably helps to explain why the signatures have apparently not survived.

<sup>46</sup> Priestley, *Works*, I, pt.2, 181; Priestley to Estlin, 18 Feb. 1792.

<sup>47</sup> Wyvill MSS., ZFW 7/2/74/16: Wyvill to Wilberforce, 18 Jan. 1792.



urgical reform within the Church of England itself.<sup>48</sup> In the early 1790s at least, the Unitarian petition was entirely consistent with the spirit of latitudinarianism.<sup>49</sup> Hence claims that the petition attracted support apart from that of Unitarians and other Dissenters have some plausibility. When Fox presented the petition of 8 March he described the signatories as 'chiefly of a class who are denominated Unitarians, but among them were various sects of Dissenters and many Members of the Church of England'.<sup>50</sup> Several newspapers reported that it was signed by 'Roman Catholics, various descriptions of Presbyterian Dissenters and many respectable members of the Church of England.'<sup>51</sup> The *Nottingham Journal* described the signatories as 'respectable persons, not only of the Unitarian worship, but of Dissenters who believed in the Trinity, and many also of the established Church'.<sup>52</sup> Thomas Belsham stated that the petition was 'signed by persons of all persuasions, Churchmen and dissenters'.<sup>53</sup>

Lindsey's correspondence, however, suggests strongly that the bulk of the signatures came from towns where Rational Dissent had been strong for many years. In all probability, just as some two-thirds of the individual members of the Unitarian Society were respectable, mainly professional, laymen (and women), most of the petitioners were Unitarian laymen in well-entrenched congregations. Even among them the response at first did not appear to be promising. Lindsey reported that at the end of February 'we had received so very few names, and returns of petitions out of the Country, that some who were averse to our going to Parliament this year were for putting it off, and stated that without a thousand signatures at least it was not to be thought of'.<sup>54</sup> This might explain why Wyvill and Belsham, writing nineteen years later, seriously under-

estimated the number of signatures.<sup>55</sup> In fact Lindsey on 6 March put the figure at 'between 1,400 and 1,500, as proper for aught I conceive as if it had been 14,000', while Fox, presenting the petition to the Commons on 8 March, put it at about 1,600.<sup>56</sup> Both hinted that more might be forthcoming and Lindsey subsequently claimed that 'upward of 400' additional names had indeed arrived. This would suggest a total in the region of 2,000.<sup>57</sup> Of the initial 1,400 - 1,500 signatures, Lindsey reveals the locations, though not the identities, of just over half, that is 861 from eight towns. They derived from three areas: the south and south-west, viz. Taunton (288), Portsmouth (38), Maidstone (86) and Essex Street Chapel, London (70); the West Midlands, viz. Birmingham (186) and Shrewsbury (49); and East Anglia, viz. Fenstanton (74), where the signatures were obtained not by a congregation but by the Anglican seceder, Rev. John Hammond, and Yarmouth (70).<sup>58</sup> In each of these cases, except Fenstanton, well-disposed congregations and their ministers were available to further the cause. The minister of the High Street Chapel in Shrewsbury, John Rowe, for instance, was in constant communication with Lindsey, and the chapel's leading layman, William Tayleur, had given one hundred guineas to the Unitarian Society and was one of Lindsey's chief financial and moral supporters.

Although the sample is a very small one and must be treated with extreme caution, the pattern of signatures so far indicated, like the membership of the Unitarian Society, suggests at first glance a state of affairs somewhat different from that of the mid-nineteenth century when, as Dr Seed has shown, the centre of Unitarianism lay firmly in the industrial north.<sup>59</sup> It was also in marked contrast to Wyvill's Unitarian-dominated petition for 'universal toleration' in 1812, when 90% of the 8,000 signatures were drawn from the four counties of Lancashire, Yorkshire, Northumberland and Durham.<sup>60</sup> To some extent, evidence from other towns supports this impression. Three congregations where it seems highly probable that the petition was supported were Lewins Mead,

<sup>55</sup> Bedfordshire Record Office, Whitbread Papers W1/4306, Wyvill to Edward Blount and others (copy), 1 March 1811; W1/4319, Belsham to Whitbread, 25 Nov. 1811. Each estimated the number of signatures to the Unitarian Petition as fewer than 500.

<sup>56</sup> J.R.L. MSS., Lindsey to Rowe, 6 March 1792; Debrett, *Parl. Reg.* XXXII, 38.

<sup>57</sup> D.W.L. MSS., 24.86(4), Lindsey to Turner, 26 March 1792; J.R.L. MSS., Lindsey to Tayleur, 26 March 1792.

<sup>58</sup> J.R.L. MSS., Lindsey to Rowe, 6 March 1792. In this letter, Lindsey gave the figure for Birmingham as 93 then added 'as many again as at first are returned from Birmingham'. This produces a total from that town of 186. This letter is partly quoted, but with many inaccuracies, in H McLachlan, 'More Letters of Theophilus Lindsey', *TUHS*, III, pt.4 (1926), 371.

<sup>59</sup> John Seed, 'The role of Unitarianism in the formation of a liberal culture, 1775-1851'. A Social History' (Hull Univ. PhD thesis, 1981), 55-7.

<sup>60</sup> Whitbread Papers, W1/4350.

<sup>48</sup> See, for example, Wyvill MSS., ZFW 7/2/69/16, Anthony Temple (Vicar of Easby, Yorks) to Wyvill, 1 May 1792; ZFW 7/2/69/5, Anthony Thorpe (a founder of the York subscription library) to Wyvill, 18 April 1792.

<sup>49</sup> See J C D Clark, *English society 1688-1832: ideology, social structure and political practice during the Ancien Regime* (Cambridge, 1985), especially 307-15; J Gascoigne, 'Anglican Latitudinarianism and Political Radicalism in the late eighteenth century', *History*, LXXI (1986), 22-38. The subsequent retreat of latitudinarians from this 'liberal' position is examined in N U Murray, 'The Influence of the French Revolution on the Church of England and its Rivals, 1789-1802' (Oxford Univ. D Phil, 1975), 95ff.

<sup>50</sup> Debrett, *Parliamentary Register*, XXXII, 38.

<sup>51</sup> *Leeds Mercury*, 17 March 1792; *Oxford Journal*, 17 March 1792.

<sup>52</sup> *Nottingham Journal*, 17 March 1792.

<sup>53</sup> T Belsham, *Memoirs of the late reverend Theophilus Lindsey* (2nd ed., London, 1820), 230-1.

<sup>54</sup> J.R.L. MSS., Lindsey to Rowe, 6 March 1792.

Bristol, where Priestley sent the petition to the minister, John Estlin; High Pavement chapel, Nottingham, where the minister, George Walker, was a committed campaigner against penal laws and where the congregation sent condolences to Priestley after the Birmingham riots; and the 'Respectable Society' at Bridport, which had a similar record.<sup>61</sup> But further scrutiny casts doubt over the implication that the geographical distribution of the signatures reflects a pattern of Unitarianism which was largely pre-industrial. Lindsey's correspondence yields evidence of support, though without giving numbers, from several urban congregations in the north of England. At Mill Hill chapel, Leeds, the Rev. William Wood reported 'a good number of names', including 'several churchmen ... the mayor and some aldermen.'<sup>62</sup> Since the corporation of Leeds at this time was dominated by a community of Anglican woollen merchants, this seems to be an example of non-Dissenting support for the petition.<sup>63</sup> The mayor of Leeds was the merchant Wade Browne, JP, and Wood described him as 'a well-informed & steady friend to the interests of general liberty.'<sup>64</sup> At Hanover Square Chapel, Newcastle upon Tyne, William Turner took 'much pains to support [it] with names.' Lindsey informed him that 'Your copy of the Petition, so amply attested, did not indeed arrive in time, not through your fault, to be included when Mr Fox introduced it to the house'; instead, it was numbered among the additional 400 signatures which arrived later.<sup>65</sup> At Cross Street Chapel, Manchester, the co-pastor, Thomas Barnes, though an Arian and not a member of the Unitarian Society, was said to be 'very hearty for the thing'.<sup>66</sup>

However, at a total of what is usually estimated as just over 200 Rational Dissenting congregations in England in the last decade of the

eighteenth century,<sup>67</sup> barely 50 were represented in the initial membership of the Unitarian Society<sup>68</sup> and even fewer contributed to the petition. Little else, perhaps, could be expected in so decentralized a church polity. Undoubtedly this reflected a failure to involve some of these congregations; it is not clear to how many the petition was actually sent. A further problem was that this approach meant that there were few opportunities for sympathetic but isolated individuals to sign unless they were personally known to the organizers. An exception was the Rev. Theophilus Houlbrooke, who, following Lindsey's own example, had resigned the rectory of Stockton-on-Teme, Worcestershire; Lindsey sent him a copy of the petition and it was returned with at least some signatures, including those of William Tayleur's two grandsons.<sup>69</sup>

Some of the gaps were highly significant. The most distinguished Unitarians of Cambridge University - William Frend, Robert Tyrwhitt, James Lambert - all refused, on theological grounds, to sign, objecting to the Socinian rigour of the Unitarian Society.<sup>70</sup> It is impossible to determine how many others were deterred by this consideration. William Hawkes of Mosley Street chapel, Manchester, withheld his name for a different reason; he was under surveillance by local loyalists.<sup>71</sup> There were no signatures from Westgate Chapel, Wakefield, despite the presence there of Lindsey's close friend William Turner senior as minister and the Milnes family (three of whom belonged to the Unitarian Society) as principal lay members.<sup>72</sup> Hull and Liverpool are not mentioned in any of the surviving evidence. At the Princes Street Presbyterian congregation, Westminster, the minister, Andrew Kippis, had not even heard of the petition, let alone circulated it, at the end of February.<sup>73</sup> Nor was there always unanimity among the members of those congregations

<sup>61</sup> Priestley, *Works*, I, pt.2, 181; Nottingham Univ. Library, Dept. of MSS., Ref. Hi M1, High Pavement Chapel Minute Books 1777-1812 (pages not numbered), entry sub 1792; Basil Short, *A respectable society. Bridport 1593-1835* (Bradford-on-Avon, 1976).

<sup>62</sup> J.R.L. MSS., Lindsey to Rowe, 6 March 1792.

<sup>63</sup> R G Wilson, *Gentlemen merchants. The merchant community in Leeds, 1700-1830* (Manchester, 1971), 161, 188-90. Lindsey reported another example: 'Mr [John] Wiche from Maidstone acquaints me that many churchmen gave him their names, and some Trinitarians who declared that they did it as being against persecution on any religious account'; J.R.L. MSS., Lindsey to Rowe, 6 March 1792.

<sup>64</sup> Wilson, *Gentlemen Merchants*, 241-2; Wyvill MSS., ZFW 7/2/69/10, Wood to Wyvill, 24 April 1792.

<sup>65</sup> D.W.L. MSS., Lindsey to Turner, 26 March 1792.

<sup>66</sup> J.R.L. MSS., Lindsey to Rowe, 6 March 1792.

<sup>67</sup> See, for example, R Currie, A Gilbert and L Horsley, *Churches and churchgoers. Patterns of church growth in the British Isles since 1700* (Oxford, 1977), 213; J Seed, 'Gentlemen Dissenters: the social and political meanings of Rational Dissent in the 1770s and 1780s', *Historical Journal*, 28 (1985), 302.

<sup>68</sup> See the list of the founder members of the Unitarian Society in *Unitarian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge* (London, 1791), 9-14 and in Seed, 'Role of Unitarianism', 368-71'. Dr Seed's work contains the fullest analysis of the social basis of Unitarianism, particularly in the north of England, for this period.

<sup>69</sup> J.R.L. MSS., Lindsey to Tayleur, 26 March 1792.

<sup>70</sup> J.R.L. MSS., Lindsey to Rowe, 6 March 1792.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid; Chetham's Library, Manchester, Mun. A6.45, Minutes of the Manchester Association for Preserving Constitutional Order and Liberty as well as Property against the various efforts of Levellers and Republicans (volume unfoliated).

<sup>72</sup> D.W.L. MSS., 12.44(55), Lindsey to Turner, 14 June 1792.

<sup>73</sup> J.R.L. MSS., Lindsey to Tayleur, 27 Feb. 1792.



which did cooperate. At Leeds it was reported that 'some Dissenters declined giving their names, thinking the application would succeed, and that it would prevent any future success in the repeal of the Test laws.'<sup>74</sup> Of some 300 hearers at Essex Street, Lindsey could gain the adherence of only 70, even during the London season, when most of them might have been expected in town, and where the petition was 'laid in the Vestry'.<sup>75</sup> One of Lindsey's hearers, the Staffordshire lawyer and landed gentleman Samuel Pipe-Wolferstan, duly signed the petition at Essex Street but recorded in his diary that his fellow-lawyer Thomas Hood of Gray's Inn, though a member for many years, would not do so.<sup>76</sup> Hence the base of support of the petition was a narrow one; unlikely to convert more than a tiny fraction of the orthodox, it did not even enjoy the united approval of all Unitarians, especially in the broader, pre-1791, sense of that term. 861 signatures from eight congregations (or sympathizers, as at Fenstanton) implies an average of 108 per congregation, and, although the sample is distorted by the fact that 288, or 14% of a total of 2,000, came from Joshua Toulmin's Mary Street General Baptist chapel at Taunton, it is difficult to believe that the petition was actively supported by many more than 20 congregations. Two qualifications offset this low figure. First, the response to the petition, because of the shortness of time and limited geographical circulation, cannot possibly be taken as indicative of the maximum potential support available to the petitioners. Hence the potential support discussed above was not all turned into actual support. Secondly, the Unitarian Society was not seeking a massive public endorsement in the early months of 1792; Rational Dissenters had never traded solely on numbers. A sense of context is provided by the assumption of the petitioners that one thousand signatures was the minimum necessary; twenty years earlier, some two hundred and fifty had been thought sufficient for the Feathers Tavern Petition. But a more sobering comparison is one with the 20,000 signatures for the abolition of the slave trade in Manchester alone - achieved at the same time and from a not dissimilar social constituency.<sup>77</sup>

However, when Fox opened the debate on the petition on 11 May 1792, parliamentary rather than public support was of prime importance. But shortly beforehand there had been a most unfavourable development. Early in April the London, then the provincial, press reported the injury to, then the death of, Gustavus III of Sweden by an assassin's bullet. The *Public Advertiser* warned 'The Treasury prints will affirm ... that he was shot at the instigation of the Democrats' but proceeded to make that

<sup>74</sup> J.R.L. MSS., Lindsey to Rowe, 6 March 1792.

<sup>75</sup> J.R.L. MSS., Lindsey to Tayleur, 27 Feb. 1792.

<sup>76</sup> Samuel Pipe-Wolferstan diary, 4 March 1792.

<sup>77</sup> Roger Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition, 1760-1810* (London, 1975), 274-5; Seymour Drescher, *Capitalism and Antislavery. British mobilization in comparative perspective* (Oxford, 1987), 80.

very outcome more likely by adding 'The consequence is, a further guarantee to the freedom of France - to the improving freedom of England - to the approaching freedom of all the world.'<sup>78</sup> In fact the ministerial press did not exploit the affair quite as much as might have been expected. But the role which the King might have played in an international crusade against the French Revolution did not pass unnoticed. A letter to the *Morning Herald* on 19 April complained that 'The Republican papers ... have justified the horrid assassination of the King of Sweden.'<sup>79</sup> On the same day, Gillray's cartoon 'Patriots amusing themselves, or Swedes practising at a Post' explicitly linked the assassination to Unitarians and their parliamentary friends with its caricature of Fox discharging a blunderbuss at what was clearly the backside of George III, with Sheridan and Priestley in approving attendance.<sup>80</sup> A parliamentarian who made the same connection was Viscount Wentworth, a Lord of the Bedchamber:

Mr Fox is to make his Unitarian Motion after the Holiday. The whole World I think is gone Mad, & the Cursed new Political Doctrines are spreading about in all parts of the Kingdom, I can perceive but little pains taken to stop their gaining Ground. The news I hear at St James is another desperate blow at Royalty. The King of Sweden is assassinated by one of his own Officers at a Masquerade, who shot him in the Back, I do not know that the account is he is really dead, but I believe no hopes of his recovery.<sup>81</sup>

On 10 May, the day before the debate on the petition, the court of George III went into mourning for the dead monarch.<sup>82</sup> This did nothing to diminish the immediacy of Burke's vision of conspirators occupying the Tower of London and seizing the King's person.<sup>83</sup>

In such circumstances it is less surprising that the petition was rejected in the Commons (by 142 votes to 63) than that almost one-third of the MPs who participated in the division voted for it. One hostile observer,

<sup>78</sup> *Public Advertiser*, 9 April 1792.

<sup>79</sup> Letter of 'A.M.' in *Morning Herald*, 19 April 1792.

<sup>80</sup> See Martin Fitzpatrick, 'Priestley Caricatured', in A Truman Schwartz and John G McEvoy (eds), *Motion toward perfection: the achievement of Joseph Priestley* (Boston, 1990), 189,191 (plate 16), 216.

<sup>81</sup> Warwick Record Office, CR 2017/C244, p.205 (Denbigh Letterbooks), Wentworth to Earl of Denbigh, 6 April 1792. I am grateful to the Rt. Hon. the Earl of Denbigh for permission to quote from this document.

<sup>82</sup> *London Gazette*, 5-8 May 1792; *The Times*, 11 May 1792.

<sup>83</sup> *Parl. Hist.*, XXIX, 1389.

Richard Hurd, Bishop of Worcester, was far from complacent about the outcome:

I am by no means satisfied with a majority of 70. Surely on such a struggle the Church of England cannot be fallen so low. I expect much greater things from its friends, now called upon to shew themselves ... Surely Mr Fox is playing a desperate game in putting himself at the head of the Dissenters.<sup>84</sup>

The absence of a division list permits only the reasonable speculation, rather than the categorical assertion, that the minority was drawn mainly from the Foxite Whigs. Dr O'Gorman estimates their numbers in the Commons in 1792-3, coincidentally, at 66, only three more than the number of MPs who voted for the petition.<sup>85</sup> Apart from the exertions of Fox himself, Charles Grey was thanked by a meeting of Unitarians in Newcastle for supporting the petition; he was also a teller in its favour. The other teller was William Adam; Samuel Whitbread and G A North were also sympathetic.<sup>86</sup> If not all the Foxite group turned out on that day, there was also support from up to a dozen non-Foxites. William Smith, a Unitarian but not yet a Foxite, spoke for the petition, while John Lee, a Unitarian of long standing but in fading health, John Sargent, MP for Seaford, and Sir James St Clair Erskine were all friendly.<sup>87</sup> Whether the two other MPs who belonged to the Unitarian Society - R S Milnes and James Martin - attended and voted cannot be ascertained, but seven months later Lindsey described the latter as 'one among the not a few glorious lights, of whom Dissenters have to boast in these days.'<sup>88</sup> The Unitarian Benjamin Vaughan, a former pupil of Priestley at Warrington Academy, became an MP on 7 February 1792 and might have been expected to vote accordingly on 11 May.<sup>89</sup> Henry Peirse, MP for Northallerton, told Wyvill that he had voted for the petition.<sup>90</sup> At precisely this time, James Scott, minister of the Unitarian chapel at Cradley, recorded that 'Mr Edward Foley, member for the county of Worcester ... publicly asserted the rights of the Dissenters [and] uniformly supported their interest in Parliament, together with his brother Andrew Foley,

<sup>84</sup> F Kilvert, *Memoirs of the life and writings of Richard Hurd* (London, 1860), 180.

<sup>85</sup> F O'Gorman, *The Whig Party and the French Revolution* (London, 1967), 253.

<sup>86</sup> E A Smith, *Lord Grey, 1764-1845* (Oxford, 1990), 42-3; *Commons Journals*, XLVII, 789; Pipe-Wolferstan diary, 2 May 1792; *Parl. Hist.*, XXIX, 1398.

<sup>87</sup> *Parl. Hist.*, XXIX, 1395-8; Pipe-Wolferstan diary, 2, 4 May 1792; *Morning Chronicle*, 5 May 1792.

<sup>88</sup> J.R.L. MSS., Lindsey to Rowe, 1 Dec. 1792.

<sup>89</sup> Roland Thorne, *The history of Parliament. The House of Commons, 1790-1820* (5 vols., London, 1986), V, 442-3.

<sup>90</sup> Wyvill MSS., ZFW 7/2/69/22: Peirse to Wyvill, 12 May 1792.

Member of [sc. for] Droitwich.'<sup>91</sup> According to Samuel Shore, who witnessed the debate, William Wilberforce voted for the petition and afterwards admitted that 'he never was so hurt by a debate before'. This is not wholly implausible, for, despite his refusal to countenance repeal in 1790 and his attack on Socinianism in chapter seven of his *Practical View* (1797), he had previously attended Essex Street chapel.<sup>92</sup>

The debate produced a further twist. It seems to have reinforced as well as reflected Whig divisions over the French Revolution. Burke, in denouncing the petition, seems to have been taunted from his own side, just as he had been on 6 May 1791, the day of his famous breach with Fox over the Quebec Bill.<sup>93</sup> Several reports state that Fox's reply to his speech provoked him into crossing the floor of the Commons and sitting next to Pitt - just as he had done on that more celebrated occasion a year earlier.<sup>94</sup> As Peirse told Wyvill, 'There seemed to be an entire Breach between them & Burke took his Seat while Fox was speaking in a most haughty Manner between Pitt & Dundas - who I believe [does] not much approve of the Union.'<sup>95</sup> Before the debate the Whig opposition - Burke apart - had remained at least superficially united and sat on the opposition benches; ten days later it began publicly to disintegrate as some of its leading figures approved the royal proclamation against sedition on 21 May.<sup>96</sup>

The immediate response of the petitioners to the defeat was to consider a further application in the next parliamentary session,<sup>97</sup> although the plan mentioned by Priestley in February for a more sweeping attack on penal religious legislation was quietly abandoned. Disney immediately produced a pamphlet which hinted at a renewed petition, but privately he was much less sanguine, confiding to Pipe-Wolferstan that 'the times will

<sup>91</sup> Rev. James Scott, MS. 'A History of Cradley', 67; he was quoting his kinsman, James Scott of Stourbridge. The MS is in the possession of Higgs and Sons and Harward and Evers, Solicitors, Stourbridge, to whom I am indebted for permission to consult it.

<sup>92</sup> Wyvill, *Political Papers*, V, 45-6; McLachlan, 'More Letters of Theophilus Lindsey', 364. Another possible supporter was the orthodox Dissenter and veteran parliamentary spokesman for repeal, Sir Henry Hoghton, MP for Preston. According to the *Morning Chronicle*, 12 May 1792, he 'said a few words, the purport of which we did not distinctly hear'.

<sup>93</sup> See, for instance, *Gloucester Journal*, 14 May 1792. This is one of many references which I owe to Dr David Wykes.

<sup>94</sup> Pipe-Wolferstan diary, 11 May 1792; *The Senator* 1st series, V, 809; *Derby Mercury*, 17 May 1792.

<sup>95</sup> Wyvill MSS., ZFW 7/2/69/22: Peirse to Wyvill, 12 May 1792.

<sup>96</sup> O'Gorman, *Whig Party and the French Revolution*, 88-90.

<sup>97</sup> J.R.L. MSS., Lindsey to Tayleur, 6 June 1792.



not bear pressing the matter.<sup>98</sup> The Standing Committee of the Dissenting Deputies, meeting under Dodson's chairmanship on 30 May, was highly pessimistic about any further campaign for Dissenting liberties.<sup>99</sup> Lindsey and at least some others in the Unitarian Society did not yield so quickly. Only on 27 June did Pipe-Wolferstan discover (from Heywood) that the special committee of the society chaired by Thomas Brand Hollis had resolved by the narrow majority of 14 to 11 not to launch a second petition.<sup>100</sup> Undoubtedly it had been influenced by the defeat in the Commons on 21 May of Samuel Whitbread's motion for an inquiry into the Birmingham riots; Whitbread's initiative failed by 189 votes to 46, a margin greater than that against the petition ten days earlier.<sup>101</sup> Benjamin Vaughan even wrote to Whitbread beforehand, urging him not to pursue his motion for fear of 'the possible injury which may follow from a continued state of irritation'. Vaughan added the significant warning:

The Dissenters have much satisfaction in seeing the patronage they are honored with, & in general have a good cause; but there are some private facts respecting individuals, in the possession of government, which the debate will bring forth; & which will not increase their popularity; as the conduct of one will be construed as the conduct of the whole.<sup>102</sup>

The broader implication was that following (and in some cases perhaps before) the petition, some Unitarians preferred the *de facto* liberty which, however precariously, they already enjoyed, to an attempt to widen the theoretical base of their toleration at the cost of a heightened public profile. But this spirit of realistic acceptance of the *status quo* was infused also with defiance. Hearing a rumour that 'the younger part of our leaders in London' proposed another application for repeal of the Test laws in 1793, Samuel Kenrick of Bewdley was scornful: 'I should as soon think of crouching to & making terms with a thief or a Robber who had deprived me of my property. Indeed it is in vain to expect it, till the public mind is changed - & even that we have seen would not do in the case of the slave trade'.<sup>103</sup> In like vein, David Jones put his faith in parliamentary reform:

<sup>98</sup> J Disney, *Dialogue between a clergyman of the Church of England and a lay-gentleman* (London, 1792), 26; Pipe-Wolferstan diary, 17 June 1792.

<sup>99</sup> R B Barlow, *Citizenship and conscience. A study in the theory and practice of religious toleration in England during the eighteenth century* (Philadelphia, 1962), 288.

<sup>100</sup> Pipe-Wolferstan diary, 27 June 1792.

<sup>101</sup> *Parl. Reg.*, XXIII, 56-102.

<sup>102</sup> Whitbread Papers, W1/2402; Vaughan to Whitbread, 20 May 1792.

<sup>103</sup> D.W.L. MSS. 24.157 (182); Kenrick to Wodrow, 28 Aug. 1793.

Indeed I hope we shall hear no more of Test Act applications, Unitarian petitions, or any such petty matters, that we shall come no more forward but on questions of general liberty, such as interest the community at large. We had better wait the decision of a fair representation of the people. As an individual I should regard the refusal of so venerable an authority more pleasing than would be the gratification of our utmost wishes from a parliament constituted as our, at present, is.<sup>104</sup>

William Wood of Leeds, although something of an optimist in 1792, subsequently admitted that 'we had misconceived the prevailing spirit of the times. We judged that what did not openly appear, had ceased to exist.'<sup>105</sup> By the winter of 1792-3 thoughts of a new petition were submerged in the flood of public assertions of loyalty, in which some Rational Dissenters participated.<sup>106</sup> While their intention was partly tactical and, in some cases, did not exclude the hope of moderate reform,<sup>107</sup> they were hardly consistent with immediate demands for relief for Unitarians. The declaration made by the Dissenting Deputies in December 1792, though conceding nothing in its insistence that the foundation of the constitution to which it affirmed its adherence was the revolution of 1688-9, amounted to a retreat from their statement of 1 February, which denied any obligation on the part of Dissenters 'to purchase protection, safety or even the good opinion of our fellow-subjects, by any avowal which the law does not require of all, or by any silence which it does not universally enjoin.'<sup>108</sup>

If political expediency were the object of such declarations they were not without success. Never again, after the 1790s, did foreign events interfere so damagingly with the domestic aspirations of Unitarians. The collapse of the 'rationalism and ... perfectibilist assumptions' of Rational Dissent in the 1790s identified by Dr Philp,<sup>109</sup> may, if correctly diagnosed, be explained in part by the rejection of the Unitarian petition. But the

<sup>104</sup> David Jones, *The nature and duties of the office of a minister of religion* (Birmingham, 1792), 15n.

<sup>105</sup> William Wood, *A Sermon, preached April 22, 1804 at Mill Hill chapel, Leeds, on the death of Dr Priestley* (Leeds, 1804), 40.

<sup>106</sup> For some examples see Scott, 'History of Cradley', 67; *The Oracle*, 1 Feb. 1793; *Manchester Chronicle*, 5 Jan. 1793.

<sup>107</sup> See D E Ginter, 'The Loyalist Association Movement of 1792-3 and British public opinion', *Hist. Jnl.*, IX (1966), 179-90. For a local example, see Scott, 'History of Cradley', 67.

<sup>108</sup> *Gent. Mag.*, 62 (1792), 1070, 567-8; Barlow, *Citizenship and conscience*, 289.

<sup>109</sup> M Philp, 'Rational religion and political radicalism in the 1790s', *Enlightenment and Dissent*, No.4 (1985), 43.

misfortunes of Rational Dissenters should not be exaggerated. Dr Fitzpatrick has drawn attention to the way in which their 'belief in God's beneficence was unshaken despite their own disappointments.' The same author observes that Rational Dissent 'gradually bowed out' in the early nineteenth century, but that its ideas 'were transmitted to posterity ... and became part of what may be described as our radical and liberal heritage.'<sup>110</sup> The publicity achieved by the Unitarian petition contributed one means to that process of transmission. Elsewhere the present writer has suggested that the longer term effects of the petition upon Unitarians were more positive than negative.<sup>111</sup> The events of 1792 did not destroy the Rational Dissenting belief either in petitioning, as was shown by Wyvill's campaigns for toleration in 1807-12, or in the political process conducted by parliamentary means. Moreover those events enhanced rather than weakened their greatest asset of all - their rapprochement with parliamentary Whiggism. If an overall impression of public antagonism nonetheless remains, it serves as testimony to the ability of Unitarians to organize, to propagandize and - for so it seemed in some quarters - to threaten. Above all it reflects their contemporary importance. And in that importance lie vital clues as to their endurance and subsequent progress.

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<sup>110</sup> Martin Fitzpatrick, 'Heretical religion and radical political ideas in late eighteenth-century England', in E Hellmuth (ed.), *The transformation of political culture. England and Germany in the late eighteenth century* (Oxford, 1990), 369-70, 371.

<sup>111</sup> Ditchfield, 'Anti-trinitarianism and toleration', 65-7.

Karis Müller

There has been some discussion on the extent of the influence of R J Boscovich's physics on the Christian materialism of Joseph Priestley.<sup>1</sup> Both the Unitarian minister and the Croatian Jesuit were concerned to repudiate the classical particle physics associated with Descartes and Newton. Boscovich's highly complex new theory of matter aimed to explain mathematically the behaviour of bodies. Unlike other natural philosophers of the time or previously, Boscovich did not consider his theory particularly relevant to Christian belief, nor was his motivation religious. Priestley on the other hand devised his materialism for a specifically religious purpose. The intention of this paper is not to give an exhaustive account of Priestley's or Boscovich's respective physics and metaphysics,<sup>2</sup> but rather to show how, once a dualism of hard particles and the void was rejected in favour of a system of interconnected repulsive and attractive forces, two very different metaphysical systems were held to be compatible with a similar matter theory.

R J Boscovich (1711-1787), Jesuit, mathematician and diplomat, published his major work *Theoria philosophiae naturalis, reducta ad unicam legem virium in natura existentium* (1758, 1763). Joseph Priestley (1733-1804), English Unitarian and chemist, probably never read it, though the two men did occasionally correspond, and Boscovich visited London and Cambridge in 1760. The differences between Boscovich's physics and Priestley's application of it were due to the latter's lack of close acquaintance with the text, no doubt, but more particularly to their different motivations. Despite according to his faith only a minor place in the *Theoria*, Boscovich took pains to show that his overturning of classical particle physics, on which contemporary apologists generally relied in their quest for scientific and rational proofs of their religion, in no way threatened faith. Priestley's use of this concept of matter within the context of an anti-Christian ontology, as then understood, understandably angered the Jesuit.<sup>3</sup> How the two thinkers replaced the dominant conceptual model of hard particles floating in empty space (or its rival variant of hard particles propelled by a fine ether) with the idea of non-extended force-points repelling or attracting one another, may best be compared under two headings: matter, space and God, and mind and body.

<sup>1</sup> See J G McEvoy, *Joseph Priestley: philosopher, scientist and divine* (University of Pittsburgh PhD, 1973), 127.

<sup>2</sup> See e.g., *ibid.*, and J G McEvoy & J E McGuire, 'God and nature: Priestley's way of rational dissent', *Historical Studies in the Physical Sciences*, vol.6 (1975), 325-404, and L L Whyte, ed., *Roger Joseph Boscovich, SJ, FRS: studies of his life and work on the anniversary of his death* (London, 1961).

<sup>3</sup> See A J Saunders, 'Be candid where we can': *The rational dissent of Joseph Priestley* (Australian National University, PhD, 1989), 94.



### Matter, space and God

From Newton, Boscovich took the concept of universal gravity and the belief that Nature could best be understood mathematically. However, he was little-concerned to speculate, as had Newton, on the implications of his own original atomic physics for religious belief. Convinced that space was simply a convenient term for expressing varying mathematical relationships between centres of force, Boscovich did not consider Newtonian speculations such as whether the divine presence might be 'in' space, 'of' it, or somehow outside it, at all useful. Newton's attempts to reassure the pious that since space was a property, not an eternal and infinite being, there were no grounds for accusations of pantheism, did not concern Boscovich, for whom space had no ontological reality. Newton had speculated that the mysterious force, gravity, was perhaps the work of one or more 'ethereal spirits' filling space and surrounding the hard particles of matter; this 'ether' or 'spirit' was variously seen by Newton as divine power at work or as a rarefied physical medium. In his *Theoria* Boscovich explicitly rejected this ambiguous ether-physics and subtracted extension and hardness from Newton's list of the universal qualities of bodies, including particles, retaining only weight and inertia; whereas Newton had postulated forces acting on particles, Boscovich preferred a simpler explanatory hypothesis, for he added attraction and repulsion to the list of qualities constituting atoms. Forces did not act between mass points - together with weight and inertia they actually were what atoms were made of. Neither Newton's dualism of hard corpuscles and the void, nor his alternative suggestion that there was an 'ether' or 'spirit' propelling these, seemed satisfactory to Boscovich:

Newton derived an explanation of the matter from an attraction of a different kind to gravitation; although he indeed seems to seek to obtain this attraction from some compressing fluid of very small density. In fact, he seeks to obtain it, at the end of his *Optics*, from a 'spirit' permeating the inmost substances of bodies; but I never was able to grasp clearly what he intended by the term 'spirit'; & even he confessed that the mode of action was unknown to him.<sup>4</sup>

Nonetheless, he did tentatively appeal to a possible explanatory ether in one passage:

A somewhat greater difficulty arises from the huge distance to which this kind of force extends. But even this can take place through some intermediate kind of exhalation, which owing to its extreme tenuity has hitherto escaped the notice of observers,

<sup>4</sup> R J Boscovich, *Theoria Philosophiae Naturalis*, Latin/English version ed. J M Child (London/Chicago, 1922), art. 409, pp.293, 295.

& such as by means of intermediate forces of its own connects also remote matter; if perchance this phenomenon cannot be derived from merely a different combination of points having forces represented by that same curve of mine.<sup>5</sup>

Boscovich's concept of matter as a system of interconnected repulsive and attractive forces acknowledged a debt also to Leibniz.<sup>6</sup> The Leibnizian 'monads' were perhaps not supposed to be descriptive of really existing matter, but it was possible to infer from his writings that these myriad unextended centres of repulsive force actually occupied space. Having declined to follow Newton's tendency to conflate natural forces with divine activity, Boscovich incorporated the Leibnizian monad into his system, although his *puncta* hypothesis was in his opinion an accurate account of reality, not a metaphysical speculation. Boscovich considered his theory complete and useful as none had previously been, since with the help of his various geometrical diagrams and mathematical computations all physical phenomena could in his view be explained and predicted. Mathematics provided the key to how matter really behaved. Like Leibniz, Boscovich saw space in Cartesian terms: absolute space was an imaginary, geometrical concept while existent space was relative, being the spatio-temporal relations between *puncta* or centres of force. Space and time were distances and successions between unextended collections of points which were held in dynamic tension, alternately attracting and repelling one another according to precise mathematical formulae put forward by the learned Jesuit. At observable distances Newtonian laws of gravitation applied. Certain as he was of the reality of the force-centres or *puncta*, Boscovich nonetheless refused to be drawn into a discussion on their origin:

To me, matter is nothing but indivisible points, that are non-extended, endowed with a force of inertia, & also mutual forces represented by a simple continuous curve having those definite properties which I stated in Art. 117; these can also be defined by an algebraical equation. Whether this law of forces is an intrinsic property of indivisible points; whether it is something substantial or accidental superadded to them, like the substantial or accidental shapes of the Peripatetics; whether it is an arbitrary law of the Author of Nature, who directs those motions by a law made according to His Will; this I do not seek to find, nor indeed can it be found from the phenomena, which are the same in all these theories. The third is that of occasional causes, suited to the taste of followers of Descartes; the second will serve the Peripatetics, who can thus admit the existence of

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, art. 515, p.365.

<sup>6</sup> Nonetheless Boscovich rejected Leibnizian 'optimism', see p.389 of *Theoria*.

matter at any point; & then a substantial form producing a circumstance (accidens) which becomes a formal law of forces; so that, if they wish, having destroyed the substance, that the same circumstances shall remain in the individual, they can preserve that individual circumstance. Hence the sensibility will remain the same exactly, & such as will be different for a different combination of such circumstances pertaining to different points. The first theory seems to be that of most of the modern philosophers, who seem to admit impenetrability & active forces, such as the followers of Leibniz & Newton all admit, as the primary properties of matter founded on its very essence. This Theory of mine can indeed be used in all these kinds of philosophising, & can be adapted to the mode of thought peculiar to any one of them.<sup>7</sup>

Obviously the dissolution of hard particles into indivisible points set apart from one another seemed to contemporaries to be turning matter into nothing. Boscovich explained his new theory:

Now what kind of extension can that be which is formed out of non-extended points & imaginary space, i.e. out of pure nothing? How can Geometry be upheld if no thing is considered to be actually continuously extended? Will not groups of points, floating in an empty space of this sort be like a cloud, dissolving at a single breath, & absolutely without a consistent figure, or solidity, or resistance? These matters pertain to that kind of extension & cohesion, which I will discuss in the third part, where I apply my Theory to physics & deal fully with these very difficulties. Meanwhile I will here merely remark in anticipation that I derive cohesion from those limit-points, in which the curve of forces cuts the axis, in such a way that a transition is made from repulsion at smaller distances to attraction at greater distances. For if two points are at the distance that corresponds to that of any of the limit-points of this kind, & the forces that arise when the distances are changed are great enough (the curve cutting the axis almost at right angles & passing to a considerable distance from it), then the points will maintain this distance apart with a very great force; so that when they are insensibly compressed they will resist further compression, & when pulled apart they resist further separation. In this way also, if a large number of points cohere together, they will in every case maintain their several positions, & thus form a mass that is most tenacious as regards its form; & this mass will exhibit exactly the same phenomena as little solid masses, as commonly understood, exhibit.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p.363.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., art. 165, p.131.

Space was for Boscovich neither an absolute, eternal and infinite substance, nor some sort of agent or spirit acting upon divine instructions, but rather a term to describe the distances between points.

[...] disputants assume that their non-extended points are placed in contact with one another, so as to form a mathematical continuum; & this cannot happen, since things that are contiguous as well as non-extended must compenetrates; but I assume non-extended points that are separated from one another. Nor indeed have the arguments, which some others use, any validity in opposition to my Theory; when they say that there is no such extension, since it is founded on non-extended points & empty space, which is absolute nothing. According to my Theory, it is founded, not on points simply, but on points having distance relations with one another; these relations, in my Theory, are not founded upon an empty intermediate space; for this space has no actual existence. It is only something that is possible, indefinitely imagined by us; that is to say, it is the possibility of real local modes of existence, pictured by us after we have mentally excluded every gap [...].<sup>9</sup>

Joseph Priestley's monism owed something to his friend John Michell, whose own book on theistic materialism had in turn been written in reply to a work of Baxter's, purporting to prove a then commonly held view of material cohesion as the result of penetration by divine spirit.<sup>10</sup> Using only conventional scholastic terms, Priestley, in his *Disquisitions relating to matter and spirit* (1777), combined Michell's rejection of spirit with the Jesuit's transposition of the Leibnizian non-extended monad to physics, ignoring however the elaborate mathematical structure built by Boscovich to explain this novel ontology. Instead, Priestley declared naïve observation sufficed to show that matter was only attraction and repulsion - inertia and weight he generally omitted to mention - which essential, fundamental properties were 'as appearing to me not to be properly what is imparted to matter, but what really makes it to be what it is'.<sup>11</sup> Matter, then, existed 'in itself' as a substance having certain forces. Yet Priestley also professed a Lockean ignorance concerning the 'real' nature of matter, precisely because attraction and repulsion were merely observable properties.<sup>12</sup> He declared the ultimate structure of matter

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., art. 372, p.273.

<sup>10</sup> Probably the most extreme example of this type of animism is Robert Clayton's *Essay on Spirit, Wherein the Doctrine of the Trinity is considered in the Light of Nature & Reason* (Dublin, 1751), see, e.g., 9-12.

<sup>11</sup> *Disquisitions*, in J T Rutt ed., *Theological and miscellaneous works of Joseph Priestley*, (25 vols., London, 1817-1831), III, 237.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 237-8, 297.



unimportant, although elsewhere he claimed to 'know' what it was.<sup>13</sup> The epistemological status of these powers was as uncertain as their origin, being either essential to matter or else dependent on divine activity; so Priestley concluded on a cautious note as had Boscovich: '... how far the powers which we ascribe to it may be said to *inhere in*, or *belong to* it, or how far they are the effect of a *foreign power*, viz. that of the Deity, concerns not my system in particular.'<sup>14</sup>

To Priestley's critics, though, the new physics did not make sense, for how could atoms attract and repel one another all at once? And how could immaterial forces combine to form solid bodies?<sup>15</sup>

Boscovich's development of the Cartesian or Leibnizian concept of space, expanded by him to cover time also, since both depended on the mutual relations of bodies, was entirely overlooked by Priestley, who declared that if matter were to disappear, absolute space would remain.<sup>16</sup> Priestley differed from Boscovich further in that he did not clearly separate divine power from physical forces. On the contrary, in his view the rejection of a distinct spirit substance actually reinforced belief in the divine omnipresence. Thus he took from Boscovich neither the method nor the mathematical evidence, nor the Christian dualism. His anti-spiritualist polemical intent irritated even an academic who in fact admired the *Theoria*.<sup>17</sup> Nonetheless, because he was satisfied that the material forces in his scheme were every bit as passive as were the hard particles of classical mechanism, the charge of hylozoistic materialism could not, he felt, be brought against him.

Priestley's elimination of a spirit-deity in his opinion made Christianity far more plausible, for God as Spirit raised the difficulty for Cartesians in particular of explaining how He could intervene in a totally alien material world. For Boscovich the distance between Spirit-God and the physical world remained, since although matter had ceased to be solid, spirit was quite distinct from these physical intensity-points. Christian dualism in the *Theoria* was taken for granted, though the divine presence was accorded little place in what was largely a work of science based on

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 216, 223.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 238.

<sup>15</sup> e.g. Anon., *An Essay on the immateriality & immortality of the soul and its instinctive sense of good and evil*, Appendix in answer to Dr Priestley's Disquisition on matter and spirit... (1778), 389.

'Philatheles Rusticans', *Reflections on the doctrine of materialism & the application of that doctrine to the pre-existence of Christ. Addressed to Joseph Priestley, LLD FRS* (London, 1779), 5-10.

A Bieknell, *The putrid soul, a political epistle to Mr Priestley* (London, 1780), 8.

<sup>16</sup> *Disquisitions*, 299-300.

<sup>17</sup> See A J Saunders, op. cit., 232.

mathematical calculations. Nonetheless the argument from design was given, the author claiming that combinations of *puncta* formed miraculous entities indeed:

What the properties of the single substance called air, which at one & the same time is suitable for sound, for breathing, even for the nutrition of animals, for the preservation during the night of the heat received during the day, for holding rain-clouds, & innumerable other uses. What those of gravity, through which the motions of the planets & comets go on unchanged, through which each sea is contained within its own bounds, & rivers flow, the rain falls upon the earth & irrigates it, & fertilizes it, houses stand up owing to their own mass, & the oscillations of pendulums yield the measure of time. Consider, if gravity were taken away suddenly, what would become of our walking, of the arrangement of our own viscera, of the air itself, which would fly off in all directions through its own elasticity. A man could pick up another from the Earth, & impel him with ever so slight a force, or even but blow upon him with his breath, & drive him from intercourse with all humanity away to infinity, nevermore to return throughout all eternity.<sup>18</sup>

This is a far cry from Boscovich's mathematical demonstrations of matter as a network of interconnected force-fields. In short, Boscovich's matter-theory did not affect his traditional Christian beliefs. The claim that his physics defended and demonstrated true religion was made, but the conventional theological arguments occasionally appearing in the *Theoria* seem to be included in the highly technical main body of the text as a precaution against accusations of undermining the faith.

Boscovich insisted on God as final cause of the universe, like Newton pronouncing him supremely free and supremely powerful, not bound by the Leibnizian principle of sufficient reason.<sup>19</sup> The world was as it was because God so chose. Even if the attractive and repulsive forces were essential to matter, still these powers existed only because of the divine free will:

First of all, if force is an essential property of matter, there is no need for any other reason beside that of the very nature of matter, to determine that this, rather than another, force should correspond to this, rather than to another, distance [...] It may be asked [...] why the Architect of Nature chose this matter in particular, such as should have this essential law of forces, and no other. In that case, I, who believe in the supreme freedom of

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., Appendix, 381-387.

<sup>19</sup> *Theoria, Appendix*, 389, 421, 423.

the Architect of Nature, think, as in all other things, that there is nothing else required for the sufficient reason of this choice beyond the free determination of the Divine will.<sup>20</sup>

Boscovich attempted an analogy between the presence of soul in the body and God in the world. Both were non-extended, yet both were somehow able to interact with matter:

Further we believe that God Himself is present everywhere throughout the whole of the undoubtedly divisible space that all bodies occupy; and yet He is onefold in the highest degree & admits not of any composite nature whatever [...] Further, we are absolutely ignorant of the nature of the presence of God, and in no wise way do we say that He is really extended throughout divisible space.<sup>21</sup>

All this was standard Newtonian fare, as was Boscovich's disinclination to search for an explanation for God's presence within nature. What interested him was the detailed, complex mathematical calculations, illustrations of a unified, global law of atomic behaviour, an effective hypothesis for future scientists to use. Priestley's aim differed from this as much as did his ontology. Instead of distinguishing spirit and unsolid matter as had Boscovich, the English Unitarian rejected any concept of spirit-substance yet attributed all mental and physical activity to direct divine intervention. This pious awareness of the total dependence of the universe on God he took to indicate the moral superiority of his Christian materialism, which concerned him more than did finding certain truth - something he did not in any case consider possible. For Priestley the creation was not an arbitrary act of divine will but rather an eternal necessity, which implied both that the universe was eternal and that God was for him separate from His creation. At the same time attraction and repulsion, that is, matter, expressed the divine energy. In short, although matter and God seemed to be one, God nonetheless was ontologically prior. In support of this Priestley in conventionally mechanistic fashion explained that matter was entirely passive, although he had earlier set out to prove that matter consisted of forces:

As the matter of which the world consists can only be moved and acted upon, and is altogether incapable of moving itself, or of acting; so all the *powers of nature*, or the tendencies of things to their different motions and operations, can only be the effect of the Divine energy, perpetually acting upon them, and causing them to have certain tendencies and effects. A stone, for instance, can no more move [...] towards the earth, of itself,

<sup>20</sup> *Theoria*, Supplements III, 421.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

than it can move or tend upwards, that is, from the earth. That it does tend downwards [...] must, therefore, be owing to the Divine energy, an energy without which the power of gravitation would cease, and the whole frame of the earth be dissolved.<sup>22</sup>

God was pronounced material,<sup>23</sup> the difference apparently being that divine matter-energy was active, whereas created matter-energy was passive. The former was 'present' in the latter and caused it to move. In fact this 'materialism' is none too clear, because it seems that the author is subtracting from matter the very qualities which he claims are its essence, in order to declare them God's activity.

### Mind and body

In the *Theoria* Boscovich explained that the forces constituting matter were quite unlike either created spirits - minds, or the Supreme Spirit - Intelligence. The disappearance from his physics of solid, impenetrable particles concerned only this perishable world. Mind was immortal and supernatural, and therefore did not obey the laws of mathematics. Nonetheless, Boscovich felt the problem of mind-body communication needed to be addressed, in order to allay fears that his new physics undermined Christian beliefs; this he attempted both in the *Theoria* itself and in its *Appendix relating to metaphysics, the mind and God*. He therefore distinguished between physical forces such as those of attraction and repulsion, which operated according to strictly predetermined mathematical laws established by God, and mental activity which was unpredictable, thereby manifesting its non-material nature and its affinity with the perfectly free Supreme Spirit. Boscovich periodically attempted to show how his new physics agreed with religious orthodoxy. Thus the *puncta* were material points having the force of inertia and active and repulsive forces, constituting when massed together bodies detectable by our senses; they could not be spiritual, since spirit could not affect our senses. Furthermore, spirit was able to think and will, and the *puncta* could do neither.<sup>24</sup> Seeing that mind and body did interact, the Jesuit mathematician tentatively opted for the brain as the soul's dwelling-place; 'For in the brain, somewhere, it seems that the seat of the mind must be situated...'.<sup>25</sup> This Cartesian solution was perhaps not entirely satisfactory; he further suggested that perhaps mind was suffused throughout the

<sup>22</sup> *Institutes of natural and revealed religion* (2nd ed., 1782). Rutt, II, 15. See J G McEvoy, op. cit., 33-34.

<sup>23</sup> *Disquisitiones*, 301-2.

<sup>24</sup> *Theoria*, 123-7.

<sup>25</sup> *Appendix*, 373.

body after all.<sup>26</sup> Sense impressions and emotions, common to animals and humans, were not mental activities in his view, but were rather the mechanical effects of matter in motion. Thought and will, on the other hand, pertaining probably only to humans, were surely spiritual in nature, since no attractive or repulsive forces seemed to be involved. The fact of mind's presence in the massed *puncta* of which humans consisted according to him clearly caused Boscovich some difficulty. Was spirit united with only one *punctum* (here the idea resembles Leibniz's spiritual monad), or was it rather present in one tiny area of space, or even in many spaces interspersed between material points? Boscovich wondered whether the brain was the seat of only sensations and emotions, or of thought and will as well? Was the mind in the brain, or in the whole body? Boscovich admitted that nothing certain could be known, except that:

the simple elements of matter cannot exist except in single points of space at single instants of time, each to each, while the mind can also be one-fold, & yet exist at one & the same time in an infinite number of points of space, conjoining with a single instant of time a continuous series of points of space; & to the whole of this series it will at one & the same time be present owing to the virtual extension it possesses; just as God also, by means of His own infinite Immensity, is present in an infinite number of points of space (& He indeed in His entirety in every single one), whether they are occupied by matter, or whether they are empty.<sup>27</sup>

At all events, the reduction of matter to force-points did not seem to Boscovich destructive of Christian belief in immortality.

Priestley, of course, took exactly the opposite view, composing the *Disquisitions* with the primary objective of demonstrating that mind could not be a substance distinct from body; that however matter was defined, mind was but an effect of matter organized, and that materialism accorded best with the Scriptures. Like other materialists such as Hobbes, La Mettrie and Voltaire, Priestley claimed thought and will were no more free than were sensations, and that the obvious causal connection between mind and body indicated that both belonged to physical nature. Having in the early 1770s still accepted traditional dualism (*Institutes of natural and revealed religion*, 1st edition, 1772), he now declared that 'a substance possessed of the property of *extension*, & of *powers of attraction or repulsion* is no more incompatible with sensation & thought, than that

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 379. However, he also thinks the 'rational soul' must exist in a single, simple non-extended point within the body, from whence it 'puts forth some sort of force into the remaining points of the body duly disposed about it' (p.85 of *Theoria*). This idea totally ignores the author's insistence on the non-identity of matter and spirit.

<sup>27</sup> *Appendix*, 373-9.

substance which [...] we have been used to call immaterial.'<sup>28</sup>

How a substance defined as forces in space could be the source of mind Priestley could not say, thus avoiding the obscure speculations attempted by Boscovich to prove the opposite. Priestley nonetheless remarked (thereby implicitly rejecting classical mechanical materialism such as that of Hobbes) that 'solid matter' was incompatible with consciousness, but since matter was in reality not solid, mental activity was simply the effect of attractive and repulsive forces within the brain.<sup>29</sup> Thus the new materialism had in Priestley's view obviated the difficulties associated with classical Newtonian or Cartesian physics.

Priestley proceeded explicitly to reject any argument for spirit that might be thought compatible with Boscovich's physics:

A spirit then, or an *immaterial substance* [...] signifies a substance that has no *extension* of any kind, nor any thing of the *vis inertiae* that belongs to matter. It has neither *length*, *breadth*, nor *thickness* so that it occupies no portion of space [...]. In fact, therefore, *spirit* & *space* have nothing to do with one another [...]

Others [...] considering that, though *mathematical points* occupy no real portion of space, they are yet capable of bearing some relation to it, by being fixed in this or that place, at certain distances from each other, are willing to allow that spirits may also be said to be in one place in preference to another.

This Priestley refuted since 'spirit' had no properties in common with matter:

Besides, a mathematical point is, in fact, no *substance* at all, being the mere *limit*, or termination of a body, or the *place* in void space where a body is terminated [...] Mere *points*, mere *lines*, or mere *surfaces*, are alike the mere *boundaries of material substances*, & may not improperly be called then *properties* [...] & consequently bear no sort of relation to what is immaterial.<sup>30</sup>

Priestley explained that thought was only a process, not an entity: '[...] the power of thinking belongs to the *brain* of a man, as that of walking to his feet, or that of speaking to his tongue.'<sup>31</sup> Mind was neither a separate substance, nor was it matter; it was nonetheless evidence of the

<sup>28</sup> *Disquisitions*, 219.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 242-9. See J G McEvoy, *op. cit.*, 117-128.

<sup>30</sup> *Disquisitions*, 259-60.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 277.



divine within us.<sup>32</sup> Such subtleties were too much for Priestley's critics, who pointed out that just because sensation and thought occurred within a body, no causal link was necessarily implied.<sup>33</sup> Another indignant author exclaimed: '[...] if spirit cannot act on matter, the universe cannot have been created by a spirit - and therefore there can be no ---! Shocking!'<sup>34</sup>

Certainly denial of the spiritual nature of mind did usually imply adherence to atheistic materialism.<sup>35</sup> Less commonly it could reinforce a sense of human inadequacy in the face of the Almighty. In either case materialists believed behaviour could and should be subject to scientific investigation, since no longer was consciousness exempt on the grounds of its supposed supernatural character. Soul eliminated, God could then become directly responsible for activities considered too 'noble' for matter to produce of itself. This was the conclusion Voltaire came to as he grappled with the intellectual challenge of atheism in his last years. As with Priestley, so too Voltaire developed a semi-mystical theistic materialism. Voltaire knew of neither Boscovich nor Priestley, and he volunteered no hypothesis concerning the ultimate structure of matter. Nonetheless, unable to conceive of God as a Spirit, Voltaire like Priestley argued for an intelligent divine power within nature, and considered the human mind simply God at work.<sup>36</sup> The implication of this platonic concept of a pre-existent divine Mind ordering or eternally creating the world was that God was not identical with it. Yet both Priestley and Voltaire took thinking, growth and other particularities of living organisms to be processes, not entities or substances. It should then have logically followed, although neither drew the inference, that mind whether divine or human could not claim to belong to a superior category of existence and should therefore not be so hypostatized. Even a 'material' God (whatever that precisely meant) could not be fairly deduced from order in nature any more than from purposeful behaviour in man. It would seem that once mind is divorced from spirit-substance, the teleological argument is much weakened. Neither Priestley nor Voltaire saw this, being deeply religious materialists for whom the disappearance of immortal souls in no way explained how images and ideas arose from sense-impressions. So they clung to a deity as an explanatory principle while refusing to attribute a spiritual nature to him.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 234, 241-5.

<sup>33</sup> 'Philatheles rusticans', op. cit. (see n.15 above), 14-15.

<sup>34</sup> Anon., *An essay on the immateriality ... of the soul*, op. cit. (see n.15), 420.

<sup>35</sup> E.g. Baron P-H D d'Holbach, *Système de la nature, ou des lois du monde physique et du monde moral* (2 vols., 1770, reprint Geneva 1973), I, 89-101.

<sup>36</sup> E.g. F A de Voltaire, *Il faut prendre un parti* (1772), & *Lettres de Memmius à Cicéron*, in *Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. L Moland (52 vols., Paris, 1877-1882), vol.28, 521, 443.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. my PhD thesis, *Voltaire and the atheistic controversy in eighteenth-century France* (London, 1984), 164-7, 179-81, 199, 267-8, 281-3.

Priestley's efforts to retain the ascendancy of divine Mind over non-solid matter struck some readers as incoherent. To them the postulate of a supernatural intelligence pointed equally to the existence of individual spirit-intelligences.<sup>38</sup>

## Conclusion

This paper has briefly compared the metaphysical implications of the theories of matter of two scientists who substituted approximations of what later came to be called force-fields for Cartesian-Newtonian atomism. Priestley remained true to the Newtonian view of space, Boscovich preferring to see space-time structures as relative to the mutual relations of non-extended force-points. Both attempted also to clarify the mind-body correlation without setting aside belief in a Creator who wisely ordered the universe, although while central for Priestley the problem was only peripheral in the case of Boscovich. The Jesuit was confident that his new scientific theory could be applied to all manner of phenomena, with the exception of consciousness. He did not question the reality of an ontologically distinct God and immortal soul. Yet the *Theoria* is not an apologetic work, for the bulk of it is taken up by geometrical figures and mathematical formulae. Priestley on the other hand did not clearly differentiate divine power from physical forces, declaring dogmatically that the latter were passive and therefore dependent on a cause which was however not spiritual. In his opinion he had resolved the difficulty attendant on God's role in the traditional Christian scheme:

As to the difficulty arising from the divine material essence penetrating other matter, it has no place at all in the hypothesis advanced from Father Boscovich and Mr Michell, and certainly this idea is much more consonant to the idea which the sacred writers give us of his *filling all in all*, than that of a being who bears no relation to space, and thereof cannot properly be said to *exist any where*, which is the doctrine of the rigid immaterialists.<sup>39</sup>

Viewing spirit-substance as a figment of the imagination, he was convinced his 'Christian materialism' better supported evidence for an all-pervasive Creator than did the dualism of orthodox Christianity. Priestley's materialism like Voltaire's posited an omnipresent God, directly responsible for processes apparently too mysterious to be the work of passive, brute matter. D'Holbach in his *Système de la nature* (1770), had reduced the cosmos to matter in motion, eliminating from it God, spirit and even empty space, but Priestley excluded only spirit. The fact that humans were thinking bodies for him made them entirely dependent on

<sup>38</sup> E.g. Anon., *An essay on the immateriality...of the soul*, op. cit. (see n.15), 16-23.

<sup>39</sup> *Disquisitions*, 301.

God, since mental acts were as passive and determined as were physical movements.<sup>40</sup>

The heretical Christian belongs to an older tradition in which science and metaphysics are intertwined. The Catholic priest did not set out to glorify God but rather to demonstrate the power of mathematical reasoning. Theologically beyond reproach despite his novel theory of matter, Boscovich had no need to prove at length the superiority of his system from a Christian standpoint. He was content to recommend it as more efficient than any other in explaining phenomena such as cohesion, light, electricity or magnetism. He did not wish to equate natural forces with divine action. The boundaries he set to the place of metaphysics in scientific speculation, as well as his definition of matter as clusters of repulsive and attractive forces, show Boscovich to have been an original thinker secure in his faith and therefore convinced that his theory could not contradict it. Priestley, much more than had Newton, made theological considerations central to his work on matter.

Priestley misinterpreted Boscovich's theory in support of his theistic and mortalist world-view. His theistic materialism made him a kindred spirit to Voltaire, who, although not interested in his later years in matter-theory, sought and found evidence of divine omnipotence in all movement, change, sensation and consciousness.

On the evidence of their scientific or philosophical works at least, both Priestley and Voltaire displayed more awareness of God's presence and of the total dependence on him of all Creation than may be discerned in the natural philosophy of the Jesuit Boscovich.

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## COLERIDGE RECONSIDERED: RELIGION, METAPHYSICS AND POLITICAL IDEAS

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During the last five years there has been a resurgence of interest in the political thought of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Works by John Morrow<sup>1</sup>, Nicholas Roe<sup>2</sup>, Deirdre Coleman<sup>3</sup> and Richard Holmes's much vaunted Whitbread prize-winning biography<sup>4</sup>, have focused on Coleridge as a social critic<sup>5</sup> and a political theorist. These works have continued a line of criticism which persistently types Coleridge as a young radical and an old Tory. Two interesting additions to this tradition have been offered by J T Miller in *Ideology and Enlightenment: the political and social thought of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*<sup>6</sup> and Ian Wylie's *Young Coleridge and the philosophers of nature*.<sup>7</sup>

Although a reasonably new release, Miller's work is in fact a late publication of a 1977 Yale PhD thesis by the Garland Press. In this regard it provides an interesting critical focus for more recent work. Essentially unrevised from its 1977 incarnation, Miller's book maintains that the originality and validity of its argument has not been superseded. But in light of works by Morrow, Coleman and arguably, Nigel Leask, Miller's account appears sound but simplistic.

It is Ian Wylie's work *Young Coleridge and the philosophers of nature* which, while operating within certain established traditions as to Coleridge's political thought, manages to break new and interesting ground with regard to the evolution of Coleridge's conception of natural science and metaphysics. The assumptions which generated from this natural philosophy were essential to Coleridge's development of a unique political and social philosophy. Wylie's work therefore, provides a useful basis for more extended and revisionist accounts of the political thought of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, although such an argument is not explicitly made by Wylie. His exposition of Coleridge's natural science "metaphysic" will do much to overturn the old line - "radical youth gives way to Tory maturity".

Coleridge as a young radical and an old Tory is a theme which has

<sup>1</sup> John Morrow, *Coleridge's political thought: property, morality and the limits of traditional discourse* (London, 1990).

<sup>2</sup> Nicholas Roe, *Wordsworth and Coleridge: "The Radical Years"* (Oxford, 1988).

<sup>3</sup> Deirdre Coleman, *Coleridge and The Friend (1809-1810)* (Oxford, 1988).

<sup>4</sup> Richard Holmes, *Coleridge: early visions* (London, 1989).

<sup>5</sup> For the first treatment of Coleridge as social and political critic see John Colmer *Coleridge: a critic of society* (Oxford, 1959).

<sup>6</sup> J T Miller, *Ideology and Enlightenment: the political and social thought of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (New York, 1988).

<sup>7</sup> Ian Wylie, *Young Coleridge and the philosophers of nature* (Oxford, 1989).

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 299-300.

been frequently played within the last twenty years. From E P Thompson's accusations of romantic apostasy in *The making of the English working class*<sup>8</sup> to Nicholas Roe's recent description of "the radical years", Coleridge's development as a political thinker has been drawn in terms of betrayal, denial, inconstancy and "turn-about". Yet there is difficulty in this position. It oversimplifies, and so obscures, the complexity of late eighteenth century rhetoric, ideology and faction. Rather than examining the incommensurability of Coleridge's views on reform, dissent, politics and the press, Roe is reduced to a guilt by association argument. Acknowledging Coleridge's refusal to join any radical association even in his early "radical days", he contends that Coleridge's politics may be judged by the company he kept.

By contrast, Deirdre Coleman produces a subtler account of Coleridge's ideas and affiliations and, arguing for the complexity of his political ideas, points to the conservative elements which were present even in the earliest works. It is this direction which promises to be the most productive in an understanding of Coleridge as a political thinker.

J T Miller's *Ideology and Enlightenment* does try to view Coleridge's political and social thought as consistent with an eighteenth century language of opposition. In this regard, Miller focuses on the country party flavour of Coleridge's 1795 lectures and pamphlets, most particularly in "The Plot Discovered". John Morrow has recently followed this line of interpretation, arguing both for traditions of civic humanism and country party ideology in Coleridge's political thought taken as a whole. These arguments are less concerned with the radical implications of the early pamphlets, than the way in which Coleridge's rhetoric functions as a criticism of executive power. The moderate republicanism of the Bristol Lectures for example, may be most usefully considered as part of the discourse of a long standing and independent, Whig tradition.

While Miller does emphasize the constitutionalist nature of Whig rhetoric, he also associates Coleridge's Whiggishness with radical dissent. Like Nicholas Roe, Miller argues for the substance of Coleridge's radicalism as an offshoot of his Unitarianism. This is unsatisfactory for two reasons. First, the extent of Coleridge's belief in Unitarianism is unclear. Secondly, the straight equation of Unitarianism and radical reform is simplistic and misleading.

Unitarians and Rational Dissenters, while by definition anti-Test, took any number of positions on such issues as the extension of the franchise, the war with France, or the abolition of the monarchy. Returning to the

<sup>8</sup> E P Thompson, *The making of the English working class* (London, 1963), 109, 193.

question of Coleridge's Unitarianism, his own descriptions are complex and contradictory during his Cambridge years. His more intimate revelations on faith, which followed his 1793 escape from University to the King's Light Dragoons, suggest a persistent and fundamental Anglicanism.

Miller does not offer proof of Coleridge's Unitarianism in any detail, simply stating in reference to the Cambridge years, "In fact, he was by this time almost certainly a Unitarian." This simplification with regard to religion is less than satisfactory, especially when juxtaposed to Miller's own observation that Coleridge exhibited some "concern at the free-thinking tendencies of radicals". If Coleridge was a Unitarian, his arguments in that direction were intellectual rather than emotional ones. At the level of faith, sentiment, and one suspects, metaphysics, Coleridge sustained a personal belief in the immanence of God; a view of Christianity based on conceptions of judgement, design, atonement and mercy. Free-thinking rationalism or Newtonian mechanism and its deistic Unitarian or Socinian extensions did not accord with this vision of the world.<sup>9</sup>

It is in its treatment of the mature Coleridge that Miller's book produces its best arguments. Chapter Four, "Property is Power", focuses on Coleridge's emergence as a conservative. Although Miller hints at a greater continuity in Coleridge's work with his suggestion of "radical ends, conservative means", he nonetheless details what he perceives to be a political turn-about in Coleridge's career. Rather than the change of mind to which Miller alludes, Coleridge experienced a crystallization and reordering of ideas which he had in some degree entertained from his earliest writings.

Coleridge's crystallization and reordering of his early principles does not constitute the apostasy with which writers from Hazlitt to Thompson and beyond have charged him. The historiographic and critical tradition of Coleridgean apostasy is not a terribly useful interpretation, either of ideas or the nature of ideology and faction in the 1790s. What then may be considered useful, if the apparent contradictions in Coleridge's political and social thought are to be resolved? The answer may be found in Coleridge's religious ideas or more pointedly, as he himself describes it in "Aids to Reflection", his religious philosophy. Religious philosophy was, for Coleridge, an extension of his natural philosophy.

Ian Wylie's *Young Coleridge and the philosophers of nature* manages

<sup>9</sup> Coleridge detailed, with specific reference to "the beauty of Holiness", this heart vs. head dichotomy in a letter to his brother George. Explaining his Unitarianism as deistic and evangelist - "a kind of religious twilight" - he referred to the levities of Voltaire which delighted his intellect and the Jesus whom his heart must love if his mind could not worship. E L Griggs, *The collected letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* Vol. I, #44, p.78, 30 March 1794, to the Rev. George Coleridge.



to synthesize the many disparate strands of Coleridge's "natural philosophy". Emphasizing the complexities of natural philosophy as a composite of modern empiricism and ancient idealist principles, Wylie rejects explanations of Coleridge's early views as characteristically mechanist or purely idealist. Always at the core of his conceptions of causation, and so, of his conceptions of history and power, Coleridge's metaphysic was at once product and source of his religious views. The importance of his metaphysics had been considered by early commentators such as R J White<sup>10</sup> and John Muirhead.<sup>11</sup> But it has been more than marginalized by later critics of Coleridge's political and social thought. The philosophical component which surfaces in much of Coleridge's religious writing provides the foundation for his understanding of history, politics, society and freedom.

Did Coleridge begin as a Unitarian only to finish as a high Anglican Trinitarian? Perhaps not. But he did look to natural science as he understood it, as the manifestation of providential design. Coleridge believed that natural philosophy alone reconciled ideas of human agency and will within a determinist schema.

Coleridge once described himself as "a complete necessitarian". He referred to his early infatuation with Hartley's quasi-deterministic and sensationalist conceptions of human nature and association. But, Coleridge also rejected the passivity of the will which Hartleian associationism suggested. Coleridge found some, but not all, of Hartley's ideas useful. Similarly, Coleridge had been attracted to some of Godwin's ideas while finding others dubious. Coleridge praised *Political Justice* for example, but rejected Godwin's conception of disinterested benevolence, as naïve and mechanistic. Coleridge was never a "complete" anything. This may suggest inconsistency, or a contradictory approach to "empirical ideas". It is not.

One of the finer points of Ian Wylie's account of Coleridge's understanding of the "philosophers of nature" is a chapter devoted to Coleridge's attempt to "wrestle with the spirit of Newton". Coleridge believed that the scientific traditions of his age, or - as he referred to it in a somewhat Kantian reference - "this critical age...this learned age...this leaden age...this age"<sup>12</sup> - had over simplified Newton. Wylie emphasizes the Platonic influences on Newton's development which favoured the concept of an ideal hierarchy of forms over that of Cartesian dualism.

<sup>10</sup> R J White, *The political thought of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (London, 1938).

<sup>11</sup> John Muirhead, *Coleridge as philosopher* (London, 1931).

<sup>12</sup> To Mary Evans, *The collected letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, Vol. I, #25, p.50, 7 February 1793.

The idealism of this perspective, Newton had gleaned from an exposure to the Cambridge Platonists, most particularly through readings of Ralph Cudworth's *The true intellectual system*. The active agent in Newton's system was motion, which generated from an interactive and dynamic substance which he called "aether". While aether could not be proved empirically, Newton's belief in it provided the speculative teleology which underlay his "mechanics". Speculation was not fact, however, and Newton's *Principia* devotes only a paragraph to aether at the treatise's conclusion.

For Coleridge, Newton's metaphysical speculation was the greater part of his science. The belief that some dynamic and unifying principle was the basis of the material world Coleridge took as a basis for his intended resolution of realist and empiricist principles. This was the truth he took from Newton, as he had done with Bacon, whom Coleridge called, paradoxically, "our English Plato".<sup>13</sup> Where others had seen Bacon and Newton as empirical mechanists, Coleridge perceived an idealist strand in their philosophies.

Ian Wylie has focused on the core of Coleridge's metaphysic; the attempt to synthesize the particular realities of empiricism with what Wylie describes as the ancient traditions of knowledge. In his conception of natural philosophy, Coleridge tried to avoid the mind-body rift of Cartesian dualism and, indeed, the barren positivism of what he had mockingly termed "this age". Coleridge charted many of the same intellectual waters as Newton, most specifically in his rejection of Descartes and his aforementioned preoccupation with the neo-Platonist ideas of Plotinus and the Cambridge divine Ralph Cudworth.

Returning to the central question of Coleridge's radical dissent, Wylie's argument is as tentative and speculative as Miller's. Coleridge's return to Cambridge after his sojourn in the dragoons was a brief one, and it is Wylie's contention that Coleridge left University for the second time without taking his degree as examinations would have necessitated an oath of conformity which he would have considered a public renunciation of his dissenting beliefs.<sup>14</sup> While it is true that many Dissenters avoided the oath in this manner, it does not follow that Coleridge's defection prior to his degree was prompted by the same concern. We are still left in the dark as to the substance of Coleridge's Unitarianism, and whether Coleridge left over the articles or his own disenchantment with academic life remains uncertain. The latter seems as likely if one examines the debt-ridden undergraduate's attempts to escape college obligations through

<sup>13</sup> S T Coleridge, *On the constitution of church and state according to the idea of each* (London, 1830), 4-5.

<sup>14</sup> Wylie, *Ibid.*, 55.

drink, debauchery and the love of Mary Evans. Indeed, it was after his final rejection by Mary Evans that Coleridge ran off to the army.

Throughout the period of William Frend's trial in the spring of 1793, worry about debt and Mary Evans appear to be the central concerns of the young Coleridge. These are the problems most frequently reflected in his correspondence. He is strikingly quiet on the subject of politics at precisely the moment his outrage as a Unitarian would presumably be most evident. Rather than any direct evidence in correspondence, notebooks or contemporary observation, Wylie offers only asseverations. Statements such as "Coleridge *undoubtedly* remained in contact with his old mentor"<sup>15</sup>, and from that, "it is quite possible that, through Frend, Coleridge met the radical campaign leaders"<sup>16</sup>, are allusive but not argumentation.

Wylie's strongest arguments are for Coleridge's metaphysical and scientific ideas and their implications for a broader religious philosophy. However, he is less satisfactory in his application of these ideas to politics and theology.<sup>17</sup> In this respect he succumbs to the same speculative and associative biography which weakens both Miller and Roe's accounts. Although, to do justice to Nicholas Roe, he freely concedes, in a too brief demurrer, the difficulty of making a conclusive case for Coleridge's early radicalism from direct evidence, such as society membership, acknowledgement in correspondence, or an unambiguous statement of belief either in radical politics or religious dissent.

If ambiguity is at the centre of the dispute over Coleridge's political career, how ought or should such an ambiguity be resolved? An analysis of Coleridge's career which considers the development of his unfinished "System"<sup>18</sup> in the context of changing ideology, faction and rhetoric may provide some degree of coherence. On the other hand, perhaps it is the very ambiguity in Coleridge which makes him such a useful guide to the nuances of political language and thought during this period.

Coleridge's great "system" of thought was never completed. It survives in fragments and journal entries as well as in manuscript form. Thomas MacFarland is currently working on the existing *Magnum Opus* for the Bollingen Foundation's "Collected Works". It is to be hoped that this synthesis of Coleridge's disparate notes and fragmentary essays will elucidate the political and philosophical language of his final attempts to,

<sup>15</sup> Wylie, *Ibid.*, 56. Italics mine.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, see p.49.

<sup>18</sup> "My system if I may venture to give it so fine a name, is the only attempt I know, ever made to reduce all knowledge into harmony." S.T.C. *Table Talk*, Sept. 12, 1831.

as he himself suggested, "write it all down".

Ian Wylie's look at *Young Coleridge and the philosophers of nature* will do much to further our understanding of some of the generative assumptions behind Coleridge's "system". J T Miller's work treated critically, is the first account of the political thought which while focusing our attention on the pivotal issue of property, does so within the confines of the classical republican paradigm as envisioned by J G A Pocock. This interpretation has been continued in the work of John Morrow, who also reminds us of the strong oppositional constitutionalism of the early pamphlets, and country party and civic humanist flavour of the later works.<sup>19</sup> Wylie's "Young Coleridge" is perhaps the most original of recent offerings. It creates a complex picture of the political genesis of a conservative Liberal. Apostasy, disappointed radical promise, turn-about and betrayal, are too easy. They are facile categories at best, unsatisfactory for an understanding of Coleridge, or his "Age".

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<sup>19</sup> Morrow, 38-42 & 67-72.

Jenny Graham

Very shortly after the publication of Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, on 1 November 1790, it was being reported in radical circles in London that amongst the "several answers" which were in preparation was one by "the American Mr Payne, author of *Common Sense &c*".<sup>2</sup> It was apparently on the advice of several of his many radical friends in London that Paine negotiated with Joseph Johnson for the publication of his pamphlet. And it was this edition which, in its issue of 19 February 1791, the *Morning Chronicle* declared was to appear on 22 February.<sup>3</sup> Already on 23 February, however, Theophilus Lindsey, while writing enthusiastically about Paine's work to William Tayleur, added that "the book is so entirely republican...and contains such reflections on the Brunswick princes, that Mr Johnson, for whom it is printed, is advised not to sell it."<sup>4</sup> And that Johnson withdrew the edition very shortly after or even before its actual publication on the advice of his friends, rather than as a result of direct threats from the government, is borne out in a sympathetic and apparently well-informed account of Paine, written a year later: "the work containing some just but severe reflections on various parts of the English government, Mr Johnson was induced, by the advice of some of his friends, to decline the publication of it."<sup>5</sup> The general furore and also confusion surrounding this initial publication is well reflected in a letter of Priestley's, written after the news

<sup>1</sup> The author wishes to make grateful acknowledgement to Lord Abinger for permission to quote from the Abinger MSS., now in the Bodleian Library, and to Dr Bruce Barker-Benfield for much helpful assistance and advice. She would also like to thank the Librarians of Dr Williams's Library and the John Rylands Library, and the Massachusetts Historical Society for permission to quote from manuscripts in their collections.

<sup>2</sup> John Rylands Library (JRL), MSS., Lindsey to Tayleur, 10 November 1790.

<sup>3</sup> G P Tyson, *Joseph Johnson, a liberal publisher* (Univ. of Iowa Press, 1979) 123; T B and T J Howell, eds., *A complete collection of State Trials* (London, 1809-1828), XXII.400-1 for Chapman's statement that it was Thomas Christie who introduced him to Paine for the printing of Part One. Cf. also P S Foner, ed., *The complete writings of Thomas Paine* (New York, 1945), II. 1300-2 for Paine's letter of 16 April 1790, almost certainly to Christie, declaring his intention of replying to Burke's pamphlet "if it should come out at a time when I could devote myself to it". And cf. *Morning Chronicle*, 19 February 1791: "On Tuesday (February 22) will be published, Price 2s.6d., RIGHTS OF MAN, being an Answer to Mr Burke's Attack on the French Revolution" by Thomas Paine. Printed for J Johnson, No.72 St. Paul's Churchyard."

<sup>4</sup> J R L MSS., Lindsey to Tayleur, 23 February 1791; and H McLachlan, ed., *Letters of Theophilus Lindsey* (Manchester, 1920), 131.

<sup>5</sup> *Impartial sketch of the life of Thomas Paine* (London, 1792), 8. The statement in A O Aldridge, *Man of reason, The life of Thomas Paine* (London, 1963) 134, that Johnson was directly threatened by the government, the present writer has been unable to confirm.

that Johnson had withdrawn the edition had clearly reached Birmingham: "What is the case with respect to Mr Paine's pamphlet?" he asked Lindsey on 11 March: "Is the edition cancelled, or will it be sold in France and America, and a new one printed for England? Was Mr Johnson threatened, or did he take the alarm of himself?"<sup>6</sup>

At exactly what time Johnson withdrew Paine's pamphlet, and how many copies had been sold, it seems impossible, from the conflicting extant reports, to state with certainty. On 24 February, however, the *Morning Chronicle*, citing with approval Paine's dedication to Washington, declared that "there is now not a copy to be had."<sup>7</sup> That some were in circulation amongst the politically informed can be seen from Lindsey's letter to Tayleur, cited above, from Priestley's letter to Lindsey of 24 February describing his satisfaction on receiving one,<sup>8</sup> and from the copy now in the Collection of the American Philosophical Society, which was Burke's own and which contains marginal annotations in his handwriting. Moreover, there is additional supporting evidence from Godwin's Diary, from which, the present author would like to suggest, it can be inferred that Brand Hollis was among those who were at this early date in possession of a copy. "Dine at B Hollis's with Jennings & Disney: borrow Paine", the entry in Godwin's Diary runs for 2 March 1791.<sup>9</sup> And in a recently discovered undated and unaddressed note which, it seems very probable, was written to Brand Hollis, with whom he did discuss political matters at this time, Godwin made clear the privileged position which the sight of the pamphlet put him in, and also his clear expectation that, in order to appear at all, it would have to be

<sup>6</sup> J T Rutt, ed., *The theological and miscellaneous works of Joseph Priestley*, 25 vols. (London, 1817-1831), I. *Life and correspondence*, pt.2, 105, Priestley to Lindsey, 11 March 1791.

<sup>7</sup> *Morning Chronicle*, 24 February 1791. This report, which now states that the pamphlet was advertised for "this day", i.e. 24 February, seems to imply that a considerable number of copies were sold (cf. also the report in the *General Evening Post*, which stated that the pamphlet was only on sale for four hours, but that "in the interval of publication a noble Marquis is esteemed lucky enough to have purchased one hundred copies..." (*General Evening Post*, March 5-8, 1791). Tyson, *Joseph Johnson*, 123, states however that only one dozen copies were printed for Johnson.

<sup>8</sup> Dr Williams's Library MSS., Priestley to Lindsey, 24 February 1791; and cf. J Graham, "Revolutionary Philosopher. The Political Ideas of Joseph Priestley, 1733-1804, Part II", *Enlightenment and Dissent*, no.9, 1990, 20, n.21. This letter of Priestley's is n.d., but postmarked 25 February, endorsed as replied to on 26 February, and from internal evidence seems certain to have been actually written on 24 February.

<sup>9</sup> Godwin's Diary: Abinger MSS., Bodleian Library, Dep. e. 198. For the suggestion that Godwin borrowed this copy from Holcroft cf. M Philp, "Godwin, Holcroft and the Rights of Man", *Enlightenment and Dissent*, no.1, 1982, 41.



severely cut. "Though I have as yet given only a cursory perusal to the pamphlet with a sight of which you have favoured me", Godwin wrote,

I will nevertheless take the liberty to express to you the feelings excited by that perusal. I shall trespass upon your goodness by begging leave to detain it, while I give it a more careful examination. Few things indeed ever mortified me more, than the recollecting, that shortly I must cease to have a copy in my possession, & that, even for the mangled remnant that is to be left, I must trust to the accidents that may attend its future publication.

In a second note, which in the original manuscript draft is penned on the same sheet of paper, Godwin described his excitement and admiration for this pamphlet, which clearly was Part One of the *Rights of Man*.<sup>10</sup>

It is upon the "accidents" that were widely assumed to be in store for the future publication of Paine's work, as well as the degree to which Godwin was at this stage an active and influential participant in the circles of reform, that much scholarly debate has recently been concentrated. The suggestion, which Mark Philp set out to refute, that in February and March 1791 a committee of reformers superintended the manuscript of the pamphlet before it was submitted to Johnson, and also were in charge of the alterations for a revised edition published a month later by Jordan, first originated in an intentionally scurrilous and notoriously inaccurate *Life of Paine*, written by a government agent, George Chalmers, under the pseudonym Francis Oldys, which appeared in the summer of 1791. In this, Chalmers made effectively two allegations about the circum-

<sup>10</sup> Abinger MSS., Dep. b. 227/6, Godwin to (?Brand Hollis), n.d. This letter was first published in full by W St Clair in *The Godwins and the Shelleys. The biography of a family* (London and New York, 1989), 48. St Clair suggested that it was written "probably to Paine but possibly to Holcroft or Fenwick". There seems however to be no substance in the notion that it was addressed to Paine (or for St Clair's further assumption, 49, that Godwin's second note was "a second letter to Paine"). The evidence that Godwin knew Paine at this time has in this writer's view been decisively refuted by Mark Philp (cf. below, n.18). St Clair, 63-4, accepts this dating, which does seem to make it extremely unlikely that Godwin was in correspondence with Paine in February 1791.

The suggestion - which P H Marshall, *William Godwin* (London, 1984), 80, also makes - that these letters were to Holcroft seems also likely to be misleading. Godwin's relationship with Holcroft at this time was extremely close (St. Clair, 80), and the far more formal tone of this letter than that of Holcroft's notes addressed to him (below, nn.13,14) makes it possible to suggest a different correspondent. That Godwin did both discuss and correspond on political matters with Brand Hollis at this time can be seen from Brand Hollis's letter to him dated 10 January 1791 (Abinger MSS., Dep. b. 229/1), enlarging on a discussion of French politics.

stances surrounding the delayed publication of Paine. He wrote that the pamphlet as it was delivered to Johnson was "submitted to a revisal of Mr Brand Hollis, and a committee of *Democrats*. It was fitted by them for the press, after some struggles, between the desires of the author, and the wishes of his patrons." It was this edition which Johnson, out of "his regard for *the shop*", unexpectedly refused to sell. "A few copies", in Chalmers' account, were "smuggled into private hands", and, as impatience heightened, "the men-midwives determined to deprive the child of its virility, rather than so hopeful an infant should be withheld from the world." It was this "mutilated brat", in Chalmers's phrase, which was delivered to the world under the imprint of Jordan, at the increased price of three shillings, on 16 March.<sup>11</sup>

The fact that, as was pointed out by M D Conway, a detailed comparison of the two editions proved that very little alteration indeed was made for the second publication<sup>12</sup> might well lead to doubt being cast upon the whole of Chalmers' account. His suggestion of the committee of democrats, however, lived on, and was perpetuated in the first of the lives of Godwin to have full access to his papers, that by Kegan Paul, published in 1876. Kegan Paul asserted that both Holcroft and Godwin saw much of the *Rights of Man* in manuscript; that they "were members of the Committee, of which Mr Brand Hollis was the leading spirit, to whom had been entrusted the revisal of the work" after Johnson's suspension of publication; but that in fact no alterations were made. As further evidence for this, Kegan Paul produced the celebrated undated little note which Holcroft penned to Godwin:

I have got it - If this do not cure my cough it is a damned perverse mule of a cough - The pamphlet - From the row - But mum - we don't sell it - Oh, no - Ears and Eggs - Verbatim, except the addition of a short preface, which, as you have not seen, I send you my copy - Not a single castration (Laud be unto God and J S Jordan!) can I discover. Hey for the New Jerusalem! The Millennium (sic)! And peace and eternal beatitude be unto the soul of Thomas Paine.<sup>13</sup>

No further evidence was adduced by Kegan Paul for the existence of an actual committee. But that Holcroft's note, with its clear indication of some interest at least in the process of publication of "the pamphlet" to which it refers, does refer to Part One of the *Rights of Man*, seems to

<sup>11</sup>F Oldys, *The life of Thomas Paine* (sic) (London, 1791), 95-6.

<sup>12</sup>M D Conway, *The life of Thomas Paine* (London, 1909, repr. N.Y. 1977), 116, note.

<sup>13</sup>C Kegan Paul, *William Godwin, his friends and contemporaries* (London, 1876), I. 69-70; Abinger MSS., Dep. b. 215/6.

have been made the more likely by the unearthing of another note from Holcroft to Godwin by William St. Clair. "I have read the pamphlet once thro'", runs this second of Holcroft's notes to be published, but clearly anticipating that quoted above,

and am absolutely in an extacy with the acute the profound the divine author; the friend of man & the terror of Despots - I have so severe a cold that I think it prudent not to go into the night air. Should you not happen to be very poetical & shd chuse to come & sit with me an hour you would be a welcome guest - I want to consult you on the castrations - I wd have the whole transcribed if I thought there were the least danger it should not be published.<sup>14</sup>

The references in Holcroft's notes to "the addition of a short preface" - which is a very exact description of the Preface incorporated by Jordan into his edition; and to the "danger it should not be published" - which clearly existed - make it seem most probable that 1791 was the likely date for both these notes. And the fact that, as St. Clair has pointed out, Godwin was at this time "very poetical", for he was composing his verse tragedy "Dunstan", seems to make this dating conclusive.<sup>15</sup>

Both from Holcroft's notes, if it can be accepted that they date to February-March 1791, and also from Godwin's letters cited above, it is clear that the circle of London reformers - who had already apparently displayed much interest in Paine's reply to Burke and had been instrumental in helping him to find a publisher - expected that cuts would have to be made in his pamphlet. And they were also, it would seem, if only in a very informal and not necessarily very influential capacity, consulted in this process.<sup>16</sup> It is in this context that the role of Brand

<sup>14</sup> St. Clair, *The Godwins and the Shelleys*, 48; Abinger MSS., Dep. c. 511.

<sup>15</sup> St Clair, *ibid.* Cf., however, Philp, "Godwin, Holcroft and the Rights of Man", 41-2, where he points out that some of these factors could equally well apply to 1792, when Jordan once again took over the publishing, this time of Part Two, of Paine's work, and Paine did again in the interval add a short Preface. Philp also rightly points out that in 1792 Paine's work was greeted with a millennial fervour. But Part One of *Rights of Man* also enjoyed an ecstatic reception, which has not been sufficiently emphasised (cf. this author's *Reform politics in England, 1789-99*: forthcoming). And in 1790-1 Paine already enjoyed a very general recognition amongst radical circles in London, which does not make their knowledge of and interest in his forthcoming publication inherently unlikely (*ibid.*, and above, n.2, below, nn. 16,17,24; cf. Philp, *ibid.*).

<sup>16</sup> For the relaying of the state of the publication by Lindsey to Priestley, cf. Priestley, *Works*, I, pt.2, 106, Priestley to Lindsey, 14 March 1791: "I am glad that Mr Paine's book is to be published as it was printed, though not by Johnson". (Cf. his query of 11 March, above, n.6.)

Hollis, which Chalmers alleged was a leading one, must be considered. Brand Hollis was undoubtedly very active in reforming circles at this time. He was a frequent attendee at meetings of the Society for Constitutional Information, which was much exercised as to the fate of Paine's work.<sup>17</sup> It seems very likely, as suggested above, that it was Brand Hollis who lent Godwin his copy of Paine; and it was certainly he, as Mark Philp has conclusively demonstrated, who introduced Godwin to Paine in November 1791.<sup>18</sup> That he played any part in the alleged committee to supervise the publication of *The Rights of Man* his biographer Disney did, however, citing Brand Hollis himself, categorically deny.<sup>19</sup> And from two letters of Brand Hollis's which seem in this context to have been hitherto unnoticed, it would appear that this denial was justified. On 4 November 1791 Brand Hollis wrote to one of his correspondents in America, Joseph Willard, President of Harvard, that

Payne's book has done much good but given great offence to Aristocrats. Burke being so violent against the English and French revolution prevented prosecution of Payne; his life is published. Some parts true and many false. Every article regarding me is notoriously so, having never seen the book till printed, etc.<sup>20</sup>

It was a statement which Brand Hollis was to repeat to another of his American correspondents, John Adams, in 1793, when, after quoting Chalmers' statement, he commented, "all which is notoriously false for I never saw the pamphlet till it was printed."<sup>21</sup> This statement is however in itself slightly disingenuous - for the issue is - and was - to what extent were alterations considered, and by whom, not only before 22 February

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *Reform politics in England, 1789-99*, Chapter IV.

<sup>18</sup> Philp, "Godwin, Holcroft and the Rights of Man", 38-40. Cf. Marshall, *Godwin*, 80, n.13, where he relies on the Diary entry for 27 February 1791: "Call on Paine" as evidence for Godwin's earlier acquaintance with Paine. This, however, as Mark Philp rightly stated, is not in itself conclusive; and, as he also pointed out, there are several instances where Godwin appears to have added entries in his Diary at a later date, and they are not always correct (Philp, 38 and n.10; and cf. also the entries for 5.11.90 and 14.5.91). It might incidentally in this context be noted that the absence of any comment from Godwin in his Diary on consultations on the publication of Paine's reply to Burke, or indeed any entry for the second publication date by Jordan, is not necessarily significant (cf. the entry for 22 February 1791: "Paine's pamphlet appears").

<sup>19</sup> J Disney, *Memoirs of Thomas Brand Hollis* (London, 1808), 18-19.

<sup>20</sup> *Proc. Mass. Hist. Soc.*, 43 (1910), 635, Brand Hollis to Willard, 4 November 1791.

<sup>21</sup> Adams Papers, Mass. Hist. Soc., Reel 115, Brand Hollis to Adams, 18 February 1793.



but between this abortive first and the second printing of Paine. Nor, from the evidence of Holcroft's notes and Godwin's letters, can it be argued in Brand Hollis's support, as did Disney (and as it has been subsequently argued since) that Paine's natural inclinations would have been against any such interference in his manuscript - at least once it was complete.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, if it can be accepted that Godwin's letter was addressed to Brand Hollis, then the latter was clearly apprised of the possibility of the cuts which in the event did not have to be made.

One final consideration must be the part played by Paine. No single letter of his, or of others describing his activities or involvement in the delayed publication of his pamphlet, appears to be extant. There have been suggestions made by his biographers that he was not in fact in London at all at this time; that he departed for Paris, and from there transmitted to England the "Preface to the English Edition" that was incorporated by Jordan.<sup>23</sup> There have also been suggestions, which appear to run directly counter to this, that Paine left London at this time for a short period, returning on 7 March. And that Paine did leave London for a short time at least, returning certainly by 7 March, is substantiated by a report which there appears to be no reason to doubt in the *Morning Chronicle* of that date.<sup>24</sup> His absence has served as a further argument for the all-important role of the so-called committee. That Paine left for Paris before his reply to Burke appeared does seem, as Mark Philp pointed out, logistically as well as inherently unlikely.<sup>25</sup> And from the Diary of Gouverneur Morris, Paine's long-standing American acquaintance who in 1791 was in Paris, it would appear that he did not leave England until early April. "Read the answer of Paine to Burke's book", Morris wrote in his Diary on 8 April: "...Paine calls on me. He says that he found great difficulty in prevailing on any bookseller to publish his book; that it is extremely popular in England, and, of course, the *writer*, which he considers as one among the uncommon revolutions of this age."<sup>26</sup> This does not sound like the boast of an author who displayed indifference to the fate of his manuscript, or who was long absent from the scene of action. And the fact that the first French edition of *The Rights of Man* dates from May 1791 seems further to point to Paine leaving for France at this time. The sketch of Paine composed by an

<sup>22</sup> Disney, *Memoirs*, 19; and cf. also Philp, 40.

<sup>23</sup> M D Conway, *Life of Paine*, 116 and note.

<sup>24</sup> *Morning Chronicle*, 7 March 1791: "Mr PAYNE, the Author of COMMON SENSE, has returned to town. His Answer to Mr Burke, which, on account of local knowledge, authentic information, and historical and scientific research, is much in request, will once more make its appearance about the latter end of this week." And cf. Aldridge, *Paine*, 134; and D Hawke, *Paine* (London, 1974), 223.

<sup>25</sup> Philp, 40.

<sup>26</sup> A C Morris, ed., *The diary and letters of Gouverneur Morris* (N.Y. 1888, repr. 1970), I.400.

apparently knowledgeable and friendly source in 1792 also states that it was in May that Paine "again went to France".<sup>27</sup> Only in Rickman's *Life of Paine* is there a suggestion that Paine was in France at an earlier date in 1791 - where, indeed, Rickman stated, he finished the composition of Part One. But Rickman in his account clearly implies that Paine was in London for its publication, for, after describing this (but with unfortunately no reference at all to the change of publisher from Johnson to Jordan), he states that "in May following he went again to France."<sup>28</sup> If consultation with others, and acceptance of alterations if necessary was, as the evidence surely suggests, not an impossibility for Paine, actually abandoning all responsibility for his production to others, and departing for Paris, does seem to fly in the face of both the probability and the evidence.

Any discussion which must to a great extent rely upon four undated and unaddressed notes, two letters which are in themselves slightly disingenuous, a literary Diary some dates in which are certainly open to question, and no single piece of solid evidence, in particular from the main protagonist, in the form of a dated, signed, and addressed letter for the period in question (i.e. 22 February - 16 March 1791), will inevitably generate controversy until some such piece of evidence is unearthed. "The issue", as Philp and Butler have recently rightly commented, "is a complex one."<sup>29</sup> The story of the "committee of democrats" can surely be laid to rest with other falsehoods of Chalmers. But that there were, amidst the air of impatience and expectation generated by the delayed publication of Paine's pamphlet, informal consultations at least amongst the radicals of the metropolis, over a far more mangled production than in the event appeared, does seem, from such evidence as is available, to admit of little doubt.

Lucy Cavendish College,  
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<sup>27</sup> *Impartial sketch of Thomas Paine*, 8: "about the middle of May, Paine again went to France." The discrepancy of one month seems understandable. Cf. also Rickman's dating, below, n.28.

<sup>28</sup> T C Rickman, *The life of Thomas Paine* (London, 1819), 84-5.

<sup>29</sup> M Philp, ed., *Collected novels and memoirs of William Godwin* (London, 1992), I. 13: Introduction by Marilyn Butler and Mark Philp.



Richard Price

(edited with an introduction by John Stephens)

Notwithstanding his other activities it must be remembered that Richard Price was by profession a dissenting minister. After leaving Coward's Academy in Moorfields in 1744 he became domestic chaplain to George Streatfield, a wealthy dissenter living in Stoke Newington. During this period he preached to congregations at Edmonton and Enfield and also at the Old Jewry where he fell out with Samuel Chandler the minister. On 25th March 1758 he was appointed morning and evening preacher at Newington Green at a stipend of £50 a year which was raised to £52.10.0 on January 1, 1760. He was joined by Thomas Amory in 1770 as evening preacher when Price himself was appointed evening preacher at the nearby Gravel Pit Meeting House in Hackney. They were both paid £30 a year which remained unchanged until Price's retirement from Newington Green in 1783 when he continued his activities at Hackney. He had been evening preacher at Poor Jewry Lane from 1762 until his appointment to Hackney.<sup>1</sup>

Hence with the exception of times when he was away from London, Price was preaching probably on most Sundays for a period of thirty years or more. Even granted that the dissenting habit of having two preachers at many meetings and other opportunities for revisions and repetitions over the years, Price's output - in common with other contemporary preachers - must have been substantial. Some twenty sermons appeared as *Sermons on Various Subjects* (London 1816) edited by his nephew William Morgan who confirms in his preface that the selection 'was taken from the great number which Dr Price had left behind him'. Morgan also confirms that he had not attempted any 'corrections and additions' to the text. These sermons, therefore, one supposes give a fair impression of the manner of Price's preaching on a Sunday to Sunday basis at least in the final stages of his career where the style broadly resembles those of Thomas Amory and Samuel Chandler. The other surviving sermons are more fully worked out: single sermons published between 1759 and 1789 on occasions such as fast days culminating with the *A Discourse on the Love of our Country* of 1789. Besides these Price published the *Sermons on Christian Doctrine* of 1787, a more overtly theological work than anything else he published in this form and which to some extent at least was written specially for publication. Internal evidence suggests that certain sections of the *Review of Morals* first saw

<sup>1</sup> D O Thomas, *The honest mind: the life and work of Richard Price* (Oxford 1977), 15ff. For details of the Newington Green Register (On deposit in Dr Williams's Library) which details his stipend see Richard Price 1723-1791 [Exhibition Catalogue]. Aberystwyth 1976. Item 17.

the light of day in the pulpit<sup>2</sup> and the same can be said of parts of more of *Four Dissertations* (1767) most notably the third 'On the future of men in a virtuous state'. All these however were at least revised for publication by Price but these last two, even so, are more overtly rhetorical than the 1787 or 1816 collections.

We can now add one unpublished sermon to that number, a peculiarly fortunate discovery since all the manuscripts that Morgan printed are lost. It has an additional importance since internal evidence in the manuscript and features of the text suggest a very early date: in fact this is probably one of the earliest extant Price manuscripts. The original preserved, appropriately, in Dr Williams's Library is neatly written and is evidently a fair copy of an earlier (possibly shorthand) draft: the handwriting is markedly similar to that found in Price's 1748 letter referred to below. By the 1760s his hand was markedly more free. There are a few words which have to be inferred and a few passages that read awkwardly and could have done with revision. What is most curious about the sermon however is that there are no changes after the time of writing. A preacher in the eighteenth or indeed any other century would be unlikely to use a sermon of this sort only once. Not only are there no alterations but also there are no indications of when it was preached: one would expect a series of dates and places somewhere: there are none. This leads to the conclusion that this sermon was not part of Price's working stock but a one-off experiment preached perhaps once and later rejected.

There is a well known passage in William Morgan's *Memoirs* which is relevant in this context. Referring to his time at the Old Jewry under Samuel Chandler, Morgan says 'there he seemed to acquire considerable popularity, but Dr Chandler, for reasons best known to himself, advised him to be less energetic in his manner, and to deliver his discourses with more diffidence and modesty. This rebuke had its natural effect on the mild and unassuming temper of Mr Price. To avoid an extreme into which he had no danger of falling, he ran into the opposite extreme of a cold and lifeless delivery, which by rendering him less popular with the congregation disposed them to feel less regret when their minister had no further occasion for his services'. Indeed one gathers that later in his

<sup>2</sup> For example, the passage on Virtue found in Richard Price, *A Review of the principal questions in morals... edited by D D Raphael* (Oxford, 1974), 265-266. This was later reproduced in William Enfield *The speaker* (Warrington, 1774), 183-185 in the section headed 'Oration and Harrangues'. This was a work used to develop the art of public speaking and was extensively used in dissenting academies in the later eighteenth century. The texts are on the whole standard eighteenth century ones together with a substantial representation of Shakespeare.

In addition Price states in the first edition of the *Review* that the 'Conclusion' is a reworking of material earlier published in periodical form. It is possible that the parts of *Four Dissertations* I have cited are reworkings of earlier pulpit utterance by now thought more suitable for print.

career it was mainly Price's fame for other reasons that made his sermons so well attended.<sup>3</sup>

This sermon bears all the characteristics of Morgan's description of his early style. It is certainly 'energetic' but cannot be said to have great intellectual content. It is worth pointing out that some of the rhetoric here can be paralleled in some of his political utterances, notably the peroration to the *A Discourse on the Love of our Country*. Some parts of *Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty* also come to mind where one striking parallel occurs. In the Sermon Price states (speaking of the possibility of damnation) 'Oh. Shocking Thought! Am I now speaking to any one who is to be thus wretched. Is there any one here whose condition is to be this.' In *Observations* we find 'From one end of America to the other they are fasting and praying. But what are we doing. Shocking Thought! We are ridiculing them as fanatics and scoffing at religion'. It is also significant that he modified the rhetoric in some editions and thought better of it: since the alternative version found in some editions is somewhat preposterous.<sup>4</sup> The presentation of the Sermon bears striking resemblance to the typographical layout of the eighteenth century editions of the political pamphlets in the frequent use of the dash and the use of emphases - in the sermon underlinings, here given in italics, in the printed works often capital letters used in addition. These peculiarities are almost certainly deliberate and therefore an integral part of the text.

So far the argument I have advanced is grounded on two observations. First, the dissimilarity between the handwriting of this Sermon and the Ashurst Letter on the one hand, and, on the other, the later Manuscripts, almost exclusively letters that survive in Price's hand, all written in the 1760s and later. Secondly, there is the fact that this sermon, quite unlike anything else in Price's pulpit output is compatible with Morgan's account of Price's teaching in the 1740s. The conjectures about rhetoric elsewhere can be regarded as secondary to this.

There are two other points which are worth considering. What is known about the provenance of the Sermon suggests, or at least does not contradict, the supposition of an early date. It does not seem to have been among the papers that Price left at his death and apparently belonged to Joseph Parker of Stoke Newington who died in 1795. It then passed to his son, also Joseph, who lived at Mettingham in Suffolk and who in turn died in 1834. His books were sold at auction in Bradwell in 1835. In the

<sup>3</sup> William Morgan, *Memoirs of the Life of the Rev. Richard Price* (London 1815), 11-12.

<sup>4</sup> MS p.28. For the textual change in *Observations* see D O Thomas, John Stephens and P A L Jones *Richard Price: a bibliographical study* (Aldershot 1993) which includes the first exhaustive analysis of the evolution of the text.

Catalogue Lot 210 is described as 'Autograph Sermon by Richard Price DD, FRS'. Dr Williams's Library possesses Lot 208 (autographs of Sir Thomas Abney and Isaac Watts), the sale cover of Lot 209 and this sermon catalogued together. They were certainly in the Library in 1894 but were probably there not long after the sale though this is not certain. Parker was part of the Newington Green community of which Price was for long a member: other items in the sale are letters from both Samuel Morton Savage and Samuel Price, Richard's uncle, to Miss Ashurst.<sup>5</sup> I have noted that the earliest known letter from Price is to (the same?) Miss Ashurst dated July 9, 1748. Whether or not she was the same as Samuel's correspondent or perhaps a sister she was certainly a member of the Newington Green circle centred on the Abney family. Price also records that he had known Mr Parker (the younger) since infancy. If one supposes that at a very early date the sermon had been lent to the Parker family and not returned this would explain both its survival and its clean unamended state. (The other possibility is that it was specially copied out for them by Price.)<sup>6</sup>

The Ashurst letter is an important document for several reasons quite apart from its early date since it sets out in outline the scheme of Providence that Price later published in *Four Dissertations*. This shows that part at least of Price's system was securely in place by this date. However, the Sermon lacks the extreme Platonism found in the *Review* and elsewhere: the emphasis is much more on man as a created being and the ideas that Price later put about of man participating in the Divine Mind are completely absent. How Price in his later writing would have treated the question of how we perceive God is unclear since he does not treat the matter again in what survives of his writing. The nearest parallel is the discussion in *Four Dissertations* on meeting our friends in the after-life. But there Price does not address the question of how it is that we perceive - if that is the right word - God.

Given how little is known about Price's thought before the publication of the *Review* it should not be totally surprising that his Platonism was incorporated into his thought at a relatively late date. One says relatively, since clearly by the time the *Review* was published he had had sufficient time to develop it into a mature synthesis. This alone is sufficient to place the date of the sermon well before 1758. A fact which may have some significance is that Price did not cite the first edition of James Harris's highly Platonist *Hermes* (1751) in the first edition of the *Review* although the second edition (1765) was lengthily and approvingly quoted in the

<sup>5</sup> *A Catalogue of the Valuable Library of Divinity...by Mr William Spelman...at the late residence of Joseph Parker, Esq. deceased Bradwell Suffolk* (Bungay 1835). I am most grateful to John Creasey, Dr Williams's Librarian for this reference and the other information here given.

<sup>6</sup> D O Thomas and Bernard Peach, *The Correspondence of Richard Price*, 3 vols. (Cardiff, Durham N.C., 1983-1994), I, 3-5; II, 155.



second edition of Price's own book published in 1769. This raises the possibility that Price's interest in Platonism definitely developed after 1751 but at best this argument is highly conjectural not least because by 1758 he would have had access to the principle modern platonist source he cites, Ralph Cudworth's *Eternal and Immutable Morality* frequently cited in the early sections of the *Review* but published in 1734.

Finally, some technical details of the Manuscript and the conventions I have used in preparing the text. The manuscript measures 173 cm by 112 cm and consists of a wrapper and 32 leaves stitched at the centre. There is no watermark visible; the paper is laid with vertical chain lines. The wrapper is in drab white: on the front cover is what appears to be an indecipherable monogram and the inscription 'A Sermon of the late Dr Richard Price written in his own hand'. The writing is probably early 19th century. On the inside front cover a childish hand has written 'Dear Sister may well wonder that She hath Neither Received nor heard from me this Long Time'. At the conclusion of the text the hand on the wrapper has written 'This Sermon was composed & written by the late Dr Price'. In my transcription I have noted page numbers from [1] to [31]: these represent pages actually written on. One leaf between [17] and [18] is blank and has not been counted. In the Library foliation this is f.10r. In placing these page numbers I have assumed that where the final word on a page crosses over to the next the whole appears on the earlier page. I have attempted to reproduce Price's spelling and punctuation exactly with the exception that I have silently expanded the obvious contractions he uses such as 'W<sup>n</sup>' for 'When', 'f<sup>m</sup>' for 'from' and suchlike features.

Rev. 21.3. And I heard a voice out of Heaven Saying, behold the Tabernacle of God is with me and he will dwell with them and they shall be his people and God himself shall be with them and be their God.

The State and happiness of Heaven are in the Scriptures often represented to us under the Notion of seeing God, of being with him and of knowing him as we are known ..... This is the Account of things which the words I have read to you contains. They inform us that in Heaven God will be peculiarly present with us, he will dwell amongst us; we shall be his people, he himself shall be with us and be our God ..... When we come to that blessed world, the Deity will unveil himself to us; we shall be near him, feel his presence See him as he is known and enjoy him for ever ..... From the words I intend to consider what will be our State and relations with respect to God in a future World. We are told that we shall be with him and that he will be our God; elsewhere we are told that we shall see him [2] face to face. The true and full meaning of these expressions may, perhaps be quite inconceivable to us and only to be known by our happy experience hereafter. But, however, Something we may know, Something we may with Probability gather from our Ideas of God and his Perfections; So much as may be

Sufficient to make us wish more for Heaven, quicken our desires after it and wean us from all the vanities of Life ..... Let me then in a very imperfect manner tell you what, I think, may [be] the State of good men, of true Christians with respect to their Creator hereafter ..... They are to *See* him, he is to be with them and to dwell amongst them ..... This, I think, may denote the following things.

1st. That in Heaven there will be Some particular and glorious manifestation of the divine presence ..... God, 'tis true is everywhere; he is necessarily in all places; his being is as boundless as Space and infinity: But, notwithstanding this, there may be *Some* places, there may be *Some* parts of the Creation to which he Shews and discovers himself as he does not to others; in which [3] he may manifest himself by *Some* visible Glory or other Symbol of his peculiar presence. And this is what the Scripture directs us to conceive of heaven; which is there represented as the Seat and habitation of God, where he Sits enthroned in awful Majesty, unveils his Glory and in a way we can form no distinct notion of, discovers himself to all its blessed inhabitants ..... Thus in the Chapter from whence my text is taken 'tis Said of the heavenly Jerusalem that the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it and that it had no need of the Sun neither of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. Vers. 10, And he shewed me the holy Jerusalem descending from God, having the Glory of God in it, ..... And ch: 22.3 and there shall be no more curse but the Throne of God and of the Lamb Shall be in it and they Shall See his face and there shall be no more Night, and they need no candle neither light of the Sun, for the Lord God giveth them light ..... And in the words of my text we are told that the Tabernacle of God will be with 3 [4] men, which probably is an Allusion to the Jewish Tabernacle where God dwelt and Shewed himself by a constant Glory over the mercy-Seat ..... The least that can be Signify'd by these and other expressions must be what I have Said, that in the upper world there will be a peculiar manifestation of God's presence. And there is plainly nothing unreasonable in this; in Supposing that he who filleth the whole Creation and whose Nature is immensity, Should to some of his Creatures make himself particularly known and in Some regions of the World fix the Seat of his near and glorious and visible presence. Oh! blessed, happy World, where the Eternal mind, the great, the infinite God, the cause and Sovereign of all things is manifested, is seen and known by all; where he will make one of us and be felt the light, the Life and glory of the place. .... When shall we come and appear before him? When shall we be admitted to our father's house and Society? When shall we find him, and know and love him better than we now possibly can? When shall we get out of this wilder-ness and Desart, Where [5] all is pain and trouble, where we are Strangers to him that made and preserves us and in a manner banished from God? 'Tis indeed, very reviving and comfortable to think that, whatever may be our Difficulties here, we have a God and Father in heaven with whom we Shall Soon be; that however far we may now be from him, we shall in a little while dwell and live with him, behold his Glory and throw



ourselves before his awful Throne ..... A moment hence we shall leave a vain World, we shall be taken from this vale of misery and tears. We shall be lifted from this dark, benighted Spot and received into those blissful mansions where God is and where he will no longer hide or conceal himself, from us. The Consequence of the Observation now made is what I would observe in the

IId place. That in Heaven we shall be immediately and distinctly conscious of the divine presence, as conscious as we are now of the presence of any of the objects of Sense with which we are now most conversant ..... We shall then as much know God, as clearly and fully See and feel him present with us, as we do now a most intimate friend and relation [6] with whom we live and converse ..... I cannot think this doubtful, for it Should Seem that nothing Less can come up to the proper meaning of the Phrases *Knowing God and Seeing him face to face which are used in Scripture* ..... Besides, is not God now always really and intimately present with us? What then can there be impossible in making us Sensible of this his presence; in causing us properly to See and be conscious of it, in the Same manner as we See and know a friend when he is before our eyes? Is not the divine Essence diffused through us and all Nature? What then can there be difficult in causing us to feel it? What is there unlikely in Supposing a latent Faculty in the human mind which hereafter will discover itself by which God will be brought within our immediate Notice and Discernment? ..... And how happy a time must this be? When all doubts of the divine existence care and Providence will be absolutely impossible, when we Shall be as conscious of his being, as we are of our own, when we shall all clearly See [7] and perceive him present with us ..... What joy of the Heart, what rapture and unspeakable pleasure must it give the good man hereafter to find Divinity near him and within him; to know and discern him who is the author of his being and the life of the Universe; to have a Sensation of him as united to his Soul, as Sustaining and pervading his Nature; to feel his Almighty influence chearing and enlivening his frame and filling him with inconceivable delights. When thus blessed with the vision of God, when thus conscious of his presence and influence, how high will the tide of joy run in his mind? How warm will be his Devotion; how ardent his Love? With what transport will he throw himself before his near and present maker and Sovereign, commit his Son to him and forever adore, worship and bless him? ..... From, this and what was before observed it follows in the

IIId Place. That in Heaven there will be a particular intercourse between God and us. Of what kind or Nature this will be, it is not possible for us at present to conceive [8]. But this in general I think we may know, that as in heaven God will gloriously manifest himself to us, as we shall there See him and immediately feel his presence, there will therefore, probably be Some correspondence between us and him, we shall hold Some kind of happy and delightful intercourse with him. As he will then in a peculiar Sense *dwell* amongst us and be with us, it must follow that he will then also admit us to

communion and fellowship with him, converse with us, reveal himself to us, keep up a constant communication with our Souls and have immediate Access to them ..... And Oh! What a Sum of happiness does this contain? To dwell with, to enjoy, and maintain eternal intercourse with the first, the greatest and best of beings; to have immediate Access to God and drink in knowledge, perfection, blessedness from the Fountain-Head, from the inexhaustible Source of being, Life and happiness ..... If you are holy, Christians! you are Soon to be with the judge of all, with the cause and father of the World; you are Soon to See him, and not Only to See him but to enjoy him and be for ever compleatly [9] happy in a State of fellowship and union with him ..... Let the thoughts, let the view and prospect of this warm and animate your hearts; Let it fill your hopes, encourage your faith and constancy, teach you to condemn the World and draw off your fond regards from all the Low and vain objects of time and Sense.

In the words of my text, 'tis added that God will be *their God*; this must Signify that we Shall then have Some peculiar *interest* in the Deity and Stand in Some Special relation to him as his creatures and children and people. Then shall we be peculiarly favoured, distinguished and blessed by him. In the New Jerusalem God will be the king, the head and leader of the blessed Society; its constitution, its laws and all its concerns will be Settled and directed by him. His near and present influence will diffuse itself through all its members, join them in mutual, unfeigned benevolence and the reverential Love of him and fill all their hearts with everlasting, unutterable joy and transport ..... Thus will he be properly their God ..... But what I would now particularly observe is this: [10] That then God himself will be their happiness; in heaven God himself will be our happiness: this is not the case with us here: The things that make us now happy are the objects which God has adapted to our faculties and Appetites, Such as friends, honour, credit etc. But in another world God as distinguished from these will be the immediate Source of our happiness; he himself will be the immediate Source of our happiness; he himself will be the light of Life, the bliss and glory of the heavenly inhabitants ..... This, I think, if we carefully consider it, we shall find to be very intelligible ..... For is it not plain that God may be more to us than any worldly enjoyments or any created good whatsoever? Do the company, the converse and fellowship of earthly friends now delight us, and may not the converse, the presence and fellowship of God our best and greatest friend much more delight us? Are we now pleased with honour, with the good Opinion and Approbation of our fellow creatures? And may we not be more pleased with the Approbation of our maker? or rather, where we have a just Sense of things [11] must not this be more to us than the Approbation of the whole Universe? Do the blessings with which we are Surrounded, do riches or anything else we can think of, make us now happy; and may not God do much more and make us much happier than any of them? In short does our felicity arise from Creatures and may it not much more arise from the Creator itself? Does it arise from what God has made and the Objects he has Suited to our Powers, and may it not much more arise from

himself the great Author? Must not the Cause be a *higher* object to the mind, than the Effect? ..... May not God be more our happiness than anything he has made? Indeed to Speak truly, 'tis he only can be our proper and compleat happiness; for every thing else must be finite and limited and therefore not Sufficient to Satisfy the boundless desires of a reasonable and immortal Soul ..... 'Tis an infinite Being alone that can be the Adequate Supply to all my wants and fill up *all* the capacities, wishes and Desires of my Nature ..... To pursue and explain this a little further, I would observe that, in a [12] future world God will be the *immediate* object of our faculties. I would not be understood to intimate that his works will not be also the objects of our Faculties. Undoubtedly, a considerable part of our Happiness will Spring from the contemplation of these; but the most Satisfactory employment of our minds will be about that Self-existent Nature, that infinite intelligence, that boundless goodness from whence *arose* in the World, which gave birth to the Universe and which fills, upholds and animates it; and this Surely must afford our faculties the highest, the noblest and happiest exercise that they can be capable of ..... Thus will the divine being himself be a Subject to our Understandings, Thus shall we be for ever contemplating not only this amazing Structure of the Universe, but also that Almighty Power, that perfect wisdom and knowledge from whence it proceeded: Thus shall we be eternally beholding the divine incomprehensible glory and majesty, viewing the scheme of creation in the Supream mind, diving into the infinity of his perfections and [13] drawing truth from its great Source and Origin. Here shall we find room and hope and matter enough for our everlasting meditation, wonder and praise; here shall we find an Ocean without Shore or bottom, which we shall never be able to fathom ..... Here shall we find an object equal to our largest Wishes, Suited to our noblest faculties and adequate to the highest capacities of the most perfect creatures ..... By our union with, by our contemplation of and enjoyment of Supream unbounded perfection Shall we be ourselves for ever growing and improving in perfection and happiness, have our utmost desires gratified and our Natures more and more raised to a resemblance of that we contemplate and are united to ..... Do the intellectual forms of Order, harmony and proportion now beget in us Love and admiration; Do the various degrees of Beauty and Excellency which we now observe Scattered through the creation fill us with pleasure and sometimes even with rapture? What then, Christians, what will be your Admiration when you come to the full view of him in whom all inferior excellencies [14] meet and center? What will be your Love, what your pleasure and transport when original, perfect uncreated Beauty presents itself to your eyes, when the cause and Author of all things, when Divinity, when absolute Rectitude Shew them Selves to your Minds and because the objects of your near, immediate and eternal Perception and Study. What joy, what unspeakable delights will hereafter *fill* you when you come to be removed from this dark world to the happy regions of Light and bliss and peace; where God resides and displays his majesty and glory; when you'll be able to *feel* your creator *present* with you and to Say that he is your God and portion when you'll be conscious and Sure of your interest in that Power and goodness which are the Springs of

being and Bliss, When that wisdom which Stretched out the Heavens and contrived and formed the Universe, when Self-existence, when eternal and necessary truth and perfection, when Supream intelligence and the divine all perfect essence are themselves the immediate [15] objects of our minds and faculties? ..... Can we possibly form a wish or thought of a happiness beyond or equal to this? of a happiness equal to that of *Seeing* God the *cause of Life* of all; of being with him who call'd forth Creation, of being intimately near to him; maintaining eternal intercourse with the Deity, having *him* for our happiness and deriving from the fountain of being, from absolute perfection itself full and Satisfying Supplies of endless joy and bliss ..... Does not the view and hope of this, oh Christians, cause your hearts to Spring for joy? Does not a prospect So large, so glorious and unbounded make you wish and long for heaven, render you Superior to this earth and all its Scenes and lift your Souls above all the troubles or the pleasures of this waste and howling wilderness? ..... Upon this head, I have only further to observe, that in a future world, God will be our happiness by being also the immediate object of all our best and noblest affections ..... The Exercise of our affections about God is now the cause of our truest and greatest pleasure; Ask the devout and [16] holy Soul and he will tell you that he knows no joys comparable to those which he feel when his heart is warmed with divine Love, when he is present before his maker, commits himself to him as the common parent and Lord and gives a full Scope to all the emotions of reverence, trust, Gratitude, wonder and praise. .... But how will these affections be increased, improved when we are transplanted to Heaven? When by happy experience we shall find that our trust in God has not been in vain; when we shall behold him as he is, have a full view of his infinite Power, wisdom and goodness and Survey these display'd and exemplyfy'd *in all his works*? How high will our Affections rise to him whom *then* we know and See and feel to be truly the *greatest* and *best* of all beings. How Strong and bright and fervent will be our Love? How firm and cheerful our dependence? How warm and elevated our praise and Gratitude? How shall we be lost in pleading, awe, devotion, wonder, joy and transport? to feel divinity present with us, to have access to him who made the world, to *see* [17] ourselves surrounded with the Glory of the God and father of all, to be admitted to the vision and enjoyment of perfect righteousness and goodness, to admire and contemplate the first and great original of Beauty and perfection and to be able to Say this being *is mine to all Eternity* ..... This Christians is a part of the happiness of Heaven, thus shall we find ourselves affected with respect to God ..... He himself will be with us, he will be the full Supply to all our wants, our happiness, our portion, the immediate object of our Faculties, our Understandings and Affections ..... Though the whole Creation Should be destroyed and myself left alone in Nature, yet in God Should I find enough to make me happy, enough to Supply the loss of creatures and to Satisfy and bless me for ever. He would be *more* to me than all his *works*; his Nature fills up the whole Idea of being; in him there are inexhaustible Stores of every thing that can Satisfy a reasonable mind; from him proceeds and in him is center'd all that gives true pleasure amongst creatures and if these



were all gone and lost, I should be at [16] no loss for happiness, while the infinite creator, while fulness of perfection remained.

Thus have I finished with what I proposed and shewn you what I think may be our State with respect to God hereafter, which seems to be all included in the expressions that we Shall See God, that he will be with us, dwell amongst us and be our God ..... The employments of Heaven are things much beyond our present comprehension; it becomes us therefore when we speak of them to be very diffident of ourselves; and what has been now offered is with this sense of things and must be supposed very deficient and to fall greatly short of the truth.

I must not leave this Subject without adding that in Heaven Christ also *will be with us* ..... This in Scripture is represented as a most important part of the happiness of Heaven; The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of the heavenly city; the Glory of God will lighten it and the Lamb is the light thereof. Rev. 21.22.23. Jesus Christ is now gone to prepare a place for us and if we love him and keep his commandments he will come again and receive us to himself [18] that where he is there may we be also, to behold his Glory which the father hath given him Joh. 17.24. and So shall we be ever with him 1 Thess. 4.17. The blessed and holy Jesus, he who took upon him our natures, gave himself for us and dy'd for our Sins; he who at the expence of his own blood redeem'd and Sav'd a guilty World, who is the image of God and the brightness of his father's Glory, who rose from the dead, who Sat down at the right hand of Power and now rules us and manages all the concerns of our Salvation; Christ in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; Christ our great Saviour, king and guardian, will in a future World, himself, be our *everlasting companion*: We shall behold him clothed in our Natures, wearing the form of a man and though the King of Glory yet condescending to familiar intercourse with us as his Brethren; then shall we be admitted to his immediate presence; converse with our great Redeemer, Sit with him on his throne, live and reign with him and from his own mouth have the whole [19] glorious Scheme of Redemption and all the mysteries of his person and Offices explained and opened to us ..... Dost thou, Christian, love thy God and Saviour and art Thou earnestly desirous to See and know and converse with *him* who has done so much for thee. A moment hence the happy time will come; A moment hence he will take thee to himself, fetch thee home to his house and Kingdom, give thee to eat of the tree of Life, lead thee to living fountains of Water and compleat thy redemption by lifting thee to Heaven, by giving thee the full view of his person and glory and receiving thee to eternal, intimate friendship and communion with him. ....

And so we Shall thus be with God and Christ, So also it may deserve to be added that we Shall be with Angels and Superior Beings. We shall then joyn the heavenly host of Angels and Archangels and mix ourselves with the glorious Assembly of bright and happy Spirits that Surround the Throne of

God ..... We shall be received into the Number and conversation of those higher ranks of creatures who So much exceed us at present in their peaceful abodes and for ever assist us and joyn with us in our Searches into the ways and works of God; in our contemplations of his Nature and perfections, in praising, adoring and worshipping our common and infinite Sovereign and Benefactor ..... Oh! blessed happy Society made up of an innumerable company of Angels; of the general Assembly and Church of the first born; of the Spirits of just men made perfect; where order, peace, joy and Love prevail for ever; Universal righteousness its law and cement; Christ the Mediator of the New covenant its great head and Leader and God the judge of all its light and life and happiness.

The Uses I shall make of what we have been upon are these; 1st Is the Happiness of Heaven to consist in God's being *with* us and being our God; Then of how much consequence is it that we now be formed to a *likeness* to him? For without this the presence, the converse and fellowship of the Deity will be absolutely incapable of giving us any pleasure. [21] For what fellowship can righteousness have with unrighteousness, what communion can light have with darkness? What concord can there be between God and Christ and Belial ..... 'Tis only the pure in heart that can See God. And though holiness be not the thing that properly entitles us to the Happiness of heaven or gives us any right or claim to it, yet is it the thing that must *prepare* us for it. Though for Eternal Life we are beholden entirely to the free grace of God in Jesus Christ; though we must receive our future Glory as the absolute *free gift* of God and not as strictly *due* to any merit in us; yet we must Remember, that still without doubt holiness is the Appointed *way* to Heaven, the condition of our obtaining it from the free and Sovereign grace of God and the *necessary* means of rendering us meet for the inheritance of the Saints in Light ..... God is absolute Rectitude, unblemished, Strict and perfect righteousness and Purity: this is his Character and Nature, and till our Characters and Nature are in some measure the Same, till we are holy and righteous as he is; till we are formed to a *Godlike* temper and [22] disposition, our happiness in him will remain an absolute impossibility..... God as long as he is either intelligent, wise or good can never approve, favour or dwell with the wicked ..... The Nature of God is essentially contrary to all iniquity; and to Suppose an Union between him and the wicked is to Suppose that Good and evil, order and confusion, truth and falsehood, Purity and Turpitude are the Same..... Let none of us then deceive themselves with vain hopes; the vision of uncreated Beauty, original Perfection and Supream excellence; goodness can only be born by those who are themselves good and whole..... Others, the ungodly and filthy, were it possible for them to *See* God, would See not a friend and father but an enemy and angry judge..... No, these are fit companions only for those they are *like*, not God and Christ and holy Angels but the infernal host of devils and damned Spirits..... If then we desire to dwell with God and to have him for our God and happiness, let us above all things endeavour to *resemble* him, to get our hearts formed to a conformity to his Nature and laws and by unfeigned holiness *dispose* ourselves for bliss and



his Nature and laws and by unfeigned holiness *dispose* ourselves for bliss and [23] sow the Seeds of endless Glory.

II<sup>ly</sup>. Are these the hopes of good men? Are we Soon (of this Number) to be infinitely happy in the Sight and fruition of God the great fountain of being and bliss? How indifferent then should we be to every thing we can enjoy in Life and how patient and chearful under all its troubles and trials? Compared with the boundless pleasures we expect Soon to enjoy at the right hand of God, what are all of the poor, the low, empty, Shortlived pleasures we meet with here? ..... Is it not most inconsistent and contradictious for one who is the heir of eternal Glory to be fond of any thing in this World, for one who e'er long is to be with God and Christ to converse with Angels and Archangels for *Such a one* to Stoop to the toys of Life or be attached to any of its enjoyments? No, Christian, after a few more days or hours, heaven and all its joys will receive thee; in the way to it then let nothing ingross thy thoughts or much engage thy affections: thou has in near view blessings infinitely more durable and Substantial than this earth can give: [24] Live then as one who knows this: Let not the heir of heaven wallow in the mire of the World, overwhelm his Soul in Sensuality or forget his glorious hopes amongst the cares and vanities of Life ..... We are designed for immortality; we are to live for ever with the Sovereign of the Universe and to have him for our God and everlasting Portion; with which disdain then should we look down on riches, titles and honours? how much higher and nobler things have we before us? When Sun and Moon and Stars are all extinguished and forgot we are to exist and be compleatly happy in the vision and enjoyment of our creator; in the company of God, of Christ, of Saints, of Angels ..... Oh! blessed hope! Oh, vast, reviving, glorious prospect!..... How mean and worthless seem all the blessings of time and Sense? What signifies it what befalls us here? Our home, our treasure and happiness lie beyond the Grave and far above this World; there then let our thoughts and wishes be fixed.

Again how chearful should we be in Adversity and troubles? for they are not only Short and momentary but [25] heaven is at the end of them. Our present light affliction worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory, which will make abundant amends for all we can go through now. The Discipline we are now under is necessary to qualify us for our future manly, permanent happy existence..... Our present toils will only make the promised rest sweeter to us when we get to it..... Let us therefore bear with patience the various ills of time..... One thought of Heaven should be enough to chear us in the darkest hours, to lift us above pain and sorrow and fill all our utmost wishes..... When (may the good Christian Say with pious eagerness) when shall I awake and find myself there? When will the fogs and clouds that now surround me and darken my mind vanish? When Shall I get above the tumults, storms and darkness of this imperfect state? When will my trials be ended, the veil of flesh and mortality drawn, the Strings of Life break and the full prospect of endless day let in upon my Soul [26] When shall I enter the fields of Light, *See* my maker, know, enjoy and contemplate; him and lose myself in the infinity of his being and perfections?..... Oh! how

To rest from all his labours, to be eased of all his pains and burdens; to be freed from sin, from grief, vexation, sickness, care, anxiety and all the heavy, numerous calamities that infest this rude and barbarous country; to bid a long adieu to restless, lawless, passions, to guilt, temptation, fear and melancholy; to be no more uneasy, dull or sorrowful, nor more harassed by destructive craving, brutal appetites, no more annoy'd or grieved by an ill natured, troublesome world; to be past all storms, secured from every danger and out of the reach of all future harms and Difficulties; to have every disorder healed, all our imperfections removed and all our doubts resolved; *to be* united to the Parent of all and from the fullness of his Nature to receive immediate large and deep supplies of everlasting joy; to know and [27] study the wonders of creation; to survey the plan of it in the mind that produced it, to behold the glory of the great redeemer; to live, to reign with Christ for ever; in short to be saints, to be *Angels*, to be ever rising in the Scale of being, growing in bliss and making nearer and nearer Approaches to the perfection and felicity of *God*; to be happy beyond what ear hath heard, tongue can utter or heart conceive and all to be *eternal*..... Fellow christians, is this the hope of worms? Is this the wide, the boundless prospect of poor, imperfect, fallen man? It is, blessed be the riches of the grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour who hath loved us and given himself for us..... What then is Earth and time and all they can do or offer..... What regard or Notice do temporal things deserve from one whose Soul is *filled* with Such expectations?

Let me conclude all this with this important Exhortation; Be holy and good, live as Christians and Secure by unfeigned faith and repentance an interest in the Salvation [28] of the Gospel: this through the divine Spirit and grace we may do; above all things then let *this* be our study and labour, for without this none of the happiness now described can possibly be ours; without this you cannot dwell with God, enter heaven or See him; without this we are all lost for ever, and instead of being rais'd in the joys of Paradise, we must Sink down to the dreadful woes of Hell, instead of being admitted to the presence and wisdom of the Deity, we must be banished from him, go into everlasting exile, be thrust down into the horrors of eternal darkness, endure the heavy weight of Almighty vengeance, live with the Devil and his Angels and know by Sad experience what remediless final ruin means..... Oh! Shocking Thought! Am I now speaking to any one who is to be thus wretched is there any one here whose condition is to be this? God forbid! May the Lord save you and me from so much misery, rescue us all from our common, infinite danger, form us by his word and grace to a meetness for heaven, teach us to be [29] wise in time and carefully to provide for our latter end; that thus when we have done with this scene of vanity and confusion, when we are come to leave this earth and to pass to a dreadful Eternity we may then be taken to those mansions where God and Christ dwell, where our maker will be with us and be our God, our happiness and everlasting portion.

**Mark Philp (with Pamela Clemit and Martin Fitzpatrick)** (Editors), *The political and philosophical writings of William Godwin* (London, Pickering and Chatto, 1993), seven volumes, £395, ISBN 1 85196 026 0 (the set).

For some fifty years William Godwin was an astonishingly prolific author on a very wide range of subjects. He was a philosopher, journalist, economist, biographer, historian, literary critic, educationalist, novelist, playwright, essayist and writer of sermons, fantasies and children's books. He met growing fame for a decade until his reputation reached its apogee in the mid-1790s with the publication of his most important philosophical work, *An enquiry concerning political justice* (1793), and his finest novel, *Caleb Williams* (1794). His fame did not last long as the conservative reaction of the later 1790s led to his being defamed, caricatured and condemned as a wild and dangerous enthusiast. Subject to ridicule and misrepresentation, his reputation slumped and he slipped into neglect, bankruptcy and near penury. And yet he continued to write prodigious amounts, sometimes in entirely new fields and without using his own name as the author of most of these later works.

Until relatively recently his reputation was still that of an icy, unfeeling rationalist or of an utopian crank, who held a number of eccentric, even quite dotty, ideas. Over the last twenty years or so the importance of his ideas, the quality of his writing, and his strength of character have, however, all received much greater recognition. His calm, lucid and balanced prose is now admired, and he is seen as a very important moral philosopher, as a pioneer in education and economics, and as an imaginative writer who deserves praise for his psychological insights and his social observation. He is also no longer perceived as being utterly heartless and devoid of passion, but is recognized as a courageous advocate of truth, reason and justice.

Over the last twenty years Godwin's reputation has been rescued and rehabilitated by a handful of scholars, including J P Clark, Isaac Kramnick, Don Locke, Peter Marshall and William St Clair. Most distinguished of all in this effort to restore Godwin to his due have been the efforts of Mark Philp. The author of a very fine monograph, *Godwin's political justice* (London, 1986), he has already led a group of scholars in editing *The collected novels and memoirs of William Godwin* (8 vols., London: Pickering and Chatto, 1992) and he has now acted as the main editor of these volumes on the political and philosophical writings of Godwin. He has been assisted in this last task by Martin Fitzpatrick, who edited the political writings in volume one, by Pamela Clemit, who edited the educational and literary writings in volume five, and by Austin Gee, who acted as his research assistant for volumes two, three, six and seven. Godwin wrote so much that a complete edition of his non-fiction could have stretched to thirty volumes or more. Mark

Philp and his team therefore had to decide what to include and what to omit. They have decided to be fairly comprehensive in their selection of Godwin's writings up to 1800; omitting some of his writings on Indian affairs in the *Political Herald*, his writings on history for the *New Annual Register*, a translation from the French of the *Memoirs of...Lord Lovat* and his genealogical work on the *English Peerage*. Of Godwin's works written after 1800, his plays, historical writings and literary studies and his children's books have been omitted, as well as the long, dense statistical sections (but not the main conclusions) in his long book, *Of population*. All of Godwin's other works have been reprinted in full; not only the work published in his lifetime, but also some political essays in volume two, some variant revisions of *Political justice* in volume four, a couple of short essays on education in volume five, and on essay on religion and an introduction to another long work (which was itself published posthumously for the first time in 1873) in volume seven. All of these manuscript works were found among the Abinger collection in the Bodleian Library.

The editing is of a very high order. Mark Philp has produced a general introduction, which says more about Godwin's ideas than about his life, and a brief note on editorial practices. Each piece is also introduced with a brief note about its publication (or its precise location, if it is published from a manuscript source) and about the reactions of major contemporary reviewers. There is also a useful list of all of Godwin's publications, in chronological order, and a very full and valuable index (of nearly 100 pages). The editing is described as light, but it certainly gives the reader what is most needed. It provides information on proper names, historical events, and obsolete words, and an effort is made to identify, where possible, all of Godwin's quotations. This reviewer could only detect a handful of minor errors or misprints among the thousands of footnotes provided by the editorial team.

The editors have published the fullest edition of the texts, where there is a choice, but in general they have usually opted to reprint the first edition. This is particularly interesting with regard to *Political justice*, a work which Godwin revised in two further editions (1796 and 1798) during his lifetime. Modern editors often reprint the last edition personally supervised by the original author and, in the case of *Political justice*, both F E L Priestley in his facsimile edition (Toronto, 1946) and Isaac Kramnick in his *Penguin* edition (Harmondsworth, 1976) chose to reproduce the third edition of 1798. Mark Philp, however, has wisely chosen to reproduce the first (and now quite rare) edition in volume three of his collection. He admits that this is a flawed statement of Godwin's later views, but he argues, persuasively, that Godwin's fame and his notoriety were based on the first edition and this edition provides the purest and most forceful expression of Godwin's philosophical anarchism. Furthermore, since Mark Philp has included all printed



variants in volume four of this collection, it is easier for the reader to see what the second and third editions were like, by looking at subsequent changes to the first edition, than it would have been to see what the first edition might have been like by working back through the variants from the third edition. It is also easier to see how the fragmented manuscript variants (found among the Abinger collection and also published here for the first time in volume four) might have altered the original version of *Political justice*.

The two volumes on *Political justice* will obviously be a major boon to scholars interested in Godwin's greatest philosophical work, but all the writings in the other five volumes of this important collection will repay study by any serious student of Godwin or his age. Volume one reprints all of Godwin's important political writings of the 1780s and these essays reveal just how much he wrote in pamphlets and journals about contemporary politics and how involved he was in defending the Fox-North coalition, criticizing the Younger Pitt and his allies, and justifying the principles and the conduct of the Whig opposition. Volume two reprints his important political writings of the 1790s, when he calmly and bravely censured the government's repressive policies, particularly the infamous Two Acts of 1795, opposed the war with revolutionary France, and defended the powerless victims of the conservative reaction. This volume also includes his most important political essays written after 1800. *Thoughts occasioned by the perusal of Dr Parr's Spital Sermon* (1801) sees him defending *Political justice* and denying that he was an advocate of political violence or ever an unqualified admirer of the French Revolution (while also conceding that he had changed his views on some issues, including the importance of the domestic affections). Two essays defend the political career of Charles James Fox, after his death in 1806, two of his letters to the press oppose a renewal of the war against Napoleon after his escape from Elba in 1814, and the most important concluding chapters to his long book, *Of population* (1820) offers his response to Thomas Malthus's pessimistic forecasts about the consequences of the present growth in population.

Volume five reprints Godwin's educational and literary writings, including a failed prospectus for a proposed school at Epsom, a series of literary parodies of famous contemporary authors (such as Gibbon, Robertson, Burke, Sheridan and Paine) and twenty-eight of the interesting essays which he contributed to *The Enquirer* (1797) on education, literature and manners. In these essays many of the ideas made famous in *Political Justice* are repeated, such as 'all education is despotism', 'he that is born to poverty, may be said, under another name, to be born a slave', 'The true element of man is to utter what he thinks', and 'The first object of virtue is to contribute to the welfare of mankind'. In volume six there is a curious and rather silly essay, proposing that a memorial should be erected on the spot where any illustrious person had

died, and a very lengthy work, *Thoughts on Man, his Nature, Productions and Discoveries* (1831), which discusses such subjects as the human body, characteristics, morals, achievements and relations, and education, astronomy and the material universe. Typical of Godwin's earlier political views, but a particularly important essay in its own right, is his discussion of the secret ballot, in which he rejects this proposed reform because he believes all men should be frank and fearless in proclaiming their political opinions. The last volume in this collection, volume seven, reprints Godwin's religious writings. These include six sermons from the early 1780s, when he still believed in the resurrection, but could shock his readers by claiming that 'God himself has no right to be a tyrant'. In a later essay, *Of Religion* (1818), published here for the first time from a manuscript in the Abinger collection, Godwin confesses to being 'an unbeliever' and acknowledges that he could no longer believe in the existence of a supreme being or in the Bible as the revealed word of God. Interestingly enough, he confesses that he was afraid to broadcast his loss of faith because of what his friends might think and he admits that it might be dangerous to spread infidelity among those without education. Clearly, Godwin was not always ready to follow his precept that all men should fearlessly voice their opinions, however unpopular they were, and should be prepared to speak the truth as they found it and risk the consequences. This unusual caution was also revealed in Godwin's decision to ask his daughter, Mary Shelley, to have his uncompleted last work, *The Genius of Christianity Unveiled*, another rational attack on Christianity and any belief in a supreme being, published after his death. This work, with its critical views on heaven and hell, retribution, contrition and atonement, and on God, Jesus and the history of Christianity, was not published until 1873. To this reprinting Mark Philp has added Godwin's letter to his daughter and, as a preface, one essay from the Abinger manuscripts not previously published.

This magnificent edition, like *The Collected Novels and Memoirs of William Godwin*, appears in a series called *The Pickering Masters*. This most impressive series includes a whole range of complementary works, on such contemporaries of Godwin as Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, Mary Edgeworth, Adam Ferguson, Robert Owen and Thomas Paine. If the very high standards set by Mark Philp and his colleagues in the collection reviewed here are a reliable guide, then all readers of *Enlightenment and Dissent* are likely to find them of immense value.

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Mark Philp (ed.), *The French Revolution and British popular politics*. Cambridge University Press, 1991. 238pp., £27.50 hb. ISBN 0 521 39123 7.

The bicentenary of the French Revolution has occasioned an impressive effort at reassessing its impact on Britain. To add to an already large, if aging, literature, there have been useful collections of essays edited by H T Dickinson (*Britain and the French Revolution*, Macmillan, 1989), and by Ceri Crossley and Ian Small (*The French Revolution and British Culture*, Oxford University Press, 1989), new studies of a more general type (Stephen Pritchett, *England and the French Revolution*, Macmillan, 1989), and of a more focused nature (H T Dickinson, *British Radicalism and the French Revolution 1789-1815*, Blackwell, 1985, Seamus Deane, *The French Revolution and Enlightenment in England*, Harvard University Press, 1988). There is a new biography of Burke (by Stanley Ayling), while the Oxford edition of his works progresses on course (the French Revolution volume appeared in 1990). There have been two new studies of Paine (my own and Mark Philp's), and a new edition of his *Rights of man* (Hackett Publishing Company, 1992). Work in progress includes Mark Philp's edition of Godwin's writings (Pickering and Chatto), my own edition of John Thelwall's political tracts, John Barrell's examination of the sedition trials of the 1790s, and several studies, long overdue, of Mary Wollstonecraft. The mere fact that Britain had no revolution has hardly discouraged interest in the era.

This collection of nine essays, with an introduction by the editor, adds much to this literature. To set the stage, Philp summarises the development of debate about the revolution and the events which surrounded it from Richard Price's 1789 sermon, which provoked Burke's *Reflections*, through the immense controversy over Paine's *Rights of Man* in 1791-3 in particular, the formation of loyalist societies, the treason trials of the mid-1790s and so on. The book proper commences with Robert Hole's 'English Sermons and Tracts as Media of Debate on the French Revolution 1789-99'. Building on Hole's *Pulpits, politics and public order in England* (1989), this stresses the predictably tranquillising intent of clerical discourse during the decade. Sermons stressing obedience became common after *Rights of man*, part two was published in early 1792, and little wonder, for Paine was no friend to tithes or established churches. Some Dissenters, in particular, welcomed the revolution at the outset, but their ardour soon cooled, aided by loyalist assaults on Priestley and the implied libel upon their own allegiance. Hole is little interested in Methodism, which used to be the great focus of his topic, but offers a useful account of the theology of clerical reaction. The late John Dinwiddy's 'Interpretations of Anti-Jacobinism' takes up the case, recently restated by H T Dickinson, that in the revolution debate the opponents of reform had much stronger arguments on their side (which is in turn a reaction to an earlier radical orthodoxy which largely ignored

Burke & Co). For Dinwiddy, however, there are dangers in associating all of the cause of reform with the Terror, and reducing the revolution to its greatest excesses. Paine, amongst others, sought not to abolish property, but to redistribute it more equitably. But his arguments are too often dismissed as threatening a British repetition of French events. Dinwiddy probes the 'popular loyalist triumph' approach very successfully, and helps to remind us that the ideological dimensions of the debate still affect historians today. Mark Philp's 'The Fragmented Ideology of Reform' takes up a similar problem, and contends that divisions amongst the reformers, while considerable, did not undermine their efforts in the 1790s. The radical agenda, moreover, Philp usefully sees as certainly as much dictated by events in the 1790s as causing them (with reference to Thelwall, among others, and shifts in radical thinking under the impact of popular mobilization in the mid-1790s). Philp recognizes that the beginnings of substantial transformation in radical thought occur in this period, and seeks a soberly pluralist explanation for such changes.

In Günther Lottes's 'Radicalism, Revolution and Political Culture: An Anglo-French Comparison', the central focus is the use of the term 'radicalism' in relation to natural rights doctrines, civic humanism, and what Lottes terms 'political psychology'. Lottes in turn scrutinizes ideas of sovereignty and representation in order to show how differently these were treated on both sides of the Channel (sovereignty, for example, being a far more divisive issue among French reformers). He also treats the problem of political mobilization from a comparative perspective. Clive Elmsley's 'Revolution, War and the Nation State: The British and French Experiences 1789-1801' similarly criss-crosses the Channel in search of the effects on the state, and on the creation of a 'new style of militaristic nationalism' (99) of the revolution and ensuing war. The French state, of course, emerged considerably altered after the revolution, though for Elmsley its great centralization by contrast to Britain differed from its predecessor chiefly in being more competent. Michael Duffy's 'War, Revolution and the Crisis of the British Empire' examines the oft-neglected colonial dimension of the struggle, particularly with respect to British ambitions in the West Indies and interests in Ireland, and portrays Britain's motives in going to war in imperial terms. David Eastwood's 'Patriotism and the English State in the 1790s' takes up aspects of the debate begun in this volume between H T Dickinson and Mark Philp, and further deflates the 'mass conservatism' hypothesis, principally by contending that 'patriotism', 'loyalism', 'conservative ideology' and 'government policy' were far from monolithic emanations of an innate British propensity towards reasonableness and moderation. Loyalists did harness much of the language of radicalism, including the concept of the rights of man, to their own ends, but by pushing the cause of moral reform at home, they also did much to channel public energy into voluntary charitable efforts.

Two final essays reopen the much-vexed issue of the real prospects for revolution in Britain in the 1790s. Ian Christie's 'Conservatism and Stability in British Society' re-emphasizes the resilience of the old order, the case resting largely on the lack of sharp divisions in British society, the considerable social mobility, the sense of shared language and, for the most part, of religious belief, the traditions of liberty to which all affected to adhere, the economic expansion of the period, and the success of the Poor Law system. In a concluding contribution, Roger Wells offers a somewhat contrary view in 'English Society and Revolutionary Politics: The Case for Insurrection'. This assails the positions Christie first outlined in *Stress and stability in late eighteenth-century Britain* (1984), and indeed shows how remarkable it was that stability prevailed in circumstances of famine, war-weariness and occasionally sharp hostility to government policy, especially considering that Methodism can no longer be considered as the counter-revolutionary force Halévy once assumed it was. Taken together, these essays offer the best balanced and intellectually most impressive set of reflections inspired by the recent bicentenary. A number of the central problems in scholarship on radicalism in the 1790s are clarified with the addition of much new material. There is, curiously, very little on Paine, the most influential contributor to 'popular politics' in Britain in this period, or on Burke's *Reflections* or the ideology of loyalism. But these have been covered adequately by other recent studies, and in most areas this volume helps greatly to push forward our knowledge of the 1790s.

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**J Dybikowski**, *On burning ground: an examination of the ideas, projects and life of David Williams*. (Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century), Oxford, The Voltaire Foundation, 1993, xix & 351pp., £56.

David Williams was praised above Tom Paine by Madame Roland and allocated several pages in the *D.N.B.* Nevertheless, this Welsh *philosophe*, educator, deist priest, political theorist and founder of the Royal Literary Fund is at best a shadowy figure in British intellectual history, known principally to Welsh historians and readers of the present journal. It is remarkable then that he has recently been the subject of two full-length books.

In 1986 Whitney Jones published *David Williams, the anvil and the hammer*, a detailed biography which stresses Williams's importance in the context of a rapidly evolving society and is good on his Welsh background. Jim Dybikowski is rather ungenerous to his predecessor, using the words 'peripheral and parochial' to describe some of his legitimate historical concerns and exaggerating the extent to which Jones sees Williams as a fragmented thinker. His own approach, by contrast, is that of the philosopher, and it complements that of his predecessor rather well. He retells the story of Williams's life, his radical experiments in education, his daring ventures in public deistic worship, his involvement with the French revolutionaries, and his untiring efforts to establish the long-lived Literary Fund; all this is well done, the newest elements being archival findings concerning Williams, Brissot and the French. The book also contains an extremely valuable bibliography, giving a great deal of detail on all the many published works, reviews of them and related manuscript material. But the heart of this study is in the presentation of the main lines of Williams's thought.

The thesis which Dybikowski defends, very convincingly in my view, is that Williams's many books and practical projects are all the expression of a coherent, if not always original, body of thought. Naturally, over a period of 40 years, his position is modified by events and age - the experience of the French Revolution in particular taught him caution on political matters and brought out a reactionary tendency which was always latent in his thinking. Nevertheless, he remained true to a number of principles; these were characteristic of much Enlightenment thought, but in his writings and practical work Williams often took them to new lengths, always treading, as a contemporary wrote, 'on burning ground' (the subtitle of Jones's book refers to another contemporary view, that of Franklin, who hoped that the hammer of Williams's reforming zeal would not be worn down by the anvil of inertia).

Perhaps the most central principle of all is the belief in freedom of thought and expression. As an educator and politician, Williams held that



children and adults alike will thrive and prosper best if they are able to think and explore the world untrammelled by authority and uninfluenced by party or faction. His religious experiments led him in the direction of an ever less dogmatic deism which was in the end barely distinguishable from complete agnosticism, though he held firm to a traditional Enlightenment belief in universal principles of morality. Like many of his contemporaries, he envisaged human progress springing from the efforts of philosophers and writers - it was this faith that led him to devote so much effort to establishing the Literary Fund, for which he had more grandiose ambitions than were ever realized. In politics, he was naturally a liberal, but as Dybikowski points out in an interesting epilogue, he was less an individualist than a communitarian, valuing above all the unanimity of a fraternal community and constantly hostile to party politics.

All of these issues are admirably discussed here and situated in a broader intellectual context (in relation to the ideas of Godwin for instance). The discussion is not always that of the dispassionate historian of ideas, but that of the philosopher who continues to engage personally with some of the issues that taxed Williams and is willing to criticize him and argue with him, even describing some of his views as 'objectionable'. Such an approach may make historians uncomfortable, but it is certainly what the subject himself would have wished; in translating Voltaire's writings on tolerance, Williams inserted footnotes in which he took issue with intolerant statements by the master.

This book then, together with that of Whitney Jones, offers a fairly definitive account of a figure who was important, though somewhat elusive, in his day. The question remains: why has he been so lost from sight? My own view, expressed in an earlier publication, is that he failed to write any single remarkable book; his most ambitious works are in some ways his least satisfactory. As a result, he fell victim to the inevitable filtering of history which only has room for so many major writers or thinkers and consigns the rest to the study of specialists. Even so, one regrets that David Williams's writings, never published since the early 19th century, are confined to a few major libraries and to antiquarian booksellers. It would be very good if the Voltaire Foundation now followed up this excellent study with an annotated selection of Williams's best writing, such as *The nature and extent of intellectual liberty*, *Letters on political liberty*, *An apology for professing the religion of nature*, and extracts from the *Lectures on education*. Jim Dybikowski would be the ideal person to edit such a volume.

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D O Thomas, *The Political Writings of Richard Price*, (Cambridge University Press, 1991), £35 (hardback), £12.95 (paperback).

This is more a Celebration than a Review. After two hundred years of neglect, Richard Price has been chosen by the distinguished editors of the series of *Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought*, and paid his due, edited by the modern philosopher who must be given the chief credit for reawakening interest in Price's genius. So let us begin with showing our thanks to the Cambridge University Press by mentioning that the *Political Writings of Richard Price* edited by D O Thomas is published simultaneously in hardcover and paperback editions at £35.00 [\$49.95] hardcover (ISBN 0 521 40162 3); £12.95 [\$16.95] paperback (ISBN 0 521 40969 1).

It will not come as any surprise to readers of *Enlightenment and Dissent* to remember that Richard Price does not rate a chapter to himself in Sir Leslie Stephen's influential *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*. "He...is remembered chiefly as the inventor of the younger Pitt's sinking fund, and as affording the occasion of one of Burke's most brilliant invectives against revolutionary principles... His writings are of interest as illustrating the connection, so often noticed by Burke, between revolutionary theories in politics and the *a priori* doctrines of metaphysicians. The advocate of the most mathematical view of morality naturally became the advocate of the indefeasible rights of man in politics. The absolute spirit is the same in both cases. His philosophical speculations are curious, though hardly possess high intrinsic merit. His book on morality is the fullest exposition of the theory it advocates; but the theory was already antiquated; and Price, though he makes a great parade of logical systematisation, is a very indistinct writer. It is often difficult to discover his precise drift, and the discovery does not always reward the labour which it exacts." [3rd Ed. 1902, Vol.II, p.3]

Wow! Price a very indistinct writer? We must bear in mind that the Victorians were absolutely besotted with Burke. "No English writer has received, or has deserved, more splendid panegyrics than Burke... [His] magnificent speeches stand alone in the language. They are the only English speeches which may be read with more than historical interest when the hearer and the speaker have long been turned to dust. His pamphlets, which are written speeches, are marked by a fervour, a richness, and a flexibility of style which is but a worthy incarnation of the wisdom embodied in them." [Vol.II, p.219] The truth is that if someone reads enough of Burke's interminable rhetoric, his taste becomes thereby sullied.

I defy anyone today to read the selections from the pamphlet *Observations on the Importance of the American Revolution and the*



*Means of making it a Benefit to the World* (which are included in Dr Thomas's book), and to agree with Stephen's judgment. One may find some of Price's judgments slightly bizarre - his prejudice against foreign trade and luxury, for example. But his writing is as distinct and clear as is a Mozart aria when compared with an aria from Wagner's *Ring*. And, I would defy anyone to read through Burke's *Reflections* today and answer the simple question, what is Burke trying to say? Clearly he (Burke) is giving vent to his anger with Price and Price's adherence to "the French disease", and following it with a long dissolute ramble on contemporary economic problems. But what else? We should not forget that in his own lifetime Burke was regarded by many (in his own party) as politically unreliable and unscrupulously ambitious in the pursuits of his own and his family's interests. It was only after the excesses of the French revolution had thoroughly frightened the English governing classes, that Burke's turgid prose became fashionable.

Readers of *Enlightenment and Dissent* will be conversant with the beauties of Price's *Two Tracts*, which is rightly chosen as the chief ornament of Price's political writings included in Thomas's selection. His selection ends with *A Discourse on the Love of our Country*. About these two choices, and the *Observations on the Importance of the American Revolution*, there can be no complaint. No one can be in any doubt that these are the essential reading. Given the importance of millennialist thought in Dissenting opinion in Price's time, it is probably right to include the 1787 Discourse, though it represents unconvincing argument to us today. But even a Celebration would lack relish without disagreement, and one reader judges the 1759 sermon on *Britain's Happiness* to be indifferent stuff, and would have been better omitted. We are told that it contains Price's surprising exultation in Britain's "prowess in arms and talking with an almost undiluted praise". Is "surprise" at this enough to ensure the piece's inclusion, when so much of Price's work has had to be left out? - Price's work with Howard on penal reform, and his steady support for Maseres and the cause of what later became Old Age Pensions: to mention but two instances of the breadth of Price's political vision.

It is Price's millennialist persuasion, his firm faith in the perfectibility of man, and (to your reviewer) his implicit belief that "light" (i.e. a better knowledge of natural philosophy) will eventually conquer all evil, which will be the chief obstacles to his acceptance today. Is greater knowledge of the structure of the atom ever going to compensate for the evil already caused by the atom bomb? Has anyone foreseen the horrors which may accompany a better knowledge of "genetic engineering"? Has not the advance of "pure science" now proceeded quite far enough for the resources spent on it to be better employed elsewhere? These are not criticisms of the book. Thomas's twenty-two page *Introduction* is a model of what such an essay should be.

Readers of *Enlightenment and Dissent!* The toast is:

The Rev. Richard Price, DD, FRS and his twentieth century apologists: Roland Thomas (whose *Richard Price: Philosopher and Apostle of Liberty*, Oxford U.P. 1924 must be looked upon as the pioneering work), the editor of this captivating volume, the other scholars mentioned on pages xxv - xxvii, and, in particular, that magnificent Frenchman who was the first in this century to get the right balance between Price and Burke - although tilting the balance too much in favour of Burke for your reviewer's taste.

"The dialogue which took place between the two men [Price and Burke] is one of the great dialogues of the eighteenth century. It is, in fact, one of the great dialogues of history, one of the noblest and most enriching. As Price has long been known through the medium of Burke, with features partly distorted by the needs of propaganda or oratory, it seemed to me desirable to try to remove the masks of the two principal actors in this political play which would have been worthy of a new Shakespeare: the mask which Burke placed on his opponent and the one which he sometimes assumed the better to convince his audience and to make his convictions prevail. This opposition between the Irish politician and the Welsh philosopher, between the orator appealing to instinct and the pastor appealing to reason; between the pamphleteer appealing to the prejudices and the publicist appealing to statistics, between mystical politics and social politics, will conclude my study. I hope to be able to show that, above the opposition due to circumstances, education, interests, or cast of mind, the same noble passion inspired both of them, the passion for liberty."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Henri Laboucheix, *Richard Price* (Paris, 1970) - translated by Sylvia and David Raphael, and published by the Voltaire Foundation at the Taylor Institution, Oxford, 1982.

**Philip J Rossi and Michael Wren** (eds.), *Kant's Philosophy of Religion Reconsidered*, Indiana University Press, 1991, pp.xiii+214, £20.

For decades Kant's views on religion and their bearing on culture, history and morality, received scant attention from academics. Kant scholars preferred to focus attention on the three great Critiques - *Of pure reason*, *Of practical reason*, *Of judgement* and on Kant's substantial writings on morality. Written when he was seventy, Kant's treatise, *Religion within the limits of reason alone* was generally neglected; university students studying Kant barely knew of its existence, whilst established Kant scholars thought it added little to what was already known of Kant's major philosophical themes in his Critiques.

The last decade or so has seen a substantial shift of interest, particularly amongst American Kant scholars. There they have argued - for example Alan Wood and Philip Quinn - for a renewed investigation of Kant's views on religion, together with a reassessment of their place in his critical philosophy. In this regard *Religion within the limits of pure reason alone* (henceforth, for short *Religion*) has come into its own and its status upgraded. No longer regarded as of peripheral interest it is now said to be a major work in its own right.

This collection of essays, in general well conceived and well executed, claims to take the discussion of Kant's philosophy of religion a stage further. All ten contributors are American, all are well versed in Kantian scholarship, all write essays of roughly the same length, except for Rossi, one of the editors, whose contribution is much longer.

The editors furnish an introduction which skilfully maps out the terrain to be covered. All the contributors, either professional philosophers or professional theologians, concentrate on *Religion* with only occasional references to other works relevant to Kant's views on religion. The title of the collection is slightly misleading. A full reconsideration of Kant's philosophy of religion would need to start with the first *Critique* where Kant develops his well known criticism of the traditional arguments for the existence of God from the standpoint of the critical philosophy, moving to the second *Critique* which argues from the twin postulates of morality to the idea of God and of immortality; this argument is refined in the third *Critique*. The *Lectures on religion* addressed mainly to undergraduates do not add to the enterprise philosophically, but clearly *Religion* and the very important *Opus postumum* do. *Der Streit der Facultäten* and *Ueber Pädagogik* are also relevant. Without a close analysis of all these works one cannot claim to have 'reconsidered' Kant's philosophy of religion.

By concentrating mainly on *Religion* the contributors can usefully discuss the limits of that rational religion which for Kant reason could alone justify. (In the title of *Religion* the literal translation of the German word rendered 'Alone' in English is 'unassisted', implying reason unassisted by revelation.)

It follows from the principles of the critical philosophy expounded in the first *Critique* that we cannot have rationally justified knowledge of God, nor can his existence be proved. Yet Kant, unlike Hume, does not aim to remove God and religion entirely. The human experience of moral choice makes freedom, and the absence of that causal determination found throughout nature, an essential constituent of any adequate analysis of the moral consciousness. But for Kant two important religious concepts, those of God and of immortality, enter as postulates of the morality thus analysed. Kant enjoins the individual, qua rational, to strive for perfect obedience to the moral law but such a struggle presupposes the co-operation of nature in the sense at least that nature is not hostile to human moral struggle. This suggests the idea of a God who has so created nature that it does not nullify man's struggle for moral perfection. The moral struggle is also unending and this brings the idea of a future life in which the struggle can endlessly continue.

Given that Kant's analysis of religion brings him to the frontier of religion, to what extent can he accommodate religion? A careful reading of *Religion* will soon convince the reader that Kant never wavers from his critical standpoint which denies any possibility of gaining knowledge of God, either by the exercise of reason to know that he exists (Aquinas) or by revelation to know his essential nature (Aquinas again). It follows that if religion is to survive it must be 'rational religion'. Kant defines 'religion' as accepting the commands of the moral law as divine prescriptions, entirely discoverable by reason without the aid of revelation. Moreover, in theory, each individual can by the exercise of his own reason discover these divine injunctions for himself. In his famous essay 'What is Enlightenment?' Kant bids men come of age, discard the yoke of political or religious authority (echoes of Rousseau?) and realize their autonomy as rational creatures by grounding their life styles on those moral and political principles discoverable by their own reason. In religion this means that the rational religion is potentially the one universal religion, for all men possess a reason, and this will eventually displace all religious 'faiths' such as Islam or Christianity or Judaism, making obsolete any institutional framework such as the visible church with its paraphernalia of ritual worship, interpreted scripture and the authority of clerics. It is one weakness of these mainly expository essays that we never find a clear statement of Kant's distinction between 'religion' and 'faiths'.



Granted this accommodation on Kant's part to religion, what is his strategy in *Religion*? It is, one suggests, to explore the extent, if at all, to which the great themes of Christian doctrine - the Fall, the Atonement, the role and authority of the visible church - can reasonably be given a footing in his rational religion. For example Kant's insistence on man's moral autonomy entails that we cannot pin the blame for radical evil in the world on any one individual in the past; the idea that we can trace evil back to the Fall of Adam is sternly rejected as wholly unworthy of man's rational nature. Again Kant's emphasis on man's freedom and his personal responsibility for his moral actions means that he cannot accept the idea, central to Christology, of a single individual, even of divine origin, making an expiatory sacrifice and bearing on his own shoulders the sins of the world. For Kant, individuals, and individuals alone, are responsible for their own misdeeds and the blame cannot be pinned on anyone else. So moral evil in the world must be explained in terms of man's misuse of his moral freedom; he has a potentiality for good but equally a potentiality for evil. Whether Kant's account of man's freedom is coherent or whether his analysis of radical evil can account for the horrors of Nazi concentration camps are issues which alas are not discussed in these essays. Incidentally in interpreting Christian doctrines in terms of his own rational religion, Kant reveals - a point unremarked by any of the contributors - an extraordinarily deep knowledge of the relevant portions of scripture and of the Christian doctrines developed from them. He is aware, for example, that the traditional interpretation of the Fall accepted by Catholics and Lutherans alike in his day, rests on a Latin misinterpretation in the Vulgate of some Greek verses in Paul's Epistle to the Romans.

The main criticism of these essays is their tendency to accept Kant's rhetoric, especially in *Religion* at its face value. Consequently there is a temptation to take Kant's claim to be able to fit the main Christian themes into his rational religion more literally than Kant possibly intended. The contributors are too interested in seeing how far Kant can be made to conform to orthodoxy and if he cannot, to criticize him for this shortcoming.

Two examples. Allen Wood in his essay 'Kant's Deism' makes him out to be a deist not a theist. The terms 'theist' and 'deist' are notoriously difficult to define precisely, but in general we can say that a theist affirms the existence of a personal creator God who enters into personal relations with men, the chief end of his creation. The deist affirms the existence of a creator but non-personal God. But before Kant, both theist and deist contended that we could know the truth of their respective but clashing affirmations. Kant emphatically denies the possibility of knowledge in the realm of religion; hence the question whether he is a deist or theist or theistic deist rings rather hollow.

Joseph Runzo in his 'Kant on reason and justified belief in God', in agreement with Wood, argues that on Kant's premises there can be no appeal to revelation, especially special revelation. However, by appealing to attempts in modern philosophy of religion, such as those of William Alston and Alvin Plantinga, to provide epistemic justification for religious belief by invoking the notion of 'foundational beliefs' Runzo argues that an evident weakness in Kant's rational religion can be corrected and thus revelation readmitted into Kant's system. But this is to ignore entirely the fact that, in terms of his own critical philosophy, Kant would have no difficulty in demolishing the notion of foundation belief, a notion somewhat uncritically adopted by Runzo.

Two final comments. If in the face of Kant's withering onslaught theism is to be rehabilitated then the main structure of Kant's critical system must be demolished by sustained and successful philosophical analysis of its weaknesses. These essays do not furnish such a criticism. One of Kant's great philosophical bequests was to suggest that morality was a 'construction', albeit one of reason. This opened the door to Nietzsche's claim that morality was a construction, not of reason, but of the will to power. Whereas Kant equated the moral insights of the carpenter from Nazareth with the deliverances of the moral law, Nietzsche saw nothing in them but weakness, the morality fit for slaves. Nietzsche's modern disciple, the Parisian Michel Foucault, a homosexual who, before he died of AIDS, revelled in the 'aesthetic' experience of indulgence in sado-masochistic homo-erotic rituals in California, hailed in a recent BBC programme as the greatest philosopher of the twentieth-century - what of Russell and Wittgenstein? - claimed Kant as his starting point for the view that morality was a construction of the will to power in sexual relations.

These ideas derived from de Sade, Nietzsche and Foucault are now clearly invading the Western cultural mainstream. In so far as these writers reject theological ethics as but another 'construction' no more valid than their own 'will to power', they pose a far greater threat to traditional Christian morality than anything in Kant's rational religion. There is little awareness in these essays of this new challenge nor any indication how it is to be met and overcome philosophically.

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*The British empiricists: Locke* by John Dunn, *Berkeley* by J O Urmson, *Hume* by A J Ayer, edited by Keith Thomas, Oxford University Press, 1992, vii + 287, paperback, £8.99.

Philosophers, seemingly, divide into two broad categories; those to whom their most brilliant philosophical insights came before they were twenty-five years of age, and those who spent a lifetime wrestling with philosophical problems before their philosophy finally took shape. Berkeley and Hume belong to the former, Locke and Kant to the latter category. Great philosophers range widely over the fields of metaphysics, ontology, theories of meaning, philosophies of science, law, morals, politics, religion and history. By these criteria Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Locke, Berkeley and Hume are great philosophers. Not that everything philosophical they have to say is true - but they have succeeded in producing valuable insights to illuminate the philosophical problems that perplex even to this day. As someone wrote of Mill - he wrote clearly enough for us to spot his philosophical mistakes. Likewise the works of great philosophers are perennially interesting for they serve to warn us off avoidable philosophical mistakes.

A historian, Keith Thomas is the General Editor of Oxford's Past Masters series. In this capacity he invited two distinguished philosophers, J O Urmson and A J Ayer to contribute volumes to his series on Berkeley and Locke respectively. For Locke, he invited a historian with special interest in Locke's political philosophy, John Dunn. Ayer's volume on Hume was published in 1980, Urmson's in 1982 and Dunn's in 1984. All three are now brought together in one paperback volume, published in 1992.

The editor contributes a short preface in which he explains that contributors to his Past Masters series set out "to expound the ideas of the past in a lucid, accessible and authoritative manner. Because they are necessarily short they do not attempt to discuss every aspect of their subjects' lives and thought". What this statement of aims leaves out of account is whether these three thinkers, "men of great intellectual versatility", should be judged in terms of their later historical influence on the history of ideas or whether they should be assessed purely on the merits or demerits, the strengths and weaknesses of their philosophical systems. Urmson on Berkeley and Ayer on Hume eschew any attempt to measure their subjects' influence on the subsequent history of ideas.

A philosopher today might well conclude that, impressive as it is, Locke's system is the weakest of the three, riddled as it is with inconsistencies. Yet Locke proved to be by far the most influential of the three in the history of ideas. Whereas Locke's writings set the framework for much of the religious and political debate in the 18th century, Hume's

superior philosophical system lay virtually neglected until his rehabilitation in the present century with the rise of logical empiricism. Dunn does indeed offer an evaluation of Locke's contribution to the history of ideas. He writes: "there is a real justice in seeing the European Enlightenment as Locke's legacy - both his triumph and his tragedy". The editor in his preface singles out this characterization of the tragic in the influence Locke bequeathed. Whether Locke's influence was tragic begs several large questions which most philosophers would rather leave to others to discuss. But one thing is clear. The lack of philosophical bite in Dunn's discussion of Locke's philosophy prevents the non-philosopher from appreciating that Locke's triumph in the Enlightenment consisted largely of channelling intellectual discussion of religion, politics and morals into philosophically vulnerable directions. But it requires a sound grasp of contemporary philosophical developments to recognize this.

The editor's short preface also betrays a lack of a wider philosophical perspective. Much of it is cliché ridden, the stock in trade of history of philosophy textbooks. For example, the reader is informed that these three philosophers were preoccupied with epistemology. So indeed were Plato, Aristotle and Aquinas. No mention is made of ontology or metaphysics. When Locke proclaims the belief that the world consists of small, unperceivable bits or atoms of matter - reviving the corpuscular theory of the ancient Greeks - he commits himself to an ontology which implies the metaphysical view that one entity, matter, at least exists. But as Dunn rightly insists, God plays an important role in Locke's political philosophy, thus introducing his second metaphysical entity, namely infinite spirit. And since Locke's epistemology seeks to answer the question, 'how do minds acquire knowledge?' this implies the third metaphysical commitment to the existence of minds. In essence, as Urmson makes abundantly clear, Berkeley in reaction to Locke, reduced these three metaphysical entities to two - minds and infinite spirit. According to Berkeley, Locke's postulation of the existence of matter is logically superfluous.

Again, if following the editor we rely on the standard history of philosophy textbooks, we will interpret Hume's philosophy as pushing Locke's metaphysics to its absurd logical conclusions by denying the existence of all three entities, matter, minds and infinite spirit. Keith Thomas holds that Hume reduced a person to a series of ideas and sensations. But as Ayer in his brilliant contribution to this volume points out, this history of philosophy view of Hume as the extreme sceptical reductionist can itself be successfully challenged as indeed it is in Kemp Smith's magisterial study (*The Philosophy of David Hume: A Critical Study of its Origins and Central Doctrines* 1941). Especially fascinating and interesting in Ayer's exposition of Hume is how *from the standpoint of modern philosophy* Ayer continually pinpoints the weaknesses in Hume's epistemology but then cogently argues for a restatement of Hume's views

which leave his central affirmations more or less intact. Indeed Ayer's own philosophically sophisticated position is Hume revived and modernized. Although sceptical about God and much of morality, Ayer remains a firm realist so far as the external world is concerned. Thus Hume, sympathetically interpreted as by Ayer, can be shown to be far from the out and out sceptic caricatured in philosophy textbooks.

To have these three essays (which originally appeared separately published) in one volume enables the reader to compare how each contributor has approached his task. All three essays are roughly of the same length.

Dunn divides his contribution into three chapters and a short conclusion. The first is a full, historically detailed account of Locke's life. The second concentrates on Locke's political philosophy. Locke's major work by which he is best known, *The Essay concerning Human Understanding*, is reserved for a shortish third chapter, much of which is devoted to Locke's moral philosophy. This is an odd if not bizarre procedure, explicable only on the belief that since the author had written a well received work on Locke's political philosophy, the first two chapters more or less wrote themselves. But on any reckoning to relegate the *Essay* to a shortish third chapter is hardly defensible.

By contrast Urmson's exposition and discussion of Berkeley is a model of how to examine the views of a major philosopher in a small compass. It is lucid, carefully written, well arranged and well balanced, always relevant in its exposition of the main tenets of Berkeley's philosophy. Urmson weaves his discussion around Berkeley's central insight that there was no such thing as matter, that the concept of matter was both superfluous and unintelligible. From the standpoint of Dr Johnson's common sense this proposition was totally nonsensical and preposterous. "One of the principal aims of this essay" writes Urmson "will be to show the reader how, in the context of the philosophical and scientific beliefs of his time, Berkeley's thesis was a very rational one to adopt and to show how ingeniously Berkeley developed it within the bounds of one of the most elegant, clear and metaphysical systems ever devised". This aim is triumphantly achieved.

Since Berkeley set out to undermine Locke's *Essay* Urmson devotes his first chapter to Locke's starting point, the acceptance of the then current scientific theory, the corpuscular philosophy, with its mechanistic explanation of natural events in terms of the clash of atoms in motion, themselves imperceptible and devoid of sense properties such as colour or smell. This corpuscular philosophy was reflected in the work of Galileo and Newton, developed by Gassendi, partially endorsed by Descartes and fully set out by Boyle, 'the father of chemistry', with whom Locke was closely associated. This first chapter illuminates Locke's position far

better than anything in Dunn's essay and so sets the scene for an exposition of Berkeley's immaterialism. Then in seven short sections Urmson shows the ramifications of Berkeley's immaterialism for his philosophy of science, for religion, politics and morals.

Urmson rounds off his excellent discussion with a short critical assessment; here he convincingly shows how Berkeley's two main premises are philosophically unsustainable. Following Locke, Berkeley holds that the furniture of the mind always consists of mental entities called 'ideas' whether these be sensations, images or concepts. He then argues that from the undisputed claim that mental entities exist, this is all that exists (apart from God). On this analysis *esse est percipi* and what is unperceived cannot be known to exist, such as the table in the empty room. As Urmson points out, Berkeley does in one section (and only one) of the *Principles* appeal to the fact that in the absence of a human perceiver the table continues to be in the empty room because it is part of the furniture of God's mind. Apart from presupposing the existence of God, this account of the continued existence of unperceived objects leads to philosophical incoherence which forces us to abandon Berkeley's immaterialism.

Berkeley's second premise appeals to a well known axiom of the Schoolmen - *nihil est in intellectu quod non prius fuit in sensu* (nothing is in the intellect which was not previously in sensation). Empiricism is not a 17th century British discovery! Even so, Berkeley's strong empiricism fails to meet the Kantian point that some concepts - necessity, negation, goodness, even God - cannot be empirically derived and may be either *a priori* or innate, being logically required in order to make an empiricist analysis of knowledge coherent.

Admirable as Urmson's essay is, that of Ayer is the more philosophically exciting. Not only does he expound Hume but throughout he wrestles philosophically with Hume's arguments. Displaying a masterly knowledge of Hume's strength and weaknesses, he constantly attempts to restate Hume's philosophy so as to remove its deficiencies. In this restatement one is immediately aware how Ayer draws upon his equal mastery of contemporary philosophy. To have brought off these twin feats - expository analysis of Hume of a rare order allied to restatement in contemporary philosophical idiom - within the compass of some hundred pages of lucid, characteristically vigorous prose is a truly remarkable feat.

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**Howard Williams** (ed.), *Essays on Kant's political philosophy*, Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1992, xix+331, £30.

With the 1983 publication of *Kant's political philosophy* (OUP) Professor Williams gained a deserved reputation, especially on the Continent, as noted in this volume by Professor Wolfgang Kersting of Hanover University, as one of Britain's leading specialists on Kant's political philosophy. His book served to rekindle interest in this aspect of Kant's work, previously largely neglected in this century. Williams now consolidates and enhances his reputation with the publication of this volume of essays, selected and edited by him, and the University of Wales Press Board, which naturally concentrates on publishing titles in Welsh and Celtic scholarship, is to be congratulated on undertaking its publication.

Professor Williams has assembled a cosmopolitan group of contributors. There are four Americans, two Germans, one from Canada and the editor apart, five from Britain. The essays by Onora O'Neill, Ernest J Weinrib, Otfried Höffe, Susan Mendus, Samuel Fleischacker, R F Atkinson and Patrick Riley have already appeared in learned journals. As they have all been well noticed elsewhere I do not propose in a short review to comment on their contents, except to say that they all merit reprinting in this volume.

The essays by Susan Shell, Roger Scruton, Wolfgang Kersting, Peter Nicholson and Steven B Smith appear for the first time in this collection.

In his brief introduction summarizing each contribution, the editor describes Susan Shell's essay as 'a stimulating and attractive essay which brings out the emotional springs of Kant's philosophy of right'. Entitled 'Kant's Political Cosmology' Shell provides an extremely interesting exposition of a series of remarks attached to Kant's own copy of his *Observations on the feeling of the beautiful and the sublime*, remarks which date to around 1765, two years after Kant had read *Emile*, thus reflecting considerable Rousseau influence. In one of the remarks Kant describes Rousseau as the 'Newton' of the moral world. Following Rousseau, Kant stresses man's freedom and equality, and the community of such free and equal individuals. Man is capable of his own salvation; he may now be in misery but this is curable by his own rational efforts.

In a section entitled Kant's Sexual Politics, Shell shows how Kant departs from Rousseau in his views on human sexuality and on marriage. Unlike Rousseau, Kant maintains that man, the male, has 'a natural need to acquire a wife'. For him, permanent sexual pairing and sexual rivalry exist right from the origin of society. Shell's exposition of Kant's views on marriage, the relation between the sexes and the differences between the sexes is fascinating. And, she insists, the 'Remarks' anticipate much

in Kant's later, more mature ethical writings.

Wolfgang Kersting's 'Kant's Concept of the State' is rather heavy going, but this impression may be due to a rather wooden translation (by the editor) from the German script of the contributor. Kersting concentrates on Kant's criticism of utilitarian and social contract theories of the state and expounds Kant's view of the necessity of the state as a lawmaking agency which reason requires if justice is to be done to man's moral freedom.

Peter Nicholson writes elegantly on the subject of 'Kant, Revolutions and History'. His main theme is the dilemma in Kant's theory of rebellion and resistance to the state. On the one hand Kant seems absolutely to forbid the right to rebellion, yet on the other seemingly applauds the French Revolution. Following up his discussion of this topic in his 1976 article in *Ethics*, Nicholson resolves the dilemma by arguing that the prohibition of resistance to the state is indeed an integral part of Kant's moral and political theory but that in retrospect we may applaud particular revolutions and rebellions. In developing this thesis he incidentally crosses swords with the editor's interpretation of the dilemma in his *Kant's political philosophy*.

Steven B Smith's essay 'Defending Kant from Hegel' is a very lucid, logical analysis and exposition of the main differences between Kant and Hegel in their respective moral theories. Despite Kant's genuflection in the direction of the social dimension of morality in his second and third formulations of the Categorical Imperative - so act as to treat others as ends in themselves as fellow members of a universal Kingdom of Ends - Kant's starting point is the extreme individualism of the first formulation. The individual qua rational is the sole source of the moral law which he can freely and completely obey out of respect for the rationality of the law. The main thrust of Hegel's criticism of Kant is that morality is essentially located in society and its institutions. Even if we concede Kant's starting point of each individual's apprehension of the distinction between moral right and wrong, what gives content to moral virtues and vices is the institutions of society in whose ways of life they are exemplified. Thus, without the institution of marriage, the vice of adultery ceases to have purchase. The riposte to Hegel is to raise the question of the criticism and reform of the moral institutions of society. Thus in the 18th century slavery was acceptable and moral but a century later the institution of slavery was regarded as thoroughly immoral and reprehensible. From whence came the insight leading to reform - from individuals or from society?

Of the essays new in this collection, Roger Scruton's is the most exciting and satisfying philosophically. Under the title 'Contract, Consent and Exploitation' Scruton first notes the two Kantian ideas 'which have



had a lasting effect on political philosophy - the hypothetical contract and the injunction to treat people as ends and never as means only'. Kant's hypothetical contract is worked out in terms of the justice of the laws to which rational individuals are willing to give consent; rational individuals refuse consent to unjust laws. This idea of the essential justice of the legal system does not conflict with Kant's second idea, that of treating others as ends.

Scruton then skilfully contrasts Kant's contract with the hypothetical contract in Rawls, who traces it back to Kant, although significantly different from Kant's in that Rawls seeks a just distribution of goods and benefits rather than a just legal system. Assuming we follow Rawls, is his hypothetical contract consistent with treating people as ends? Rawls argues that it is but Nozick argues strongly that it is not. 'It is fair to say' remarks Scruton 'that neither side in this controversy has succeeded in establishing its case.'

Perhaps the reason is to be found in the Marxist/socialist critique of the 'bourgeois liberal' interpretation of Kant's political philosophy. The Marxist claims that his critique of capitalist society is the only one which does justice to Kant's insistence on treating individuals as ends, for it condemns exploitation of the individual for economic gain. Scruton then embarks on a fine exposition of the Marxist analysis which he then submits to searching criticism. He ends on an optimistic note; we are thrown back on some bourgeois liberal interpretation of Kant's hypothetical contract, one which is consistent with treating others as ends for it stresses consent between rational individuals, consent which is provisional at first but becomes firmer as individuals engage increasingly in fair dealings with each other.

This is undoubtedly a useful collection of essays on Kant's political philosophy. It is unfortunately marred by some careless editing. Both the dust jacket and the table of contributors assign Professor R F Atkinson to Essex University; it should, of course, have been Exeter University. In the table of acknowledgements, no date is given for Weinrib's article in the 'Columbia Law Review' nor is the date of publication given for the volume in which Susan Mendus's essay first appeared.

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**John Dwyer and Richard Sher (eds.),** *Sociability and Society in Eighteenth Century Scotland* (Edinburgh, the Mercat Press, 1993) xii + 252, £10.95.

**Brian Hillyard,** *David Steuart Esquire: An Edinburgh Collector* (Edinburgh, The Edinburgh Bibliographical Society in association with The National Library of Scotland, 1993) vol. 88, £12.

**Paul B Wood,** *The Aberdeen Enlightenment: The Arts Curriculum in the Eighteenth Century* (Aberdeen, Aberdeen University Press, 1993) xvi + 240, £8.95.

These three books are all welcome additions to the growing literature on all aspects of eighteenth-century Scotland. They are different in their structure and their focus, but they are united by their concern with aspects of eighteenth-century Scottish culture. This reviewer has collaborated on publication projects with both John Dwyer and Richard Sher in the past, both together and separately, and it is with real pleasure that one notes their continued productivity and their participation in projects such as *Sociability and Society*, a British edition of papers which were almost all originally presented at a conference on 'The Social World of the Scottish Enlightenment' in 1988, and all of which appeared originally as Volume 15 nos. 1 and 2 of the journal *Eighteenth-Century Life*, published by the John Hopkins University Press. The publication of predominantly American scholarship on eighteenth-century Scotland by a Scottish publisher is a welcome sign of progress in integrating the work of American and British scholars on the subject, ensuring that good scholarship on Scottish history produced outside Scotland is made available to a Scottish and British readership.

Like all collections of essays, this contains papers which vary in quality and emphasis, but the real value of books like this is that they act as occasional specialist journals, providing a forum for work in progress by specialists and forays into a subject area by scholars whose principal work lies in another area. They are a good way to provide focus and coherence for papers which can lose impact when published in isolation in a more general scholarly journal. In the present case, the volume also records a productive American conference on eighteenth-century Scottish studies that led to the formation of an interdisciplinary Eighteenth-Century Scottish Studies Society which has held subsequent conferences in Britain and America and been involved in the production of additional volumes of essays.

Any choice of essays from a volume will always be subjective, but this reviewer found two contributions of particular interest. James G Basker, 'Scotticisms and the Problem of Cultural Identity in Eighteenth-Century Britain' is a brief product of Basker's scholarship on Tobias Smollett,

related here to similar problems of identity and culture encountered by James Boswell and David Hume. Basker points out that Smollett and other Scots of the Enlightenment, in their eagerness to gain access to a wider and brighter cultural world through the English language, acted as anglicisers of Scottish culture. It made their literary careers possible, but like modern writers of English who develop outside the anglophone heartland of California, New York and London, the possibility of developing one's art and talent came only at the cost of distancing oneself from one's native culture without any genuine possibility of complete acceptance by those whose taste would dictate your literary fortunes. Basker identifies Smollett as 'a key agent for the Enlightenment in Britain' in advocating what Basker terms the 'democratisation of culture for general readers'. The price was that only on his deathbed, in Italy, could Smollett present his positive view of Scottish culture in his last novel, *Humphrey Clinker*.

Ned Landsman's essay 'Presbyterians and Provincial Society: The Evangelical Enlightenment in the West of Scotland, 1740-1775' addresses the relationship between the great religious revivals of the mid-eighteenth century and their relationship to the Enlightenment, which is of particular interest to readers of this journal. Lowland Scotland provides an ideal area to explore this important subject, and Landsman is able to contribute to the work which has begun to appear emphasizing the relationship between evangelicalism and enlightenment rather than presenting them as in opposition. Landsman is able to demonstrate that Scottish evangelical clergymen shared an interest in, for example, the culture of print, which became a tool for their efforts to provide a meaningful framework for intense individual experience. In other words, what divided evangelical intellectuals from their 'enlightened' brethren was not a lack of interest in culture, but the uses to which literature and philosophy should be put in society.

Another point which Landsman develops in his work is the positive view of provincial (as opposed to metropolitan) culture created by Scottish evangelical clergymen such as John Witherspoon. In a metropolitan British context, commerce and liberty were in opposition, but to Witherspoon provinces of the British empire like Scotland and America offered examples of the rapid growth of commerce developing out of the liberty provided by traditional British emphasis on law, the individual, and political representation. Economic liberty would link national prosperity and power to material prosperity for all. This could be realized in a provincial setting, but the luxury and corruption of metropolitan culture doomed London and England to a decline in which a few would prosper while the bulk of the population remained in poverty. Landsman cannot develop his ideas fully in a short conference paper published originally, it must be remembered, in 1991, but his essay indicates exciting possibilities for future work.

Landsman's work on Scottish ideas of provincial culture provides a good context for assessing the other books considered in this review. Paul Wood's monograph on the arts curricula offered in eighteenth-century Aberdeen grows out of his conviction that the 'Scottish Enlightenment' should not be presented solely in terms of the culture of Edinburgh, though it is debatable if any scholar of the Scottish Enlightenment ever proposed this. Now that so much work has been carried out on the culture of Scotland's 'metropolis' (a term contemporary Scots sometimes used), it is natural that scholars should turn their attentions to the other regional centres of urban culture in eighteenth-century Scotland - Glasgow and Aberdeen. Ned Landsman's work has focused on Glasgow and the west of Scotland, Paul Wood, by contrast, has looked north to Aberdeen. His monograph is a commissioned volume in the University of Aberdeen's 'Quincentennial Studies in the history of the University of Aberdeen' and thus is focused on a very particular aspect of Scottish and Aberdonian culture: the two Aberdeen colleges who in 1860 were to combine as the University of Aberdeen. It is even more focused than that, as Wood's interest is in the arts curricula rather than in other aspects of college life. Though Wood admits that little is known about just what kind of student attended the Aberdeen colleges in the eighteenth century, his careful reconstruction of the curricula provides a fascinating exercise in intellectual history, marred only by printing errors which make it difficult to follow the references for pages 109-127 of the text. The problem with education history remains, however, the same as the problem with publishing history. The scholar can establish what was made available to the student in education or the reader in publishing, but how can one determine what was learned or absorbed in either case, or the effect on the recipient of the ideas so expressed?

Wood's careful, though dense work, provides some interesting new perspectives on accepted ideas about the nature of the Scottish Enlightenment. His chapter, 'The Legacy of Reform', for example, provides interesting new evidence to question some of George Davie's influential ideas on the 'democratic intellect' of Scottish education, in particular Davie's emphasis on the philosophical and historical context with which, he claimed, mathematics were taught in the Scottish universities in the eighteenth century. Wood is also able to produce new information on the place of Newton's work in the Aberdeen curriculum, and make the sensible observation that the use of Newton's work varied widely during the eighteenth century, using the example of Patrick Copland at Marischal College. Wood's conclusion, 'The Purposes of Politeness', tries to develop a new perspective on the idea of polite culture as part of the Enlightenment. He argues, citing the work of Nicholas Phillipson, Richard Sher and Peter Jones (now Librarian at King's College, Cambridge), that historians 'have equated politeness with either classical learning or Addisonian moralizing' and attempts to argue that the term implies a much wider approach to learning which included traditional



humanistic subjects as well as the natural sciences. Here he himself betrays misunderstandings of the work of his colleagues, whose efforts explored one aspect of the Scottish Enlightenment and who have never claimed that their work would exclude consideration of other aspects of knowledge and culture in the Enlightenment. Wood reflects the emphasis natural in his particular interest in the Aberdeen of Thomas Reid and James Beattie and the ideas of Scottish 'common sense' philosophy. His understanding of, to use Henry May's terms, the 'skeptical enlightenment', is much less profound than his grasp of the 'didactic enlightenment' so clearly illustrated by the example of the arts curricula of the Aberdeen colleges in the eighteenth century.

Another example of the tension between approaches which emphasize the unity or the diversity which both form part of the study of the Enlightenment is Brian Hillyard's elegant edition of the catalogue of the collection of the great Scottish book collector of the eighteenth century, David Steuart. Little has been known of Steuart until now. Dr Hillyard's introduction, the product of years of scholarship, carefully reconstructs Steuart's career, which provides a fascinating insight into the commercial world of eighteenth-century Scotland. Has the perception of Enlightenment culture, led by available sources, underestimated the role of the commercial middle class in favour of academics and clergymen who produced the published works which would not have come into existence without the market for their works provided by the landowners, lawyers, bankers and merchants who were willing to purchase the products of Enlightenment culture?

Valuable as is the biographical data provided here, the book is really a contribution to the history of printing and book-collecting, and in that sense extends its scope beyond Scotland, in that Steuart as a collector bought books in many languages and from many periods. It is his copy of the Gutenberg Bible which is now in the possession of the National Library of Scotland, and the great breadth of taste and variety illustrated in the catalogue of Steuart's books sold in 1801 reminds us of the cosmopolitan and universal aspect of the Enlightenment. Here is the record of a collection of books assembled out of a love of knowledge and culture which was inclusive rather than exclusive. It also records a love of print as art. The sale catalogue advances the claim that the collection included 'some of the finest specimens of typography extant' and lists printers from Gutenberg to Baskerville, Caxton to Foulis and Bodoni. Steuart cannot be presented as typical, as Hillyard points out, but his great collection reminds us of the Enlightenment's connection with the Renaissance culture as well as the eighteenth-century world of commerce. Steuart amassed his fabulous collection through his mercantile connections in Europe as well as by participating, as a customer, in the antiquarian book trade which was coming into existence in London and to a limited extent in Edinburgh.

The three very different books reviewed here illustrate the richness and variety of current scholarship on eighteenth-century Scotland. This very diversity may seem to threaten coherence in studying the subject, but all three works do illustrate aspects of the importance of commerce in the history of culture in the eighteenth century. Basker and Landsman consider aspects of the tension caused by the social change of the period linked to commercial growth (Smollett as a professional man of letters, evangelical religion as a response to the demands of a commercial society). The colleges of Aberdeen had to face up to their need to recruit students by offering attractive curricula to ensure their financial survival. Steuart's book collection was the product of commerce both in the sense that it was purchased with wealth generated by commerce and banking and in that it was at least partly assembled through a commercial network of traders in antiquarian books which came into existence in the eighteenth century. Interest in eighteenth-century Scotland has grown in the past two decades because lowland Scottish society had to face the problems and challenges of commercial change in a comparatively short time and succeeded, at a price, in adjusting to changing circumstances. As the literature has increased, so the opportunity grows to place this comparative success in a more general European and western context which will link Scottish studies with broader considerations of Enlightenment and eighteenth-century history.

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**Alison Yarrington and Kelvin Everest** (eds.), *Reflections on Revolution: Images of Romanticism*, London: Routledge, 1993, 200pp., £35.

**Chris Jones**, *Radical Sensibility: Literature and Ideas in the 1790s*, London: Routledge, 1993, 231pp., £35.

*Reflections on Revolution* is a collection of papers from a conference held on British culture and the French Revolution at Leicester University in 1989. It is rather less than the sum of its parts, and not all its parts stand on the positive side of the balance sheet. The publisher's gloss claims that the book represents the increasing 'interdisciplinarity emerging from cultural and historical studies', but the evidence for this is not strong. About two thirds of the essays are on literature, the remainder on visual representation. But a difference in the type of object studied does not amount to 'interdisciplinarity'. What matters is how far claims within one disciplinary discourse can be genuinely redeemed in another - how far literary scholars can carry historians, philosophers, social theorists, and others with them - and how far they can do so without losing their distinctive identity. These papers indicate the difficulties of the project. David Punter's piece on 'Parts of the body/parts of speech', brings Melanie Klein to bear on an apparently random collection of texts in an analysis which can satisfy neither Kleinian or historian. In so far as the essay has historical credibility it is by quoting extensively from Lynn Hunt - but it then undercuts this by arguing that the discursive problematic (derived from her work) which faced France after the execution of the king was one which crossed the channel in an unmediated form to frame Blake's post-1793 corpus. This is not just unlikely, it is wholly implausible and fundamentally ahistorical. Punter also shares with a number of other contributors the view that 'Jacobinism' predicated a sharply defined group and an intellectual agenda which is the same in both France and England. This is anti-jacobinism succeeding with a vengeance. Indeed, the whole question of the part which loyalism plays in constructing the language of controversy and the agenda for reform is left to one side - perhaps most surprisingly by Nigel Leask whose otherwise informative paper on pantisocracy gives greater weight to French events in 1792-3 than English ones in accounting for radical emigration. Leask's slip is uncharacteristic, but many of the contributions treat the historical context as nothing more than a backdrop which can be set up behind an accepted corpus of romantic texts and treated as an unproblematic point of reference. This makes for bad history, an impoverished understanding of culture, and a view of romanticism which cannot cross disciplinary boundaries. Two exceptions to this are Gavin Edwards' lucid and entertaining account of 'Crabbe's regicidal households', and David Bindman's 'Blake, Paine and the French Revolution'. Both pieces indicate a subtle grasp of the complex local contexts within which their authors grappled with larger universal and

international themes. These pieces do carry interdisciplinary weight (as does Angus Easson's piece on Dickens and Carlyle, although it is not clear what it is doing in this collection), but few others do.

Chris Jones's *Radical Sensibility* is foreshadowed in a shorter piece included in this collection. Both the paper and the book are open to serious objections, although the book does contain some occasional insights - as in his argument for the significance of Godwin's letter to Fox and Sheridan in 1791 - and some useful work on the under-studied Charlotte Smith and Helen Maria Williams. The objections are to the principal concerns of the book - namely its claims for the centrality of sensibility in the construction of radical and conservative positions in the last decade of the eighteenth century. The book opens with an extensive discussion of varieties of sensibility, but Jones's discussion is insufficiently discriminating in his account of the philosophical appeal to sentiment. Hutcheson, Shaftesbury, Hume, Smith, Kames and others are drawn into a general movement of sensibility. Not having used the term is evidently not considered a handicap, and the distinctions between sentimentalism, social affections, sympathy, moral sense, and sociability are for the most part set aside as matters of detail. Sensibility is taken to include all this and more, and the reader begins to sense, as Leslie Stephen remarked of sentimentalism, that sensibility 'is the name of a kind of mildew that spreads over the literature of the period'. Small wonder that rationalism is also embraced within the movement, with what Jones insists on calling the 'benevolist principle' in Godwin being linked to the doctrine of necessity via Hume's influence (pp.94-6). That Jones can make such a claim is indicative of the fact that he seems to have read only material which he identifies as part of sensibility. This means that there is no substantive reference to Price's *Review* and no reference at all to Jonathan Edwards, despite Godwin's express recognition of his influence. Indeed, we get no real sense of what would be involved in resisting sensibility.

One consequence of treating sensibility as a unified movement and universal gloop, is that fine distinctions become lost. Most damagingly, Jones's account of the complex role which is played in the early part of the 1790s by Godwin, Holcroft, Inchbald, Wollstonecraft, Mackintosh and others, in qualifying their varied philosophical and literary inheritance in responding to Burke is disconcertingly thin; yet this is intended as the central theme of the book.

Jones's book fails because it is insufficiently interdisciplinary. His account of the philosophical issues and positions associated with sympathy and sentiment is wholly superficial: it glides across the surface of texts, recognizing affinities in language which are read as indicative of paradigmatic affinities, with the result that everything becomes grist to the mill. Jones's reading of sensibility, despite its occasional insights, blithely

homogenizes a complex and fissured historical and philosophical terrain to produce an account of the literature of the 1790s which is deeply unsatisfactory.

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**John Barrell**, *The birth of Pandora and the division of knowledge* (London: MacMillan, 1992), pp.263, £47.50 (hardback), £18.95 (paperback).

*The birth of Pandora* consists of seven essays 'all written in the Britain of the 1980s' and the back cover promises that they 'will be of interest to historians, literary critics, historians of art and all those with an interest in cultural history and cultural studies'. The title essay was written expressly for the volume. Five of the essays have been developed out of conference papers, several of these already having been printed as articles before their inclusion in the present volume. The essay entitled 'The Public Figure and the Private Eye: William Collins's "Ode to Evening"' is plucked from another volume of essays *Teaching the Text*.

The latter was a didactic publication brought out in 1983 with the specific intention of vindicating 'the teaching practice of members of the English Faculty at Cambridge who in 1981 supported Colin MacCabe during what became known as the "MacCabe affair"'. This essay stands apart from the rest of the volume not only in its narrowly 'political' inspiration but in its subject - it is the only essay devoted to the exposition of a canonical literary text. It is also formally and structurally distinct, although it is difficult to determine in what its structure consists. Barrell calls it 'a reconstruction of some remarks made *ex tempore*, punctuated by questions and observations from students and followed by discussion'. The essay consequently occupies a no man's land between the record of a performance, a political manifesto, and a polished piece of academic essay writing. Barrell's 'reconstruction' provides descriptions - in reported speech - of the ways in which a long sentence from Collins's *Ode* was syntactically rearranged when students read it aloud. Barrell then states, or stated, to the class, 'I'll try and frame what I have to say as a commentary on those readings'. Given the fact that these readings are unrecoverable for the present reader it is hard to see the point of the exercise. By his own admission Barrell is using an elementary, or should one say ordinary, set of tools, for his close reading of the syntax: 'I shall not demand of you, however, any understanding of sentence structure beyond what you might have picked up, had you been candidates for English language at O level twenty years ago'. Most of the essay consequently consists of what used to be called practical criticism or close reading, with a certain amount of historical context provided for the students. It must have been a good class, and the essay probably served a useful function when originally published, as a proof that English academics in Cambridge in 1983 were responsible teachers. The essay does not sit happily in the present volume.

The essay 'Imaginary Treason Imaginary Law: The State Trials of 1794' looks at the trials of Tooke, Hardy and Thelwall and in passing at the Scottish treason trials of Downey and Watt earlier the same year.

Barrell states that his essay is the first stage in a more ambitious attempt 'to study the political arguments of the 1790s by focusing on the treason trials, and by seeing them as the occasion of a dramatized and staged conflict between the various discourses in which politics was debated in that decade'. Such a study would be valuable and Barrell is shrewd to map his future territory, but he does not include, at this stage, several aspects of the topic which would be necessary for the project's successful undertaking. The treason trials are a subject that certainly deserves to be taken out of the specific context of legal and radical history which have so far largely claimed it as their own. One of the problems with this essay lies in the way its recapitulations of recent legal scholarship end up choking the discussion. Suspicions are aroused when the second footnote refers to recent academic and legal studies as 'three excellent books...to which this essay is indebted for most of whatever understanding it has of the legal questions it discusses'. A study which had mastered the knotty legal background surrounding the law of Treason in the 1790s to the extent that it could rise to incorporate such questions as the theatrical conventions, narrative development, extra legal rhetoric, and propagandistic implications of the trials, is long overdue. Such a study would relate the rhetoric employed in the trials and the strategies of the different participants to the various traditions of trial literature, to the radical exploitation of the tradition of Protestant martyrology and to the literature of mock trials and trial parody which had permeated radical satire and popular parody since the Civil War. Barrell does not take this course but relates the trials to traditionally privileged linguistic areas - to use his terms 'the discourse of philosophical radicalism', 'the discourse of the law' and 'aesthetic enquiry, if I can use that term to cover that extensive study of the powers and pleasures of the imagination, where its nature and its creative functions were being defined'.

It is very difficult to read the trials as 'a dramatised and staged conflict' without first distinguishing them most carefully one from another. The differences between them are so extensive as to make it unwise to treat them - in the way Barrell does - as a congruent group. The trials of Hardy and of Tooke differ structurally, theatrically and linguistically. The trial of Thelwall was much shorter than the other two and generated nothing like the same interest. Hardy's trial was the longest and the most tense of the three. It was also the most conventionally decorous and arid in terms of the legal forms and language observed in court. His defence was left in the technically and rhetorically expert hands of Erskine and the other defending lawyer John Gibbs. Hardy's trial provided lessons in common sense and passivity - in the value of obtaining a good professional defence, of keeping a low profile, and of allowing the prosecution to hang itself with its own enormous rope. Tooke's trial took place in a wholly changed atmosphere in which Hardy's trial is frequently referred to and in which Hardy is mythologized as a new political radical martyr. Tooke himself took a prominent part in the cross examinations and used a

variety of satiric and comic techniques eccentric to customary legal practice to mock the prosecution and impress the jury. Barrell alludes neither to Tooke's professional skills as a linguist or to his application of techniques of linguistic analysis not only in 1794 but in his 1777 trial, nor to Olivia Smith's authoritative and influential 1984 discussion of these issues in *The politics of language*.

The remaining five essays in the book find Barrell on more familiar ground. They concern various aspects of eighteenth century aesthetics as they relate to questions of gender, the representation of the division of labour and the public and private functions of art. The essay 'The Private Comedy of Thomas Rowlandson' examines Rowlandson's depiction of the labouring agricultural poor, and is a gem. Barrell argues that Rowlandson's position as a caricaturist producing watercolour drawings and etchings allowed him a freedom to present the poor in situations and actions which have comedy and energy. These qualities are shown to be in conflict with, or eccentric to, the conventions which dominated depictions of the agricultural poor by the 1780s - artists such as Francis Wheatley specializing in finished oil paintings and watercolours which present them as subservient, industrious and static. Barrell is at his best relating the tensions in Rowlandson's work to the wider issues of how the comic and the representation of the agricultural poor interact. The passages contrasting the works of Rowlandson and Wheatley have lightness of touch and wit. Rowlandson's qualities are conveyed at times in a style that combines economy and beauty: 'Rowlandson's haymakers wear expressions, and adopt attitudes, characteristic of a time of life, not a time of day - an energetic youthfulness that he celebrated so tirelessly'. The writing also displays some audacious shifts which combine humour and intellectual rigour; Rowlandson's *Harvesters resting in a cornfield* are described: 'The Haymakers display once again, a surplus energy; they communicate a sense of having the energy not only to do their work but to enjoy more of life than just working.' The transposition of the theory of surplus value to describe the energy levels of Rowlandson's poor makes saucy but serious parody.

'Visualising the Division of Labour' is a discussion of W H Pyne's *Microcosm: or a picturesque delineation of the arts, agriculture, manufacturers etc. of Great Britain in a series of above a thousand groups of small figures for the embellishment of landscape*. The opening page attempts to define the phrase 'the division of labour' and the definitions break down into several varieties. First, there is the division of labour as a narrative which incorporates both a Marxist 'bad narrative' of 'alienation, from the unity of the productive process' and an eighteenth century narrative held by 'political economists' whereby the division of labour had 'for the most part a good story to tell'. Secondly, there is the 'discourse of the division of labour'; Barrell describes this piece as an attempt to analyse 'the problem of authority in the discourse of the



division of labour'. Barrell's book appears in MacMillan's 'Language, Discourse, Society' series but, despite the very great number of compound phrases using the word 'discourse', at no point does Barrell clarify his understanding of the term or the nature of his obvious debt to Foucault. In this piece, perhaps because of its implicit theoretical ambitions, Barrell is particularly unclear. He states that 'in the late eighteenth century, the idea of the division of labour functioned as a fully articulated discourse' yet the question of how, at any time, an *idea* could function as a 'fully articulated discourse' remains unarticulated. However, Barrell's reading of *The Microcosm* is subtle and effective. The central discussion uncovers complex tensions arising from the depiction of 'divided labour' in the eighteenth century within the theoretical context of the picturesque.

The title essay which concludes the volume sees James Barry's thirty year obsession with the myth of Pandora as 'a fascinating chronicle of the development of his ideas about the social and political functions of his art'. Barry's various treatments of the myth provide the basis for a set of excursions into political and aesthetic eighteenth century theories of art which are filtered through Barrell's familiar concerns - the public and private functions of art, the impact of the division of labour and the ramifications of gender. This long piece can perhaps best be understood as a set of working notes, and incorporates some stunning insights. Of particular value are the analysis of the implications for Barry's art of the Sicyonian maid as a myth describing the origin of painting, and the discussion of the impact of Egyptian and Hindu art, and of contemporary scholarship about them, on Barry's conception of classical representation. But as the piece continues it becomes increasingly directionless.

There is an elaborate attempt to psychoanalyse what is presented as Barry's foot fetishism which reveals Barrell's lack of confidence in his technical qualification for the task. After trying to establish a connection between snakes and bad feet in Barry's paintings of male heroes and gods as the signs of a castration complex the authorial persona breaks into the analysis to apologize for the lack of evidence and of method 'in an essay which has promised to talk about Barry's art in terms of fetishism, the evidence had better not be too oblique, or the fetishism will come to seem my own - and it is more important than I care to explain that I should appear here as diagnostician and not as co-analysand'. But perhaps we do deserve a non-autobiographical explanation in view of the fact that Barrell's 'evidence' up to this point has been very thin.

The problem with 'this excursion into the psychoanalytic' lies not so much in the application of Freud but in the highly tendentious nature of the visual evidence. The hunt for problem feet in Barry drifts off into similarity spotting that is at best whimsical, at worst arbitrary. Having isolated the poisoned foot in Barry's *Philoctates* subsequent visual analogues are introduced in terms such as 'The attitude appears elsewhere

in Barry's painting. We find something like it in the blinded Polyphemus', 'The comparable, if not precisely similar attitude of the mortally wounded hero in *The death of General Wolfe*'. Looking at these two pictures in terms of composition and draftsmanship it is hard to see the connection Barrell desires, while there is not a snake in sight. Barrell finally explains their relevance as 'part of what seems to have been a more general interest in depicting men heroes and gods...with wounded or otherwise troublesome feet'. Having established Barry's obsession some unlikely candidates are playfully drawn into the category, and it is apparently not necessary to be a male to be one of Barry's foot afflicted 'men' or 'heroes' in *The temptation of Adam*. though it is Eve's heel, not Adam's, that is threatened in the painting, the effect is to represent Eve as, metonymically, her own male descendants, so that the picture seems to belong with the other paintings about men with problem feet'. Towards its conclusion the essay switches discussion to Barry and the French Revolution but inevitably returns to feet in the final paragraphs, and with humorous felicity the whole piece ends with a *footnote* in which Barrell amasses material which unfortunately eluded him before the book went to press.

Why did this collection see the light of day, what is its function and what is its audience? Barrell dwells at length on questions of method and motivation and is theoretically ambitious for his work. He does not want to be pigeon holed and his foreword argues powerfully for the interdisciplinary vigour and methodological sophistication of the essays. 'They are preoccupied with questions of cultural history, but they are not attempts to write a history of ideas, still less a history of real events, but rather of discursive representations.' Are the essays then 'an attempt to write a history...of discursive representations'? If so what does this mean? Is the project intended to be a Foucaultian analysis of eighteenth century ideas about art? The range of subject matter which Barrell addresses in these essays and the various approaches to reading and decipherment which he attempts to employ require him to be all things to all academics, with the result that he sees his theoretical position as defined by conventional disciplines in a way that is unimaginable in the writing of Foucault. 'I try therefore to be a historian among literary critics, and a literary critic among historians - and among art historians too.' It is difficult work and demands good faith and generosity on the reader's part but given the reliance throughout the essays on 'discourse' Barrell's foreword might attempt to establish where his work stands in relation to Foucaultian and post-Foucaultian discourse theory.

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