Enlightenment and Dissent

No. 24 2008

CONTENTS

Special Supplement

EDITORIAL

This is the first time that we have produced two volumes for a single issue. We view this very much as a special case justified by the fine quality of Hannah Lightbody's diary and of the editing by David Sekers. The information which he provides enables one to gain a unique insight in to Hannah Lightbody and her milieu. The diary and his documentation make a coherent volume and one which we felt could be made available for purchase by those who do not subscribe to the journal. We have absorbed most of the extra cost, but have also made a small increase in the price of the journal which we hope will be acceptable to our loyal subscribers.

A trend which is increasingly apparent in our contributors is the increasing citation of electronic references. Eighteenth Century Collections Online in particular is an amazing resource, but increasingly libraries and record offices are also making manuscript resources available online. The Electronic Enlightenment project, associated with the Bodleian Library, is, amongst other things, making available over 53,000 letters and documents. Another approach, though complementary, is to edit some holdings and make them available online. The letters of Joseph Priestley held by Dr. Williams's Library, the most significant collection of Priestley's correspondence, have been edited by Simon Mills and are freely available online. This edition is much to be recommended, and an ideal preliminary is Simon's article in this number discussing the work of Priestley's first editor, John Towill Rutt.

In many ways the proliferation of electronic resources makes researching much easier, and provides wonderful facilities for the interrogation of documents, although, on the other hand, serendipitous moments in a library or record office are hard to replicate sitting in front of a screen.

MHF

GODLINESS AND GODLIKENESS: CAMBRIDGE PLATONISM IN RICHARD PRICE'S RELIGIOUS RATIONALISM

Louise Hickman[*]

In the later seventeenth century, and throughout the eighteenth, one can detect a distinct trend in English religious thought towards rationalism, modernism and 'enlightenment'. In recent years, it has become popular to perceive this 'age of reason' as a project of rationalisation, liberalism and increasing secularization; one which leads inevitably to nihilism and the collapse of modernity.[1] By advancing an ethics of rationalist intuitionism, it is no surprise that Richard Price has been thought of as epitomizing the trend towards an 'enlightened' and modernistic world-view. His philosophy has been described as the 'culmination of eighteenth century rationalism',[2] and Alasdair MacIntyre makes a forceful critique when he suggests Price as a prime example of an Enlightenment moralist who was forced to search for an alternative justification for ethics following the eighteenth-century rejection of Aristotelianism and Christian teleology.[3]

While it is fair to call Price a rationalist in many important respects, a closer reading of his work suggests that rather than abandoning a theological foundation for ethics, he has a firm commitment to teleology in the form of a deeply Christian Platonic doctrine of deiformity. Price's rationalism is a deeply religious and theological rationalism informed by one particular strand of an evolving Christian Platonic rationalist

---

[*] I would like to thank Douglas Hedley and Russell Re-Manning for helpful comments. Thanks also to the anonymous reviewers *Enlightenment and Dissent* for their valuable comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

1 This is Alasdair MacIntyre's argument in *After virtue: A study in moral theory* (2nd edn., London, 1985), chapters 4 and 5. MacIntyre's reading of the history of moral philosophy has become widely influential. See for example, Alister McGrath, *The renewal of Anglicanism* (London, 1993), Colin Gunton, *Enlightenment and alienation: An essay toward Trinitarian theology* (Basingstoke, 1985) and Stanley Hauerwas, *Vision and virtue: essays in Christian ethical reflection* (Indiana, 1981).

2 Bernard Peach, *The ethics of Richard Price* (Unpublished PhD. dissertation, Cambridge, Mass., 1951), 100.

3 MacIntyre, *After virtue*, 236.

tradition. Although the influence of Platonism upon his epistemology has been previously acknowledged,[4] the debt owed by Price to the Platonic tradition has never been fully explored, especially in relation to his theology. A study of Price's Platonic account of 'becoming like God' shows how adherence to this doctrine gives his account of reason and intuition a substantial theological (and Platonic) flavour and ensures the irreducible importance of virtue and character in his moral philosophy. A study of Price's Platonism also draws a sharp distinction between his rationalism and that of the Socinians. This is important not only as a means of gaining a more accurate understanding of Price's thought, but also for an appreciation of the difficulties of interpreting the Enlightenment as a unified singular project.

I

Price is not shy about declaring his enthusiasm for the Platonic tradition. In a letter to Lord Monboddo dated 1780, he declares: 'I was always a warm admirer of Plato among the antients and of Cudworth and Clarke among the moderns.'[5] He even goes as far as to avidly agree with Lord Monboddo's estimation of Plato as a 'Philosopher truly Divine'[6] and he gives us evidence that he has read, among others, Alcinous, Plotinus and the Cambridge Platonist Henry More.[7] He does not attempt to distinguish between the different philosophies of the Platonic tradition but exhibits a reading of Plato coloured by both the Cambridge Platonists and middle

---

4 Two recent articles by Martha K Zebrowski testify to the strong influence of Platonism on Price; 'Richard Price: British Platonist of the eighteenth century', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 55 (1994), 17-35 and 'We may venture to say, that the number of Platonic readers is considerable: Richard Price, Joseph Priestley and the Platonic strain in eighteenth-century thought', *Enlightenment and Dissent*, 19 (2000), 193-213. Examination of this influence in the literature on Price has usually focused on his epistemology rather than his ethics or theology.

5 *The correspondence of Richard Price*, ed. W B Peach & D O Thomas (3 vols., Durham NC, 1991) II, Price to Monboddo, 2nd Aug. 1780, p.65.

6 *Correspondence of Richard Price*, II, Monboddo to Price 15 Sept. 1780, p.70 and Price to Monboddo, 11 Dec. 1780, p.87.

7 Richard Price, *A review of the principle questions in morals*, ed. D D Raphael (3rd edn., Oxford, 1974), 217n. and *Four dissertations*, a facsimile reprint of the edition of 1768 with an introduction by John Stephens (Bristol, 1990), 49.

Platonism.[8] A significant influence from Aristotle, Ficino and especially Plotinus should temper attempts to see the Cambridge Platonists as straightforward Platonists[9] (and there are some considerable divergences of opinion between the members of this school), but in their commitment to the sovereignty of the good and the true, to the belief that reason is divine and God-given, and to the ethical life as one ultimately of participation of the soul in God, the Cambridge Platonists (and also, I suggest, Price) firmly advance the spirit of Plato's philosophy as they interpret it.[10]

The doctrine of participation is apparent in Price's adoption of the Platonic doctrine that the ultimate aim of the soul is deiformity: to become like God.[11] The language of deiformity is not present in Price's *Review of the principle questions in morals* but it is a strong theme in some of his sermons and highlights the theology behind the moral philosophy of the

---

8 The difficulties of interpreting Plato's philosophy were not unappreciated in the eighteenth century: see, for example, Martha K Zebrowski, 'John William Thomson's 1728 Edition of Plato's "Parmenides". A Calvinist humanist from Königsberg reads Platonic theology in Oxford', *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 30.1 (2007), 113-131.

9 Samuel Taylor Coleridge suggests they are more properly called Plotinists: see Roberta Florence Brinkely ed., *Coleridge on the seventeenth century* (Durham N.C., 1955), 366. For an examination of some of the tensions within Cambridge Platonism, see G A J Rogers, 'The other-worldly philosophers and the real world: The Cambridge Platonists, theology and politics', in G A J Rogers, J M Vienne and Y C Zarka eds., *The Cambridge Platonists in philosophical context: politics, metaphysics and religion* (London, 1997), 3-15.

10 Charles Taliaferro and Alison J Teply eds., *Cambridge Platonist spirituality* (New York, 2004), 6-12; Julius Moravcsik, *Plato and Platonism: Plato's conception of appearance and reality in ontology, epistemology and ethics, and its modern echoes* (Oxford, 1992), especially vii-ix; Lloyd P Gerson, 'What is Platonism?' *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 43 (2005), 253-76; Frederick J Powicke, *The Cambridge Platonists: a study* (London, 1926) and C A Patrides, *The Cambridge Platonists* (Cambridge, 1969), 1-23 all define Platonism as adhering to these basic ideas.

11 David Sedley insists that this is a pivotal aspect of Plato's thought in 'The ideal of Godlikeness' in Gail Fine ed., *Plato* (Oxford, 2000), 791-810. Julian Annas, *Platonic ethics, old and new* (London, 2000) argues that the ancient Platonists interpreted the doctrine of becoming like God as one of the most important features of Plato's ethics. Lloyd Gerson accepts this doctrine as a feature common to virtually all types of Platonism: 'What is Platonism?' *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 43 (2005), 253-76.

Review. True religion, Price states, consists in 'being like God'[12] and we should aim at resembling him and, 'making ourselves partakers of a divine nature.'[13] Present here are two important Platonic ideas: kinship between reason and the divine (based on resemblance), and the concept of participation (developed in terms of deiformity). For Plato, kinship between the Forms and (at least part of) the soul is necessary because the soul must be like the Forms in order for knowledge to occur;[14] a theme taken up by the Cambridge Platonists in their insistence that the knower can attain knowledge because he or she has a kinship with the thing known.[15] For the Cambridge Platonists, it is participation in God which grounds human knowing: reason allows us the very possibility of knowledge because it is akin to the divine. Central here, for Price, is the well attested influence of Ralph Cudworth's epistemology in which the mind of God is the archetypal intellect with all particular created intellects being derived from God.[16] Price follows both Plato and Cudworth in his description of the intellectual part of man (the soul) as 'immortal and divine', 'an emanation from the supreme intelligence'.[17] Human reason is ultimately derived from God because God is 'the divine, uncreated, infinite reason and power, from whence all other reason and power are derived'.[18]

---

12 *Sermons on various subjects*, ed. W Morgan (London, 1816) [hereafter cited as *SVS*], 379.

13 *SVS*, 376.

14 See *Phaedo*, 78b-84b; and see also the *Timaeus;* Gerson discusses Platonic kinship in considerable depth in 'What is Platonism?' 253-276.

15 *Phaedo*, 78b-84b; John Smith, *Select discourses* (4th edn., Cambridge, 1859), 2-3 (Smith's *Select discourses* and his *The excellency and nobleness of true religion* were both published posthumously); Benjamin Whichcote, *The works of the learned Benjamin Whichcote* (4 vols. Aberdeen, 1751), I, 32, 53; II, 189, 201; IV, 299; Whichcote, *Moral and religious aphorisms* (London, 1930), no. 460; Daniel C Russell, 'Virtue as "Likeness to God" in Plato and Seneca', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 42 (2004), 241-260. Daniel Walker Howe, 'The Cambridge Platonists of old England and the Cambridge Platonists of New England,' *Church History*, 57 (1988), 471 argues that this is a more Platonic than Plotinian idea.

16 Ralph Cudworth, *A treatise concerning eternal and immutable morality* with *A treatise of freewill*, ed. Sarah Hutton (Cambridge, 1996), 77 and 128.

17 *SVS*, 148; *The nature and dignity of the human soul*: *a sermon preached at St. Thomas' January the Fifth, 1766* (London, 1766), 11; See also Plato, *Timaeus*, 41d, 61c, 65a.

18 *Review*, 88.

Reason, then, is divine, and deiformity means using our reason to 'become like God'. What might this mean in practice? Price suggests that acquiring a 'likeness to God' means becoming God's 'genuine offspring'[19] which is accomplished by fixing our minds on truth and right in order to participate in the moral excellence of God. The ethical weight of Price's thought is clear here: partaking in God's nature means the imitation of God's ethical perfections, which is a theme of considerable importance within certain branches of the Platonic tradition. Although Plato himself is not explicitly theistic, envisaging deiformity in theistic terms is a notable characteristic of Socratic thought and it lends itself well to Plato's linking of virtue with holiness. Socrates describes his mission in terms of 'service to God' seen in terms of divine supervision with holiness as a moral virtue.[20] David Sedley draws attention to the fact that although Plato did not share Socrates' theology, it still cohered with his own intention to link justice with holiness and also with the philosophy of becoming like God that develops throughout the more 'Platonic' dialogues of *The republic*, *Phaedrus* and *Theaetetus*.[21] Becoming like God is described in the *Theaetetus* as the escape from earth to heaven; involving a change to becoming 'just and pure, with understanding.'[22] Difficulties of interpreting Plato's position and of cohering the dialogues abound: for the middle Platonists, including Alcinous, becoming like God was envisaged in explicitly practical and ethical terms, but for Plotinus, and the Neoplatonists, it was seen more in terms of a mystical flight from the world and a more literal union with the One.[23] These different interpretations result thereafter in tensions within the Platonic tradition, compounded by the fact that the theological aspect of this doctrine only becomes explicit with Augustine's Christianizing of Plato. If the

---

19 *SVS*, 382.

20 *Apology*, 29d-30a.

21 The *Phaedrus* has a very different interpretation of the idea, but Sedley gives a persuasive argument for reading the doctrine as coherent in the light of the *Timaeus* in 'The ideal of Godlikeness', 796.

22 *Theaetetus*, 176b, *The republic*, 613a-b. See, however, Julia Annas, 'What are Plato's "middle" dialogues in the middle of?' in Annas and Crowe eds., *New perspectives on Plato, modern and ancient*, 1-23 for a challenge to the developmental understanding of Plato's dialogues.

23 E.g. Plotinus, *Ennead*, 1.2.

Cambridge Platonists or Price were aware of these tensions, however, they did not consider them problematic when reading the ancient Platonic texts.[24] It is likely, therefore, that Price would have seen the Cambridge Platonist notion of deiformity as cohering neatly with Plato's own view, in keeping with Alcinous' interpretation of the doctrine. The perceived harmony in the 'Platonic' position can be explained by the influence of Stoicism on Price, Benjamin Whichcote and Cudworth. Within Stoicism, no great conflict was accepted between the ethical and other-worldly strands of the doctrine while rationality was linked to virtue, making deiformity not a matter of escaping from this life, but of living morally within it.[25] The influence of Stoicism on Price perhaps explains how he could have accepted this interpretation as it would have fitted neatly with his reading of Plato and the Cambridge Platonists. Rightly or wrongly, Price seems to follow the middle Platonists, interpreting the Cambridge Platonists accordingly, by embracing an ethical understanding of Plato's concept of becoming like God, based on a theology of the participation of the human reason in divine reason.

In fleshing out his understanding of what 'becoming like God' entails, Price closely follows Benjamin Whichcote's account of the doctrine, which forms much of the basis for Cudworth's interpretation of the idea.[26] Price endorses the distinction made by Whichcote between the natural and moral characteristics of God. Some of the classical attributes are listed (Price calls them 'natural attributes', Whichcote 'perfections') including independence, omnipotence, omniscience, and eternity.[27] As it is obvious to both that imitation of God could not consist of acquiring any of these aforesaid characteristics, they focus on the imitation of God's moral attributes or perfections. While Whichcote suggests, 'it is only in the

---

24 John H Muirhead, *The Platonic tradition in Anglo-Saxon philosophy: studies in the history of idealism in England and America* (London, 1931), 53, argues this point.

25 Daniel C Russell makes the case that the Stoics saw no conflict between the two different interpretations of the doctrine in 'Virtue as "Likeness to God" in Plato and Seneca' *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 42 (2004), 241-260.

26 Michael B Gill briefly attests to the influence of Whichcote's ideas of deiformity and reason upon the British moralists of the eighteenth century (including Price) in 'The religious rationalism of Benjamin Whichcote', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 37 (1999), 288.

27 *SVS*, 366; Whichcote, *Works*, II, 385.

exercise of his power and the direction of [God's] will that we can be like him',[28] Price suggests, 'We imitate [God] when our wills are likewise directed by truth and reason'.[29] God is truth and right, God's will is orientated to truth and goodness, and Whichcote and Price insist that each human will should be orientated in the same way too. For both, becoming like God is based on rectitude of the will, which involves cultivating a charitable temper and being ready to assist others. Although both concede that it is impossible for us to be virtuous in exactly the same way that God is (because God is the eternal law itself), it is possible for us to aim for our wills to be guided by the same principle as God's: in this sense, we can aim to become like God. Becoming like God therefore means imitating God's moral characteristics. We can never imitate God's omnipotence or omniscience but it is possible, on this distinction, to imitate God's moral perfections by allowing our will to be guided by truth and right. 'Let us think of the order that governs nature. Let us exhibit that order in our own conduct that we may share in the infinite happiness which it has been established to produce.'[30]

Many of these themes are also present in Cudworth, and there was undoubtedly a theological influence from him upon Price: God is goodness, while truth is linked to God through the necessary independence of mind and matter.[31] For Cudworth too, holiness is the 'conformity of our wills to the will of God', while the 'great mystery of the Gospel, is to establish a Godlike frame and disposition of spirit…in the hearts of men.'[32] His understanding of the doctrine is, however, inseparably linked to his Christology uncovering a significant difference in emphasis between him and Price. In Cudworth's theology, it is the descent of the Logos into human likeness in the incarnation that enables participation in the divine nature.[33] Any Godlike frame and disposition we have is enabled by Christ's death on the cross, while the spark of divinity within all human beings is the 'immortal seed' of the Logos

---

28 Whichcote, *Works*, II, 385; Price, *SVS*, 366.

29 *SVS*, 366.

30 *SVS*, 382.

31 *Treatise*, 130.

32 *A sermon preached before the House of Commons, March 31st 1647* reprinted in Patrides ed., *Cambridge Platonists*, 98 and 102.

33 *Sermon*, 101.

acting immediately upon human nature: 'Christ formed in us':[34] 'God was therefore incarnated and made man', Cudworth states, paraphrasing Athanasius, 'that he might deify us, that is…make us partakers of the Divine nature.'[35] Whichcote's theology is not without a Christological element (that Christ died for our sins, he believes is just as indispensable to religion as morality)[36] but his understanding of the doctrine of deiformity is more strongly rationalistic, lending itself to Price's prioritising of moral action over religious belief. Adopting Whichcote's interpretation of the doctrine would have enabled Price to take Cudworth at his word when he stated that goodness and holiness are more fundamental than Christological speculation, and would have enabled Price to avoid seeing any contradiction between Cudworth's view and his own.[37] In accepting a thoroughly ethical interpretation of this doctrine, Price is, however, explicitly at odds with the more Plotinian account of it given by John Smith. There is no sense in Price of the union of the individual with the Universal World soul and no concept of abstraction and flight from the body.[38] An entirely other-worldly interpretation is, however, largely rejected by Whichcote, More and Cudworth, with the result that the overriding importance of the ethical in Price's account grants him a distinct harmony with the general spirit of the Cambridge Platonist tradition and their interpretation of Platonic doctrine.[39]

This is particularly apparent in the view of the human person underpinning Price's theology of becoming divine. He adopts a tripartite division of the soul and a concern that reason should govern human action. Firstly Price identifies certain 'instincts' which human beings share with animals. These include our feelings of hunger, thirst and sexual attraction, and, following the philosophy of the *Phaedrus* and the *Republic*,[40] Price calls them 'appetites' or 'passions'. Secondly, he makes a distinction between these instincts and what he calls 'affections,'[41] by

34 *Sermon,* 104-106.
35 *Sermon,* 101.
36 *Works,* II, 293.
37 *Sermon,* 96.
38 See, for example, Smith, *Select discourses,* 147, 407.
39 Patrides, *Cambridge Platonists,* 18, points out that the Cambridge Platonists resisted Plotinus' call for isolation from the world: e.g. More, *Antidote against atheism* (London, 1655), A5.
40 *Republic,* 439d.
41 *Review,* 74.

which he means the desires had by reasonable beings, which are the result of rationality, for example, benevolence, or love of truth. Affections seem to be very much akin to the 'spirit' element of the soul postulated by Plato. Whereas passion (instinct) is nothing to do with reason, affections are depicted as dependent on reason; they are something that animals do not experience because only human beings possess reason.[42] The term 'will' is used to cover this second aspect of the soul. Appetites are placed under the direction of reason, the third aspect of human nature, and are intended to be subject to it. Reason is the superior, controlling aspect of the soul; the intellect, the understanding, the eye of the mind, which examines, judges, decides and directs.[43] To defend his claim of the pre-eminence of reason, Price appeals both to Alcinous, and to Plato for whom goodness is the discipline of keeping the passions and affections in subjection to reason.[44]

In a nod towards Plato's *Republic*, Price links morality with proper order in the soul; for Plato, 'each of us will be just…only if each part of him is performing its proper function' and for Price, 'goodness in mankind is the 'sound state of our natures' restored and established.'[45] Deiformity is thus not an escape from the body but a proper ordering of the soul. In this, Price has much in common too with Henry More for whom Cartesian dualism is to be rejected for its cleaving apart of body and soul: 'Wherefore the Passions of the Body are not to be quite extinguished, but regulated, that there may be the greater plenitude of life in the whole man.'[46] Imitation of God can only occur when reason governs the soul and kind affections are cultivated.[47] A distinctive definition of religion itself results from this: for both Whichcote and Price, it is the imitation of God's moral perfections; 'in these doth religion consists; viz. in a divine nature, in the imitation of God in respect of his moral perfections, of holiness, goodness, righteousness and truth: and in

42 *Review,* 79.

43 *Review,* 17; 38 c.f. *Timaeus,* 29b; 214.

44 *Review,* 217n; *Phaedrus,* 246.

45 *Republic,* 441d-e; *Review,* 217.

46 *Conjectura cabbalistic,* 158. See J E Saveson, 'Differing reactions to Descartes among the Cambridge Platonists' *Journal of the History of Ideas,* 21 (1960), 560-567, for a discussion of the different accounts of becoming like God in Smith and More.

47 *Sermons on the Christian doctrine* (London, 1787), 319.

the guidance and superintendency of the divine spirit over our minds'.[48] True religion ('being like God') means therefore, for Price, becoming morally good, and it is this that is the supreme telos of human nature. In this, Price is closer to Whichcote than Plato: his epistemological foundation may come largely from Plato, but he adopts Whichcote's religious understanding of becoming like God,[49] which fits with his insistence that it is the actual imitation of God, rather than the possession of reason as such, that gives human beings their dignity. The imago Dei is not a faculty of the mind, nor is it a separate soul, but rather shows itself in our 'maintaining an invariable regard to truth and right'.[50]

The similarity of language and thought between Price and Whichote is perhaps at least partly explained by the influence of Samuel Clarke upon Price. The idea of conformity of our will to God's is present in Clarke and forms the basis for his account of obligation. Whether Clarke borrowed from Whichcote's theology is not clear but in 1707 he anonymously published a fourth volume of Whichcote's sermons, which suggests at the very least an admission that Whichcote's ideas cohered with his own.[51] Despite the general coherence between Price and a broadly Cambridge Platonist account of becoming like God, however, any similarity must be tempered by the lack of any strong theology of grace in Price's work. The Cambridge Platonists were concerned to harmonize their Platonism with an orthodox Christianity, which they interpreted as Trinitarian and which involved a Christology of the incarnate Logos (as touched on above). John Smith has the strongest theology of grace, going as far as to see becoming like God in terms of the union between Christ and God, as a result of grace.[52] Although More, Whichcote and Cudworth understood deiformity in highly ethical terms, they still speak of its possibility in

---

48 *Works*, II, 385, see also 386, and John Smith, *The excellency and nobleness of true religion* (London, 1864), 7- 8.

49 David Pailin, 'Reconciling theory and fact: The problem of 'other faiths' in Lord Herbert and the Cambridge Platonists' in Douglas Hedley and Sarah Hutton eds., *Platonism at the origins of modernity: studies on Platonism and early modern philosophy* (Netherlands, 2008), 93-111 points out that for Whichcote, man is not deified as a rational animal (inferior creatures are rational too) but as a religious creature.

50 *SVS*, 367-8; *SVS*, 371, c.f. Whichcote, *Works*, I, 53-54.

51 This point is made by James Deotis Roberts, *From Puritanism to Platonism in seventeenth century England* (The Hague, 1968), 240.

52 *Select discourses*, 340.

terms of the 'seed' of God. Although their Logos Christology is central for their ethics, and although Price has a higher Christology than Joseph Priestley or the Socinians would allow, he has little theology of grace or incarnation in relation to deiformity. The tensions present in the Cambridge Platonists' commitment to rationalism and grace[53] are resolved by Price by advancing a reduction of religion to morality. What he gains by this move is, however, negated by the difficulties it brings for his Christology: foreshadowing the problems of later Dissenters, he tries to maintain a role for Christ as saviour but struggles to find a satisfactory answer as to what it is that human beings are to be saved from.[54] Price's Unitarianism therefore marks a break with Logos theology and a break with a theology that sees an inseparable link between ethics and the Triune God.

II

The doctrine of becoming like God illustrates one way in which Price's theology exhibits a Platonic influence. This doctrine also, however, underpins his account of human reason and its role within his moral philosophy. 'Intuition' is the term Price uses for the intellect's discernment of the self-evident ideas of moral right and wrong, and it is an active power of reason as it is described as apprehending immediate truth that cannot be discerned through sensation. We may observe individual actions through our senses but what we intuit is right in itself, or rectitude, which is a law.[55] D D Raphael in his introduction to the third edition of the *Review* suggests Price was the first to apply the word 'intuition' to moral judgement[56] and it has been generally accepted that Price was the first philosopher to speak of the intuition of moral truth. This innovation is thought to be a conscious and novel extension of Descartes' concept of

---

53 Gill sees an inherent tension between Whichcote's rationalism and his Christology, 'The religious rationalism of Benjamin Whichcote', 271.

54 A M C Waterman makes this point in relation to Price and Priestley's theories of Church and state in 'The nexus between theology and political doctrine in Church and Dissent' in Knud Haakonssen ed., *Enlightenment and religion: Rational Dissent in eighteenth-century Britain* (Cambridge, 1996), 216.

55 *Review,* 110.

56 *Review*, xix.

intuition to moral epistemology.[57] Price's application of intuition to moral knowledge was not entirely original, however, and the Platonic influence upon his thought suggests that it was not entirely Cartesian.

Reason, for Price, can intuit truth because it participates in God (which enables us to perceive truth) and so for him, like the Cambridge Platonists, reason is the candle of the Lord.[58] For Price, we are capable of perceiving truth by intuition, because the intellect is ultimately derived from God who is the source of all knowledge. In this sense, the eye can see because it resembles that which it sees.[59] The understanding, or reason, participates in truth itself, which enables it to recognize truth when presented with particulars.[60] Henry More, for example, makes this point clearly when he describes the immediate apprehension of certain moral principles, which arise out of the intellect, or nous.[61] More does not use the term 'intuition', but his account of how we know these basic axioms is highly similar to Price's account of intuition. The intellect is described as an image of the divine Logos, in which is found the wisdom of God. The connection of intuition with ethical knowledge makes Price closer here to the Cambridge Platonists than to Descartes. Although his simple ideas do show a close similarity with Descartes' clear and distinct ideas, and although he adopts the criterion of clarity and distinction for truth, the way in which intuition is described and discussed shows a deep influence from the Platonic (and particularly Cambridge Platonist) tradition.[62]

---

57 A S Cua, *Reason and virtue: a study in the ethics of Richard Price* (New York, 1966), 78. Raphael also describes Price's notion of intuition as Cartesian in 'Introduction' to Price's *Review,* xix.

58 This phrase, originally from Proverbs, 20:27 is often quoted by the Cambridge Platonists. See for example; Benjamin Whichcote, *Moral and religious aphorisms* (London, 1930), §916, p.102; Smith, *Excellency,* 103. The term is used as a metaphor for the power of the mind, or reason, to apprehend knowledge. David Pailin, 'Reconciling theory and fact' discusses the varied interpretations of the scope of reason but acknowledges that all the Cambridge Platonists had a substantial belief in the power of reason as a religious and ethical guide.

59 *SVS,* 148; *Nature and dignity,* 11; c.f. Plotinus, *Ennead,* I.6.9.

60 *Review,* 20, c.f. Cudworth, *Treatise,* 58.

61 More, *An account of virtue* (London, 1690), 1.4.2.

62 The later Cambridge Platonists were certainly influenced by Descartes but it is doubtful that Whichcote had anything more than a passing acquaintance with his writings: see e.g. Roberts, *From Puritanism to Platonism in seventeenth century England,* 38.

It is upon a largely Cambridge Platonist view of reason that Price's distinction, made throughout the *Review*, between reason and reasoning is based. Reasoning is mere deduction and is passive and self-contained. Reason, or intuition, however, involves partaking in the divine nature and seeing by divine light:

> 'Truth is the proper object of mind, as light is of the eye .... Truth and science are of infinite extent; and it is not conceivable that the understanding can be indifferent to them…or that, with the prospect before it of unbounded scope for improvement and endless acquisitions, it should be capable of being equally contented with error, darkness, and ignorance.'[63]

Price was not, therefore, introducing an entirely new concept when he spoke of the intuition of moral truth. Given the use of the notion of intuition in the Eighteenth century, and given the influence upon him of the Platonic tradition, it is not surprising that he appealed to the idea of the intuition of moral knowledge, as it was in many ways a development of the Christian idea that there is an intelligible natural law that we can perceive through reason.

Stephen Darwall draws attention to a possible change in emphasis in the ethics of Cudworth away from a Platonism towards a more practical conception of reason. Clarke, Price and Balguy, he suggests, are internalist in the sense that they assert a connection between morality and motive but they do not believe that normativity (obligation) is itself to be understood as internal to the rational will. They affirm instead the ancient Platonic doctrine that it is of the nature of the ethical that it cannot be known or perceived with indifference. What makes a moral claim true cannot, therefore, be anything to do with motivation or the will. Reason, for the rational intuitionists, is a purely theoretical faculty that registers a metaphysically independent (normative) order. Cudworth, Darwall suggests, moves away from this Platonic position towards a more Kantian belief that the truth of any ethical proposition depends on the practicality of pure reason.[64]

---

63 *Review,* 73.

64 Stephen Darwall, *The British moralists and the internal 'ought' 1640-1740* (Cambridge, 1995), 111.

Darwall is right that Cudworth is not as overtly Platonic as the Eighteenth century rationalists here. He definitely envisages universal natures (including moral ones) as modifications of mind (more accurately of God's mind, from which all created minds are derived) and Cudworth's ethical idealism is fairly explicit.[65] Whether this makes his a practical idealism, distinct from Price at least, is harder to discern. Cudworth does deny that there is an independent normative order that is somehow disclosed to mind; it is part of intellectual nature if an action is morally right or wrong. According to Cudworth, '[I]f the Rational or Intellectual Nature in its self were indetermined and Unobliged to any thing, and so destitute of all Morality, it were not possible that any thing should be made Morally Good or Evil, obligatory or unlawful'.[66] When Darwall quotes from Cudworth to show his distinction from the Platonic tradition, however, is when he sounds most similar to Whichcote, for whom obligations are grounded in intellectual nature:

> [Obligations] are grounded in that capacity that man is made unto, being a rational creature, being made intelligent and voluntary; these are rooted in the intellectual nature; so that 'tis as impossible for the intellectual nature to be without the principles and grounds of these, as it is impossible for the water to be without its natural quality that belongs to it.[67]

Although Cudworth denies that the apprehension of morality is read off intellectual forms, or written on the soul as on a book (because it is an inward and vital principle), he still insists that it is not will but nature that grounds moral obligation.[68] At times, Price comes close to Cudworth's ethical idealism. The connection between God's mind, as the ground of intellectual nature, ensures that nothing would be obligatory without the existence of rational nature because of the fundamental reality of mind over matter and the kinship between human reason and divine intellect. Price sometimes appears to adopt a more practical account of reason; the

---

65 Darwall gives the examples from Cudworth's *Treatise* of I.ii.6; IV.vi.4; and.IV.vi.13.

66 Cudworth, *Treatise*, 22.

67 Whichcote, *Works*, II, 59.

68 Cudworth, *Treatise*, IV.vi.4, quoted in Darwall, *British moralists*, 127; Cudworth, *Treatise*, 22.

perception of our minds proves what the supreme reason will do;[69] as for Cudworth, God is the first 'Rule and Exemplar of Morality'.[70] At other times, however, he follows a philosophy closer to Clarke's account of obligation in terms of a more theoretical judgement of reason. The strong influence of Cudworth's Treatise along with Clarke's moral philosophy therefore results in some considerable tension in his position.

Leaving aside any debate as to the worth of contemporary deontological intuitionism, it is certainly inaccurate to suggest, as MacIntyre does, that for Price the meaning of duty and obligation is immediately obvious to any rational being in the sense of 'self-evident' to all as it might be for Twentieth century intuitionism.[71] Price describes the mind as able to intuit simple ideas that are self-evident, because these ideas cannot be inferred or deduced from other beliefs: the same is true of our basic moral ideas. Our perceptions of right and wrong must be immediate because they cannot be analysed and cannot be deduced or inferred from a prior principle. This, he believes, is shown by the fact one can always ask whether that ethical principle is right:

> There are, undoubtedly, some actions that are ultimately approved, and for justifying which no reason can be assigned; as there are some ends, which are ultimately desired, and for choosing which no reason can be given.[72]

This is the notion of right and wrong as 'simple' or prior that grounds the notion of self-evidence and immediacy. He is attempting to show here that we do not derive the meaning of 'good' from any other concept, and in this way, it is basic or simple. Immediacy does not mean obviousness, but ensures that immediate truths are not derived from other ideas in the mind.[73] We cannot explain virtue by saying that it is 'conformity to the relations of persons and things', because one can always ask whether it is right to conform ourselves to the relations of persons and things. If this question is asked, 'we shall find ourselves obliged to terminate our views

---

69 *Review,* 83.

70 *Treatise,* IV.vi.13, quoted in Darwall, *British moralists,* 127.

71 Alasdair MacIntyre, *A short history of ethics: A history of moral philosophy from the Homeric age to the twentieth century* (London, 1967; repr. 1984), 176.

72 *Review,* 41.

73 *Review,* 112.

in a simple perception, and something ultimately approved for which no justifying reason can be assigned.'[74] The existence of objective rightness is something that we have to postulate in order to make sense of our experiences, and in this way, right and wrong are ideas that force themselves upon us because they 'in some form or other, always remain, even when we think we have annihilated them.'[75] The Good, therefore, remains behind all our experiences of particular goods and moral ideas are self-evident, not because they are discerned through reasoning, but because such simple ideas make reasoning possible.[76] Self-evidence does not call to mind the acknowledgment of obvious statements but points to the active power of the mind.[77]

The value of Price's intuitionism is that morality is not seen as a matter of simply applying algorithmic laws but it is rather a quality of insight and perception grounded very much in a commitment to idealism and to a religious world-view. Intuition is not a strange ghostly function of the mind, nor is it used as a last ditch Enlightenment attempt to ground morality following an eighteenth- century rejection of Aristotelianism and Christian teleology.[78] Price used the notion of intuition, not because he saw it as his only weapon against the attack of David Hume and Francis Hutcheson, but because it was a natural development of the tradition by which he was so influenced. This safeguards the importance of theology for Price's position: the light of reason, for the Cambridge Platonists and for Price is not self-authenticating[79] because reason involves participation in God and it is God who ultimately gives reason its authority. Price, like the Cambridge Platonists, has no wish to replace God with rationality, but to reaffirm the dependence of rationality on God. For Price, reason is only a source of knowledge because it originally comes from God, and reason partakes in truth because God is truth. All knowledge (including that of science, religion, or morality) is, in this way, a form of revelation.

---

74 *Review,* 127.

75 *Review,* 112.

76 *Review,* 98.

77 More, *An antidote against atheism* (London, 1655), 20; Cudworth, *Treatise,* 78. This idea is also expressed by Plotinus in *Enneads*, V.5. See also Dominic Scott, 'Platonic recollection and Cambridge Platonism', *Hermathena,* 149 (1990), 73-97.

78 MacIntyre, *After virtue,* 236.

79 H R McAdoo, *The spirit of Anglicanism: a survey of Anglican theological method in the seventeenth century* (London, 1965), 85.

While Priestley laid the blame for the corruption of Christianity at the door of the Platonists, Price believes the key for saving Christianity from Calvinist voluntarism and relativism lies at the heart of what he saw as the Platonic message.

III

It is within this context of participation in the divine and transformation of character that the real meaning of religion is to be found. For Price, as for Cudworth and the other Cambridge Platonists, the truths of theology and philosophy are a guide for the ethical life.[80] The inseparability of philosophy and ethics is clear, with the result being a raised concern for the ethical over the doctrinal, which marks a general post-Reformation trend in English moral philosophy in its distinction between morality and religion.[81] For both Price and the Cambridge Platonists, when it came to religious belief, the ethical interpretation of 'becoming like God' generally led to a prioritizing of the ethical at the expense of the doctrinal. Beliefs, doctrines, and the finer points of speculative theology were made secondary to the living of a good life in keeping with reason making it unsurprising that the distinction between the Cambridge Platonists and the latitudinarians was indistinct. Even less surprising is that Price saw in them an outlook so close to his own. In matters of religion, Price calls merely for an honest mind: one that has sought knowledge with integrity and sought the good. In the face of divergent doctrines of God, '…there is but one thing fundamental, and that is, an honest mind.'[82] No one echoes this sentiment more than Cudworth in his appeal to the House of Commons: 'Surely, the way to heaven that Christ hath taught us, is plain and easie, if we have but honest hearts … no man shall ever be kept out of heaven, for not comprehending mysteries that were beyond the reach of his shallow understanding; if he had but an honest and good heart'.[83]

---

80 Powick, *Cambridge Platonists,* 118.

81 Aharon Lichtenstein, *Henry More: the rational theology of a Cambridge Platonist* (Cambridge, Mass., 1962) discusses this in relation to the Cambridge Platonists, see especially Chapter Four. See also Isobel Rivers, *Reason, grace and sentiment* for an overview of the changing relationship between religion and morality in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

82 *Sermons on the Christian doctrine,* 25.

83 Cudworth, *Sermon,* 11.

Despite the importance of Logos theology for Cudworth, Price would easily have seen in Cudworth a forerunner of his own position.

Cambridge Platonism therefore sits easily with Price's conviction that religion is not fundamentally comprised of following doctrines or creeds, and one can trace here the origins of the dissenting call for toleration and the primacy of conscience. It was popular for the nonconformists even in the Seventeenth century to appeal to a supposed divine element of human reason to justify the following of conscience[84] but it is probable that the arguments used arose from the Platonic commitment to the place and nature of reason found within the Cambridge school.[85] Cudworth and More's theology should therefore be regarded as laying the ground for Price's Arianism; an Arianism that is a natural offshoot of an emphasis on the ethical and rational.

The relationship between Trinitarianism and Platonism was uneasy during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as indeed it has been since the time of Origen and Arius himself.[86] Priestley felt the import of the Platonic Trinity was responsible for some of the worst corruptions of Christianity[87] whereas Cudworth saw himself as recovering a genuine Platonism from the Platonists who had corrupted it by their subordinationist interpretation of the Platonic hypostases.[88] Cudworth,

---

84 See Richard Ashcraft, 'Latitudinarianism and toleration' in Richard Kroll, Richard Ashcraft and Perez Zagorin eds., *Philosophy, science and religion in England, 1640-1700* (Cambridge, 1992).

85 G A J Rogers, 'The other-worldly philosophers and the real world: The Cambridge Platonists, theology and politics', in Rogers, Vienne and Zarka eds., *The Cambridge Platonists in philosophical context*, 3-16.

86 Arius himself appealed to a tradition which included the Platonic thought Clement of Alexandria, Justin Martyr and Origen. See Maurice Wiles, *Archetypal heresy: Arianism through the centuries* (Oxford, 1996), 16. Sarah Hutton draws attention to the ambiguous relationship between Christianity and Platonism in 'Platonism and the Trinity: Anne Conway, Henry More and Christoph Sand', in Martin Mulsow and Jan Rohls eds., *Socinianism and Arminianism: Antitrinitarians, Calvinists and cultural exchange in seventeent-century Europe* (Leiden, 2005), 209-24.

87 John Towill Rutt ed., *The theological and miscellaneous works of Joseph Priestley, LL.D. F.R.S. &c.* (25 Vols., London, 1817-32), VI, 200; c.f. VI, 152 and V, 19.

88 Cudworth, *The true intellectual system of the universe* (4 Vols. London, 1678), I, 581. See Hutton 'Platonism and the Trinity: Anne Conway, Henry More and Christoph Sand', in Mulsow and Rohls eds., *Socinianism and Arminianism*, 209-24, for more discussion of More and Conway's disagreement over the Trinity and for more about the relationship between Platonism and Christianity. For a discussion of Cudworth's

however, walks an uneasy path between Trinitarian orthodoxy and heterodoxy largely due to his adoption of a Platonic Trinity. By its nature it sees the divisions of the Godhead as gradations, open to interpretation as subordination.[89] His contemporary Theophilus Gale saw Platonism as leading directly to Arianism,[90] while the Unitarian Stephen Nye suggested one might call Cudworth's Trinitarianism either 'Mollis Arianismus' or Moderate Arianism.[91] Joshua Toulmin reports that the True Intellectual System followed the Platonists in accounting for the doctrine of the Trinity and that it represented the Son and Spirit as in every way inferior to the Father.[92] The orthodox puritans too had a tendency to see the Cambridge Platonists as being in league with the Socinians and Arminians 'in their plea for the liberty of prophesying, their emphasis on purely scriptural formulations of doctrine, their insistence upon the rightful function of reason in religion.'[93] Despite, therefore, Cudworth's rejection of the Arian God as jumbled and confused,[94] and despite receiving condemnation for being a Tritheist by others,[95] there is good evidence to endorse the claim that the Arian controversy was in some measure prepared by the Cambridge Platonists[96] making explicit another reason why Price found their theology so agreeable. Although he was familiar with his work, Price does not associate Cudworth with a Trinitarian position, treating Trinitarianism as Calvinism or voluntarism (denounced

---

Trinitarianism, see Douglas Hedley, '"Persons of substance and the Cambridge Platonist connection": Some roots and ramifications of the Trinitarian controversy in Seventeenth century England', in Mulsow and Rohls eds., *Socinianism and Arminianism*, 225-40.

89 See e.g. Maurice Wiles, *Archetypal heresy,* 64, c.f. Cudworth, *True intellectual system*, I, 546-632.

90 *Court of Gentiles*, Part III 'The vanity of pagan philosophy demonstrated' (London, 1677), 140.

91 See Maurice Wiles, *Archetypal heresy,* 65-66.

92 Joshua Toulmin, *An historical view of the state of the Protestant Dissenters in England and of the progress of free enquiry and religious liberty from the Revolution to the accession of Queen Anne* (London, 1814), 175.

93 H John McLachlan *Socinianism in seventeenth century England* (Oxford, 1951), 101.

94 Cudworth, *True intellectual system*, 579.

95 John Tulloch, *Rational theology and Christian philosophy in England in the seventeenth century* (2 vols., London, 1872), II, 273.

96 E M Wilbur, *A history of Unitarianism in Transylvania, England and America* (Cambridge, Mass., 1952), 237.

by the Cambridge Platonists) and seeing no distinction between the two.[97] Whether Cudworth should be interpreted as Arian or not, there can be little doubt that Price must have seen himself as inheriting Cudworth's theological legacy.

Just as the Cambridge Platonists rejected the extremes of ratiocination and 'enthusiasm', Arianism, for Price, was a middle way between Athanasianism and Socinianism: this, for him, was the true Unitarianism: he had, he claimed, a better right to the title than the Socinians.[98] His reasons for rejecting the 'extremes' of Calvinism and Socinianism are interesting because he gives due importance to both reason and scripture, and, at times, grants far more weight to Scripture.[99] Calvinism is rejected because of his ethical slant: only those doctrines universally received are important. His reasons for rejecting Socinianism reveal more about his philosophical position: one might think that with such a strong commitment to reason, Price would embrace Socinianism. He resists, however, the prioritising of human reason and allows for a far more advanced theology of nature than Socinianism would permit. His reasons are twofold: Socinianism leads to Deism and it is infused with scepticism about the Bible.

Price calls for orthodoxy to defend the doctrines of atonement and the pre-existence of Christ against Priestley and Socinianism because such doctrines are clearly laid down in the Scriptures.[100] He refuses on this occasion to argue on rational grounds because this would concede the argument. This means that although Socinianism is rational, it is still to be rejected because scripture is prior to reason. Although both Scripture and reason are two sources of knowledge, Price still retains the theological insistence that reason cannot judge Scripture:

> We mean not to object to the use of Reason in religion. On the contrary we have pleaded for it. But we apprehend the chief province of Reason, in regard to the peculiar doctrines of Revelation is, to examine that Revelation, and ascertain

97 *Sermons on Christian doctrine*, 44.
98 *Sermons on Christian doctrine*, 143.
99 *Sermons on Christian doctrine*, 50.
100 *Thoughts on the progress of Socinianism with an enquiry into the course and the cure with a particular view to the writings of Dr. Priestley* (London, 1787), 3.

> what it teaches. What we object to is, first to determine from Reason what is truth, and then explain the scripture by it, and make it to speak the same language.[101]

Despite a strong commitment to human reason, and despite using rational arguments to make theological points himself, Price's position must, therefore, be distinguished from the more Socinian approach to natural theology, including that developed by Locke, Priestley and Paley. Whether Locke was a Socinian himself is a subject for debate[102] but there can be little doubt that he was significantly influential in fashioning the empirical nature of Socinianism through his arguments for God's existence based on miracles. By attempting to prove the validity of Scripture and to promote an entirely 'reasonable' Christianity, Locke helped to define a Socinianism that was characterized by a belief in a purely rational (and largely ethical) religion and the inerrancy of Scripture. Locke's philosophy of religion went on to shape eighteenth century rationalism, epitomized by the natural theology of Paley.[103] The legacy of Locke's rational religion was inherited by Unitarianism in the eighteenth century, an inheritance that Priestley actively embraces in his tendency towards materialism, evidences for Christianity and Scriptural literalism, thus confirming Lockean empiricism as the predecessor of Priestley's Unitarianism[104] and of the more extreme rationalism that Unitarianism developed into.[105]

By consciously adopting Platonic epistemological and theological arguments and using them to consolidate his position against Priestley, Socinianism and ratiocination, Price shows that although in many ways he advances a philosophy of reason, he is also part of a trend away from extreme rationalism. He would reject John Toland's insistence that there is nothing in Christianity 'above' reason.[106] Reason is not the only

---

101 *Progress of Socinianism,* 18n.

102 See e.g. Wiles, *Archetypal heresy,* 74-5.

103 Leslie Stephen *History of English thought* (2 Vols., London, 1876), I, 426.

104 B W Young, *Religion and enlightenment in eighteenth century England: theological debate from Locke to Burke* (Oxford, 1998) makes a clear case for the association of ancient Unitarianism with modern Socinianism.

105 Young calls Unitarianism the extreme end of England's Enlightenment: *Religion and enlightenment,* 217.

106 John Toland, *Christianity not mysterious* (London 1696; repr. New York, 1978), 6.

foundation of certitude for Price: the pre-existence of Christ, for example, is known from Scripture, not from reason.[107] Although Price never explicitly explores the more mystical Platonic inward path to knowledge of God, and this distinguishes him in part from the Plotinian elements of the Cambridge school, natural theology is never divorced from revelation.[108] Revelation through Scripture is fundamental regardless of its rational coherence. If Priestley's Unitarianism can be regarded as an heir of Locke's supposed Socinianism, then Richard Price should be regarded as the dissenting heir of the Cambridge Platonist tradition. Where Scripture offers no guidance on doctrinal matters, however, all that matters is living according to an honest mind. Price therefore keeps his Platonism away from Trinitarianism and, by shifting the emphasis even further onto toleration, he grants the finer (and, as he sees it, unimportant) questions of Christology little discussion or argument. This lack of argument indicates why Arianism faltered during the Eighteenth century. Between Horsley's Trinitarianism and Priestley's Socinianism, the middle ground was squeezed and despite his insistence that Arianism was the doctrinally correct position, Price's extreme toleration resulted in a lack of a philosophical defence of this position. It is no surprise, therefore, that Arianism lost considerable support.[109]

IV

The doctrines and dogmas associated with religious belief may not have been thought a necessary part of the moral life for Price or the Cambridge Platonists because the most important thing they envisaged for the moral life was the honest heart, or conscience.[110] However, this examination of Price has made clear how fundamentally important religion is for his moral philosophy. Religious belief is not a superfluous addition to morality and does not merely have motivational value. Although the seeds

---

[107] *Sermons on Christian doctrine*, 131.

[108] For more on Platonic theology of nature see A E Taylor, *Platonism and its influence* (London, 1925), 49.

[109] This goes some way towards filling in Wiles' account of the controversy in *Archetypal heresy*, 156.

[110] Price uses the term 'honest heart' in *SVS*, 154; Edward Fowler, who wrote an apologia for the Cambridge Platonists uses the term in the same way in, *Principles and practices* (2nd edn., London, 1671) quoted in Lichtenstein, *Henry More*, 158.

of the distinction between religion and ethics are present in Price's belief that good ethical behaviour is not dependent on following religious doctrine, and that all human beings share the reason essential for the perception of moral truth, theological belief is clearly essential for Price's moral philosophy. The Enlightenment did not form a unified project of the neglect of character, an obsession with undeniable moral rules and the supremacy of human reason. The concepts of intuition, self-evidence and reason in Price are not the result of a sudden rupture of thought, nor are they entirely novel philosophical concepts but they take their place in a developing Christian rationalist tradition and a distinctly Platonic one at that.

Louise Hickman
Newman University College

ASPECTS OF A POLYMATH: UNVEILING J T RUTT'S EDITION OF JOSEPH PRIESTLEY'S LETTERS TO THEOPHILUS LINDSEY*

Simon Mills

Introduction

In 2007 the Dr Williams's Centre for Dissenting Studies, a collaborative project between Dr Williams's Library and Queen Mary, University of London, launched its first publication: an electronic edition, with an introduction and editorial apparatus, of the letters of Joseph Priestley to the Unitarian minister Theophilus Lindsey (1723-1808) written between 1769 and 1794.[1] Priestley's letters to Lindsey offer a valuable insight into the most productive period of his life and work and shed much light on the development of Rational Dissent during the second half of the eighteenth century. During the period covered by the letters Priestley worked as a Dissenting minister at Leeds, Librarian to the Earl of Shelburne at Calne, and a minister and leading advocate of the emerging Unitarian movement at Birmingham. Lindsey seceded from the Church of England and founded the first avowedly Unitarian chapel at Essex Street in London. The letters contain a mass of information on the composition, printing, and distribution of Priestley's works in church history, theology, and politics, and describe in detail the controversies he engaged in with major political and ecclesiastical figures, including

* The following essay originated in a paper presented at 'Tomb or Treasure? new archival explorations', a conference held at the Centre for Editing Lives and Letters, Queen Mary, University of London on 4 July 2007. The editorial work on Priestley's letters was undertaken with the assistance of an AHRC collaborative doctoral award and a bursary from Dr Williams's Library. For their valuable advice and assistance I would like to thank Dr David Wykes, Professor Isabel Rivers, Professor Grayson Ditchfield, and all of the staff at Dr Williams's Library. Permission to quote from Joseph Priestley's letters contained in MS 12.12 has been kindly granted by the Trustees of Dr Williams's Library. Permission to quote from MS 654 has been kindly granted by the Royal Society.

1 See Simon Mills ed., 'The letters of Joseph Priestley to Theophilus Lindsey, 1769-1794', at: http://www.english.qmul.ac.uk/drwilliams/pubs/ contents.html. All further references to the letters will be to this online edition. A full account of the editorial and transcription procedures followed can be found on the website.

Edmund Burke, Samuel Horsley, and William Blackstone. Priestley's accounts of the Dissenters' three unsuccessful applications to Parliament for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts offer a glimpse of the political life of the period. Set against the turbulent political climate of the years leading up to the French Revolution, the letters contain a record of the increasing hostility towards Dissenters and political radicals in England resulting in the Birmingham riots of July 1791 and Priestley's eventual decision to emigrate to America in 1794. Whereas Priestley's letters written after this date provide much information on his family life and later works, it is the letters written prior to his departure that best illustrate the early growth of the Unitarian movement. The insight the letters provide into the relationship between Priestley and Lindsey illuminates an intellectual companionship which was largely the catalyst for the formation of Unitarianism as a distinct movement within Rational Dissent.[2]

Priestley's letters of this period have long been available to scholars in a nineteenth-century edition compiled by the prominent Unitarian John Towill Rutt (1760-1841). The letters to Lindsey were printed, along with Priestley's memoirs, in the first of the twenty-five volumes of Rutt's *The theological and miscellaneous works of Joseph Priestley*, published between 1817 and 1832.[3] However Rutt's edition was incomplete and those letters that were published were often heavily edited. The electronic version of Priestley's letters thus provides the first complete transcription of Priestley's letters to Lindsey. The new edition consists of an annotated transcription of all of the 116 letters from Priestley to Lindsey that are known to have survived written between 1769 and 1794. This includes six complete letters not currently available in print as well as over 15,000 words of text omitted from the letters that were printed in Rutt's nineteenth-century edition.

---

2 On Priestley's relationship with Lindsey see G M Ditchfield, '"The preceptor of nations": Joseph Priestley and Theophilus Lindsey', *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society*, vol. 23, pt. 2 (2004), 495-512.

3 John Towill Rutt ed., *The theological and miscellaneous works of Joseph Priestley, LL.D. F.R.S. &c.* (25 vols., Bristol, 2003; first edn. London, 1817-1832) (hereafter referred to as Rutt). Three of the letters to Lindsey contained in Rutt's edition (30 July 1770, 23 Dec. 1770, 2 Oct. 1801) have been reprinted in Robert E Schofield ed., *Joseph Priestley, a scientific autobiography of Joseph Priestley, 1733-1804: selected scientific correspondence* (Cambridge Mass., 1966).

This previously unpublished material offers many new insights into the lives and careers of Priestley, Lindsey and their circle. In the course of this article I shall attempt to do two things. Firstly, following a brief account of the manuscripts of Priestley's letters and their history, I shall analyse the agenda informing Rutt's editorial practice. I shall argue that Rutt's edition of Priestley's letters is an attempt to fashion a certain image of Priestley reflecting Rutt's own concerns as a Unitarian publicist, and that it exemplifies the values embedded in the editorial practices of the early nineteenth century. Secondly, I shall sketch an overview of the extracts omitted from Rutt's edition, and suggest some areas of research which the availability of these sources will open up to those interested in Priestley, Lindsey, and late eighteenth-century Rational Dissent. In this way I shall begin to answer two questions: firstly, why Rutt might have chosen to exclude certain sections of the letters; and secondly, how the new edition of the letters modifies our understanding of Priestley's and Lindsey's relationship and of the early development of British Unitarianism.

The Letters

The vast majority of Priestley's extant letters to Lindsey are now held at Dr Williams's Library in London.[4] The two volumes of Priestley's letters held at Dr Williams's span a period of over thirty years, from the late 1760s to shortly before Priestley's death in 1804. This collection was the

[4] The bulk of the collection of Priestley's letters at Dr Williams's Library is contained in MS 12.12 and MS 12.13. MS 12.12 contains 113 letters written from Leeds, Birmingham and London between 1769 and 1794. MS 12.13 contains 90 letters written from New York, Philadelphia and Northumberland between 1794 and 1803. As well as the letters to Lindsey the collection contains a number of letters to Thomas Belsham, Caleb Rotheram, and William Smith. The letters were donated to the library by Benjamin Mardon, who had acquired them from Rutt's widow, in 1857. According to a catalogue of Priestley's correspondence compiled by Priestley's biographer, Professor Robert E Schofield, there are only three letters from Priestley to Lindsey not in the Dr Williams's collection: two now held at the library of the Royal Society, and one now held at the Birmingham Reference Library. See Robert E Schofield, *A preliminary check-list of manuscripts, letters, &c. to, from, and by Dr. Joseph Priestley, LL.D. F.R.S., &c.* (2001), an unpublished manuscript held at Dr Williams's Library. David Wykes has estimated that Dr Williams's Library holds around two fifths of all of Priestley's surviving letters, see Isabel Rivers and David L Wykes ed., *Joseph Priestley, scientist, philosopher, and theologian* (Oxford, 2008), 16.

principal source used by Rutt in the compilation of his edition. The letters were made available to Rutt by Thomas Gibson, executor to the Unitarian minister Thomas Belsham.[5] Lindsey's replies to Priestley have not survived. Most of the letters that Priestley received prior to 1791 most likely perished during the Birmingham riots; letters received after the riots were most likely destroyed intentionally by Priestley himself. According to the testimony of Priestley's son, Joseph Priestley Jr., Priestley destroyed all of the letters he had received from Belsham and Lindsey to the end of the year 1802.[6] There is also evidence in Priestley's letters that he disposed of some of Lindsey's letters immediately after reading them.[7] However from Lindsey's extensive surviving letters to others in his and Priestley's circle, including the Dissenting layman William Tayleur and the Dissenting minister William Turner, it is possible to piece together some of the missing details of Priestley's and Lindsey's correspondence.[8]

It is difficult to know for certain what proportion of the letters written by Priestley to Lindsey have survived. The collection at Dr Williams's contains almost monthly letters between late 1769 and 1772. Excepting one letter of 1775, there is a near twelve-year break between 1772 and 1786. The correspondence resumes with monthly letters for 1786 and 1787 and increases over the next three years, containing 22 letters for 1789 and 33 for 1790. There is some evidence in the early letters up to 1772 that the surviving collection reflects fairly accurately the actual number of letters written from Priestley to Lindsey during this period. The references to Priestley's works that accompanied the letters and Lindsey's comments on them seem to indicate an unbroken correspondence. That the correspondence was relatively infrequent at this point is confirmed by Priestley's occasional opening apologies, as, for example, in a letter of May 1770 where he writes that 'I blame myself for letting our correspondence sleep so long'.[9] The correspondence was

5 Rutt, I, v-vi.

6 Joseph Priestley Jr. to John Towill Rutt, 16 Dec. 1831, DWL MS 12.58 (61).

7 See, for example, 19 Dec. 1789 where Priestley writes that 'I have just turned to your former letter, which I happen not to have destroyed'. See also Rutt, I, ii, iv.

8 For Lindsey's letters of the period 1747 to 1788 see G M Ditchfield ed., *The letters of Theophilus Lindsey (1723-1808), volume I: 1747-1788* (Woodbridge, 2007).

9 30 May 1770.

sporadic in its early stages due to Lindsey's involvement in political affairs and frequent visits to London. In October of 1771 Lindsey wrote to William Turner requesting him to apologise to Priestley for his late silence, citing 'a multiplicity of business and engagements' as his excuse for neglecting to answer a letter he had received from Priestley over a fortnight previously.[10]

The long gap in the correspondence between 1773 and 1786 is more difficult to explain. It is possible that Priestley wrote much less to Lindsey during this period. During the years he spent at Calne in the employment of the Earl of Shelburne Priestley worked largely on scientific and philosophical subjects rather than theological ones. He was able to spend his winters in London, where he would have had the opportunity to spend time with Lindsey. In January of 1775 Lindsey wrote to William Turner that 'We see D^{r} Priestley very often'; in December of the same year he informed Turner that Priestley 'calls upon us not seldom'.[11] However, the situation had evidently changed by the end of the 1770s. Lindsey wrote to Turner on 14 May 1778 that 'It is a great loss to us, that D^{r}. Priestley is so little in London; tho he repairs it a little by writing tolerably often'.[12] Thus, it is clear that some correspondence from this period has since been lost. Rutt's edition contains four letters from this period no longer extant.[13] Furthermore, Lindsey's letters from the period 1773 to 1788 contain references to at least fifteen letters from Priestley, some of which Lindsey transcribed extracts from, which were not printed in Rutt's edition and the manuscripts of which do not appear to have survived.

The Editor and his Agenda

Rutt's achievement in transcribing and annotating such an extensive, if not complete, body of letters has been evinced by the endurance of his work as the standard edition of Priestley's correspondence. Since its first publication in the early nineteenth century the whole of the *Theological and miscellaneous works* has been reissued twice: by Kraus in 1972, and again by Thoemmes Press in 2002. Scholars of Priestley and his circle still find Rutt's edition of the letters a valuable resource. This is

10 Ditchfield ed., *Letters of Lindsey*, 116.
11 Ditchfield ed., *Letters of Lindsey*, 205; 220.
12 Ditchfield ed., *Letters of Lindsey*, 257.
13 Rutt's edition contains two letters from 1774, one from 1776 and one from 1777.

understandable considering its many advantages: Rutt knew Priestley personally; his editorial notes embed Priestley's own letters within a textual framework of personal reminiscences, quotations from contemporary periodicals, and extracts from the correspondence of others in Priestley's and Lindsey's circle. These notes remain immensely valuable as the work of an editor immersed in the same intellectual world as his subject and acquainted with many of the figures referred to in the letters. Furthermore, the work is now the only source for a number of Priestley's letters, the originals of which have since been lost.[14]

However, the edition also has some major shortcomings. Although not inconsistent with the editorial practices of its time, Rutt's transcription falls short of the standards expected by modern scholarship. Despite being generally accurate, the original spelling and punctuation are altered in Rutt's text and contractions and occasional errors are amended without indication. Although these are, for the most part, largely insignificant there are a number of interesting emendations. In most cases Rutt almost certainly thought of himself as correcting errors on Priestley's behalf, yet it is tempting to wonder whether Priestley's occasional slips reveal anything of deeper significance. Priestley's comment that Lindsey's father-in-law, Archdeacon Francis Blackburne, is 'too ungenerous' to make any unfriendly use of the letters of two Roman Catholics which Priestley had sent to Lindsey, is silently altered to 'too generous' in Rutt's edition.[15] In a similar vein, Rutt inserts a convenient negative to Priestley's opening declaration that 'I do not desire to be informed of the reason of your late silence, as I doubt it was a very good one' from a letter to Lindsey of March 1772.[16] More significantly, sentences and whole paragraphs are frequently omitted, two separate sentences of the manuscript often being run together and partly rewritten in Rutt's edition

[14] Rutt's edition contains 26 letters from Priestley to Lindsey, prior to his departure to America, not held at Dr Williams's Library. One of these is now in the Birmingham Reference Library, the others may not have survived.

[15] 18 Dec. 1769, Rutt, I, i, 104-106. On the manuscript letter there are pencilled bracket around the 'un' in Rutt's hand. Many of the excisions in the letters have been marked by Rutt in this way, with extracts missing from his edition crossed out on the manuscript.

[16] Rutt's edition reads 'I do not desire to be informed of the reason of your late silence, as I doubt not it was a very good one', Rutt, I, i, 159-61.

to preserve a readable text. On one occasion Rutt attaches a passage from a letter, otherwise omitted from his edition, as a postscript to a letter written four days earlier.[17]

Rutt's editorial work ought to be understood in the context of his own role in the emerging Unitarian movement. Rutt was an inheritor of the political and theological traditions of Unitarianism partly inaugurated by Priestley.[18] As a young man Rutt had supported the American and French Revolutions; in 1780 he joined the Society for Constitutional Information and was afterwards a founder member of the Society of the Friends of the People. He was sympathetic to and active in assisting the Scottish political reformers Thomas Muir, Thomas Fyshe Palmer, and William Skirving, who had been sentenced to transportation for sedition in 1793. He also assisted Priestley in the wake of the Birmingham riots of 1791. In his religious opinions Rutt followed a similar trajectory to Priestley, moving away from the Calvinism he had inherited from his parents to a mature Unitarian position. He was strongly influenced by Priestley and Thomas Belsham in the development of his religious outlook. By 1796 he was a leading member of the Gravel-Pit congregation at Hackney (where at that time Belsham was minister) where he took an active role in conferences on religious questions held in the vestry. He went on to become a major contributor to Unitarian periodicals of the early nineteenth century: he assisted in the founding of the *Monthly Repository*, for which he occasionally served as editor, and was a regular contributor to the *Christian Reformer*. In addition to Priestley's works he edited a *Collection of prayers, psalms, and hymns* for Unitarian worship (1802), an enlarged edition of the *Memoirs* of the classical and biblical scholar and Dissenting academy tutor Gilbert Wakefield (1804), and the autobiography of the Presbyterian minister and historian of Dissent Edmund Calamy (1829-1830).

Rutt's opening declaration in the introduction to his edition of Priestley's works of his aim to present his subject as a 'serious, diligent, and persevering investigator of moral and religious truth', and 'an example of active virtue and unobtrusive piety', exemplifies his attempt to leave a monument to his intellectual hero that would counteract the

[17] See 26 Jan. 1790, the fourth paragraph of which is printed in Rutt, I, ii, 51 as a postscript to a letter of 22 Jan. 1790.

[18] On Rutt see *Memorials of the late John Towill Rutt* (Bristol, 1845).

many critical assessments of Priestley's life and work produced in the wake of the riots of 1791 and in the relatively conservative political and religious climate of late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century England.[19] In this sense, there was undoubtedly an element of hagiography informing some of Rutt's editorial decisions. This impulse most likely informed Rutt's decision to edit out from the letters some of Priestley's more critical character assessments. Omitted, for example, is Priestley's censorious opinion of the Roman Catholic Biblical scholar Alexander Geddes: 'he is an ostentatious man, and will do every thing in the most splendid manner'; as is his comment that Gilbert Wakefield has 'too many peculiarities'.[20] Rutt left out Priestley's opinion of the Presbyterian minister and academy tutor at New College, Manchester Thomas Barnes: 'He is an enemy to all free inquiry. I hear the Academy that he is a[t] the head of does not flourish at all'; and his reported assessment of the orientalist and theologian Joseph White: 'I hear to day', wrote Priestley to Lindsey, 'that he is a man so low, and debauched, that he has probably but little sense of shame'.[21]

Many of these editorial decisions were undoubtedly dictated by prudence: some of the younger generation of Priestley's associates would have been living in 1815 when Rutt began his editorial work. William Frend, for example, whose zeal for theological radicalism Priestley considered 'deficient in prudence', lived until 1841, presumably partly explaining Rutt's decision to omit several unflattering references to his work.[22] The Presbyterian minister and tutor in Hebrew and mathematics at New College, Hackney, Abraham Rees, of whom Priestley wrote to Lindsey that the committee at the college 'have hither to, (but without any reason in my opinion) made so much account!', lived until 1825.[23]

There is also a sense that Rutt edited out some material relating to Priestley's less successful endeavours. The letters of 1770 to 1772 chart Priestley's attempt to promote his *Theological Repository* and contain a substantial amount of material relating to the printing and distribution of the work, much of which is left out of Rutt's edition. The *Repository*,

19 Rutt, I, i, 1.
20 29 Jun. 1788; 3 April 1789.
21 3 April 1789; 10 Nov. 1789.
22 29 Jun. 1788.
23 3 April 1789.

founded in 1768 whilst Priestley was at Leeds, was designed as a forum for theological debate, conceived principally as a 'receptacle for small pieces of criticism, and single observations'.[24] The journal, published in six volumes between 1769 and 1788, contained analyses of specific passages of scripture, many of which argued for an Arian or Socinian interpretation of Biblical texts. Most of the essays were written by Rational Dissenters personally connected with Priestley; Priestley himself wrote almost a third of the articles.

As were most of Priestley's theological writings, the *Repository* was highly contentious. Priestley wrote to Lindsey in 1770 that 'At the years end I shall state the account to a few friends but I am advised not to make it public lest our enemies should triumph'.[25] A passage from a letter of 4 February 1771 indicates that Francis Blackburne, whose relationship with Priestley had already been strained by Priestley's advocacy of toleration for Roman Catholicism, blamed Priestley's infamous invitation for contributions from 'persons who disbelieve in Christianity, and Revelation in general' for the *Repository's* low sales.[26] Most of Priestley's early letters contain records of Priestley receiving articles for the journal and soliciting Lindsey and Blackburne for contributions. The letters contain instructions to Lindsey to distribute copies and occasionally include accounts and requests for payment. The last became more frequent as Priestley came under increasing financial pressure to keep the *Repository* afloat. Although the scheme began optimistically, Priestley writing in 1769 that 'The Repository shall live', in less than a year its failing prospects had become evident.[27] In December 1770 Priestley wrote to Lindsey, in a passage omitted from Rutt's edition, that

> I can now inform you that I must dispose of fifty more sets of this volume of the Repository, at the full price of six shillings, before I shall be indemnified for the expenses of attending the publication. For I am a loser rather more than 15£.[28]

---

[24] *The Theological Repository; consisting of original essays, hints, queries, &c. calculated to promote religious knowledge* (2nd edn., London, 1773), vol. 1, ix. On the *Theological Repository* see H McLachlan, *The Unitarian movement in the religious life of England*, i. *its contribution to thought and learning 1700-1900* (London, 1934), 169-171.

[25] 30 Aug. 1770.

[26] 4 Feb. 1771. See Priestley's Introduction, x-xi.

[27] 18 Dec. 1769.

[28] 23 Dec. 1770.

A month later Priestley wrote on a sombre note, in an extract again omitted from Rutt's text, that 'I am sorry to inform you, that I do not find there is any prospect of the sale of this work increasing, and, therefore, that I shall be obliged to shut it up, at least for some time'.[29]

Rutt also appears to have been keen to downplay indications of disagreement between figures in Priestley's and Lindsey's circle. From a letter of 11 June 1787 Rutt edited out an account, later discounted by Lindsey, of an incident related by John Coates, assistant minister at the Old Meeting in Birmingham. Recently returned from a trip to London, Coates had informed Priestley of a comment made by Richard Price, then minister at the Gravel-Pit Meeting Place at Hackney. As Priestley related the incident to Lindsey, Price 'in large company //in// which you and D^{r} Kippis were present, said "he should not be suprised if I should become a deist" and that D^{r} Kippis, as well as yourself, replied to him in my favour'.[30] Indications that William Hawkes, Priestley's associate at Birmingham, disapproved of some of Priestley's theological writings are also omitted. In October 1789, for example, Priestley wrote to Lindsey that,

> Mr Hawkes is exceedingly dissatisfied with my mode of address to Bp Horsley, and earnestly begs of me to reconsider it. He thinks the stile should be what is usual to a Bp; and he //is// also offended at //the// general harshness of my Letters to him.[31]

A week later Priestley wrote again that 'Mr Hawkes was offended with many things that you particularly approved in the Letters; but he is meekness itself'.[32]

Rutt also omitted a number of passages detailing the strained relationship between Gilbert Wakefield and the committee at the New College, Hackney. Wakefield was classical tutor with responsibility for a number of private pupils at Hackney from July 1790, but left the college after just one year largely due to disputes with his colleagues and the committee. Writing in October 1790, Priestley informed Lindsey of a

---

29 27 Feb 1771.
30 11 Jun. 1787.
31 21 Oct. 1789.
32 29 Oct. 1789.

report from his Birmingham friend George Russell, whose nephew Thomas Pougher Russell had been studying under Wakefield, of Wakefield's grievances. According to Russell, Wakefield was 'so dissatisfied with the conduct of the Trustees of the New College', that he was 'determined to leave them', and had accused the trustees of 'throwing away their money on unnecessary buildings, and useless tutors, while the effective men are neglected and unpaid.'[33] Priestley next mentioned the subject a few days later, writing to Lindsey, on a more optimistic note, that 'as neither you nor Mr Belsham say any thing in particular about the state of the academy, I hope it is not so bad as Mr W[akefield] represented, or that what is bad will be set to rights.'[34] Priestley's optimism proved misjudged: Wakefield left the college in July 1790, writing two years later of his decision to 'escape from a crazy and sinking vessel'.[35] In the same month Priestley hinted at further problems among the staff, writing to Lindsey that 'I am much concerned for Mr Belsham, on all accounts, but I do not see what can be done.'[36] A month later Priestley wrote that 'I am glad to find that Mr Belsham does not despair of the College', and referred to the possible appointment of Richard Porson, presumably as a replacement for Wakefield as tutor in classics.[37]

At several points the letters record disputes between Priestley, as a representative of the provincial Dissenters, and the London committee appointed to conduct the application to Parliament for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. The evident resentment which Priestley felt with regards to the committee's conduct may be behind Rutt's decision not to include a letter of 26 January 1790.[38] The London committee,

---

33 27 Oct. 1790. See Gilbert Wakefield, *Memoirs of the life of Gilbert Wakefield* (London, 1792), 368-69, where Wakefield makes similar complaints.

34 2 Nov. 1790.

35 Wakefield, *Memoirs*, 377.

36 2 Jun. 1791.

37 29 Jun. 1791. In 1790 Porson was a fellow at Trinity College, Cambridge. See Geoffrey V Morson, 'Porson, Richard (1759–1808)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (50 vols., Oxford, 2004), online edn. [*ODNB*].

38 The letter is comprised of a long paragraph expressing Priestley's grievances with the London committee and two short paragraphs concerning the distribution and acquisition of books. One paragraph, concerning the distribution of Priestley's works in Oxford is added as a postscript to the preceding letter in the collection (22 Jan.

chaired by Edward Jeffries, met frequently between 1786 and 1790 at Dr Williams's Library, then in Red Cross Street, and at the King's Head Tavern in the Poultry to organise the Dissenters' three applications to the House of Commons to repeal the Test Laws. At a meeting of 6 November 1789, the committee had resolved that the motion for the repeal of the Test Laws be renewed in the Commons at the ensuing session.[39] Priestley evidently felt that the timing of the application was inappropriate, and used the occasion to give vent to his grievances with the London committee:

> I can assure you that many Dissenters in the country are far from being satisfied with the conduct of the London Committee, and the wisdom of their conduct is much arraigned, as well as their assuming to act for the whole body, when they knew that body was ready to act for themselves. Many think the bringing //the// motion forward in the last year of a session to be wrong, as looks like a readiness to take an unfair advantage, whereas we wish to act, and to app[ear] to act, in the most open manner. It is plainly seen that the union of all the Dissenters of all denominations throughout the kingdom, the greatest event that has taken place in their history, and which cannot but have happy effects, is viewed with jealousy and dislike by the London Committee. This// is thought to betray a narrow mind, unworthy of persons intrusted to act for the great body of which they would be the head. I hope that for the future they will be more cautious, and know their place.[40]

The passage illustrates well Priestley's occasional dismay with the

---

1790). Of the six letters omitted by Rutt it is most likely that one, now held at the Royal Society, was not available to him at the time he assembled his edition. Given that the remaining five are now bound with the bulk of the collection at Dr Williams's Library, it is most likely that Rutt did have access to these letters but deliberately chose to exclude them from his edition.

39 Thomas W Davis ed., *Committees for repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts: minutes 1786-90 and 1827-8* (London Record Society, 1978), 22-42, minutes, 1788-90, nos. 61-99; http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=38779.

40 26 Jan. 1790.

conduct of the London committee.[41] Three months later Priestley wrote again that 'this Committee will engross every thing, and take no care of not offending the Country Dissenters'.[42]

Furthermore, a substantial number of the passages omitted from Rutt's edition concern points of disagreement between Priestley and Lindsey. Most of the letters accompanied drafts of the manuscripts of Priestley's theological and political writings, which Priestley had sent to Lindsey for review prior to publication. The letters frequently begin with Priestley thanking Lindsey for his comments and suggestions and confirm Priestley's later recollection that Lindsey had a strong influence over his published writings.[43] Refusing to allow Lindsey to pay for a number of his pamphlets, Priestley wrote in October 1787 that 'When I give you so much trouble about them before publication, so that they are in a great measure your own, it would be hard indeed to pay for them afterwards'.[44] A more sober Lindsey often appears to have tempered Priestley's polemical ire. Priestley was later to record in his memoirs that 'my disposition led to precipitancy, to which their [Lindsey's and Mrs Lindsey's] coolness was a seasonable check'.[45] In fact, Priestley appears at points almost deferential in his acceptance of Lindsey's cautions. Considering the style of address to be used in his letters to the Bishop of St David's, Samuel Horsley, Priestley wrote to Lindsey that 'In this, as in every thing else, I shall be governed by you'.[46] Writing in October 1789, Priestley comments that 'I thank you for your opinion of the things I sent in my last, and shall confor[m] to your advice in every thing'.[47]

However, on occasions Priestley was willing to trust to his own judgment and even to argue his case against Lindsey. Rutt's preference for

---

41 On topic of the country Dissenters' attitude to the London committee see Richard Whitlock Davis, *Dissent in politics, 1780-1830: the political life of William Smith, M.P.* (London, 1971), 47-48.

42 11 Mar. 1790.

43 Priestley wrote in his memoirs that 'I never chose to publish any thing of moment relating to theology without consulting him; and hardly ever ventured to insert any thing that they [Lindsey and Mrs Lindsey] disapproved' (Rutt, I, i, 85-86).

44 28 Oct. 1787.

45 Rutt, I, i, 86.

46 31 Aug. 1789.

47 12 Oct. 1789.

downplaying this aspect of Priestley's and Lindsey's relationship probably explains the omission of a further two whole letters from his edition. The first letter concerns Priestley's letters to Samuel Horsley printed as part of his *Defences of Unitarianism for the years 1788 & 1789* (1790). In the *Defences* Priestley had attempted to counter Horsley's theological arguments by recourse to an attack *ad hominem*. The *Defences* contain a critical assessment of Horsley's edition and notes to works of Isaac Newton and a reproduction of a circular letter sent from Horsley to the clergy of his diocese, advising them not to vote for John George Phillips, MP for Carmarthen, who had voted for going into a committee to consider the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts in the Commons on 8 May 1789.[48] Lindsey had evidently written to Priestley expressing his opinion that the inclusion of Horsley's letter was unjustified. Priestley, however, responded that 'I own I do not myself feel the force of your reasons, especially with respect to the note', and advised Lindsey to seek a second opinion, arguing defensively that 'I see nothing dishonourable //or inconsistent// in my conduct with respect to it.'[49]

The second letter concerns a lecture to commemorate the anniversary of the New College at Hackney, delivered by Priestley to the Meeting House at the Old Jewry in April of 1791. The lecture was later printed as *The proper objects of education in the present state of the world* in the same year. In this polemical tract Priestley strongly criticised the English universities for their anachronistic practice of demanding an 'absolute subscription to complex articles of faith'; condemned the 'unnatural *alliance of church and state*', and referred contentiously to the Reformation's failure to abolish what he referred to as '*the idolatrous worship of Jesus Christ*'.[50] In a letter of February 1791 Priestley informed Lindsey that he had declined the invitation from Andrew Kippis, then a

---

48 See Priestley, *Defences of Unitarianism for the years 1788 & 1789* (Birmingham, 1790), 26-27, 64.

49 19 Dec. 1789.

50 Joseph Priestley, *The proper objects of education in the present state of the world: represented in a discourse, delivered on Wednesday, April 27, 1791, at the meeting-house in the Old-Jewry, London; to the supporters of the New College at Hackney* (London, 1791), 16, 22, 35.

tutor at Hackney, to preach the sermon.[51] He cited his opinion that Gilbert Wakefield, who until July of 1790 had been tutor in classics at the college, would be a more appropriate choice for the occasion as the reason for his decision in addition to his concern, as he expressed it, 'not to appear forward, as I am thought to be, to catch at every opportunity of exhibiting myself, and throwing out bold and insolent things before the Public'.[52] However Priestley decided to write the discourse anyway, to forward it to Lindsey, and leave the final decision as to whether he would or wouldn't preach in Lindsey's hands.

A week later Priestley sent Lindsey the manuscript, with instructions that he could show it to Richard Price on the condition that he give him a 'strict charge […] to say nothing of the contents of it'.[53] He told Lindsey to retain the work until the time of his next visit to London when the two of them could make any of Lindsey's suggested corrections together. Lindsey evidently wrote to Priestley expressing his general approbation of the manuscript. Soon afterwards though, Priestley changed his mind and wrote to Lindsey asking him to return the work, explaining that 'I shall probably make many alterations and additions'.[54] However, the next day Priestley evidently received a letter from Lindsey expressing his drastic change of sentiment. Although the letter has not survived it is clear that Lindsey strongly advised Priestley to abandon the project warning him of the offence that his anti-establishment polemic was likely to cause. Priestley's reply of 24 February 1791 was omitted from Rutt's edition. It depicts Priestley at his most pugnacious, evincing his enthusiasm for controversy and his unwillingness to adopt an irenic approach:

> I own I am now rather inclined to be my own advocate, especially as I do not see the force of my own original objections, in the strong light that I then did, and in that in which you now see them. As to <u>giving offence</u>, it will not be remedied, if it [be] worth remedying (which I think it is not) by silence. I have //heard// so much of the offence I have given by my <u>Letters</u>

[51] Priestley's letter to Andrew Kippis declining the invitation to preach the sermon is preserved at DWL. See MS 24.107, f. 2.

[52] 8 Feb. 1791.

[53] 18 Feb. 1791.

[54] 23 Feb. 1791.

> to Mr Burke, that as I intirely approve of my own conduct in that business, I am perfectly indifferent to it, and even rather amused and pleased with it. Indeed, no great good was ever done with[out?] risking and incurring much dislike.[55]

Typically, Priestley quickly shifts to a more conciliatory tone. In the remainder of the letter Priestley requests Lindsey to show the discourse to Thomas Belsham, then professor in divinity at New College, and the barrister and Old Testament scholar Michael Dodson (1732-1799), noting that Belsham in particular was sure to give an 'impartial judgment'.[56] He concedes that the discourse 'is not to be delivered as it now is, but as it may be improved, and I shall be glad to receive any hints of improvement'.[57] Lindsey deferred returning the manuscript for nearly three weeks. On 11 March Priestley wrote to Lindsey that 'I wish you would send me the Sermon', requesting that he include it in a parcel along with a selection of papers he was expecting from London.[58] He finally received it on the fourteenth. By then the manuscript had been passed from Lindsey to Michael Dodson and possibly to Price and Belsham before arriving back in Birmingham. Priestley thanked Lindsey for his remarks, noting that 'Mr Dodson also put a few, and some the same with yours'.[59]

The Editor and his Audience

Thus, a slightly more complex relationship between Priestley and Lindsey and a less homogeneous depiction of Priestley's theological circle emerges from the new edition of the correspondence. However the reason for the majority of omissions from Rutt's edition is most likely more subtle, reflecting less the specific agenda of the editor than the cultural expectations of his audience. Most of the sections left out of Rutt's text concern personal and domestic issues. The omission of these passages

---

55 24 Feb. 1791.
56 24 Feb. 1791.
57 24 Feb. 1791.
58 11 Mar. 1791.
59 14 Mar. 1791.

was most likely due less to Rutt's concern to protect Priestley's reputation, than to attitudes towards the kind of material suitable for publication. In addition to the closing remarks, Rutt omitted nearly all of the references which Priestley made to his own and to his wife's health and to household matters such as the hiring, and occasional disciplining, of servants. Priestley's and Lindsey's deepening friendship is evinced by the extent to which Priestley came to confide in his friend and to share his concerns over his wife Mary's deteriorating condition. Priestley's letters of the 1790s contain frequent, and sometimes graphic, descriptions of Mary's symptoms, and of his diagnosis and concerns. In a letter of 2 July 1790, for example, Priestley wrote of his wife that

> Of late she has been very poorly, and the day before yesterday, she [was] coughing violently at tea time, in consequence of taking something into the windpipe, she burst a blood vessel and continued to spit blood perhaps two hours, but in no great quantity, and it has not returned since; so that this circumstance does not alarm me so much as her general habit. She is continually feverish, and has other consumptive symptoms. But it is remarkable how suddenly they sometimes all disappear, and she looks as well as ever she did in her life; so that I am not without hope that she may do well.[60]

Priestley was equally candid on the subject of his own health. Writing to Lindsey in 1775 he recorded that 'Two fresh boils (one of them the most painful I ever had) are now in their most inflamed state, and two others have just made their appearance' confiding that 'I am absolutely laid up; for the boils are so situated, that I cannot bear no sort of motion, and I cannot bear a strait coat'.[61] Lindsey's letters indicate that Lindsey's wife Hannah occasionally wrote to Priestley advising him on matters concerning his health. On 7 December 1774 Lindsey wrote to William Turner that 'D^{r}. Priestley's eruption in the form of boils new, still continues', adding that 'My wife has sent him word that She thinks he has not sufficient good advice, and has desired him to get better, if he is not soon well - as also sent him her own'.[62] Over a decade later on 29

[60] 2 July 1790.
[61] 25 March 1775.
[62] Ditchfield ed., *Letters of Lindsey*, 201-202.

November 1788 Lindsey wrote to William Tayleur that 'the Doctor's [i.e. Priestley's] letter marks him so far from well, that my wife in her friendly zeal and love for him has written him a medical letter which I am to inclose in a frank I have procured for him'.[63] On 18 August 1790 Priestley related to Lindsey that 'Yesterday I had my two teeth drawn, which was the most painful operation of the kind that I had had'.[64]

Whereas to Rutt and his generation of readers the exclusion of such details from an edition of the correspondence must have seemed justified by their irrelevance and even distastefulness, the inclusion of these descriptions of symptoms and of curative measures (crude antimony for Priestley's boils and a Burgundy pitch plaster for Mary's cough) may prove more acceptable to an audience which places accuracy and scholarly integrity over decorum. Moreover, they will be of particular interest in themselves to contemporary scholars, particularly those working in the growing field of the history of medicine.

Also omitted from Rutt's edition is the long narrative of Priestley's difficulties in procuring employment for his sons Joseph (1768-1863) and William (b. 1771). At some point in the 1780s Priestley's eldest son Joseph had been apprenticed to Priestley's brother-in-law John Wilkinson at the Wilkinson brothers' ironworks. A dispute between the two brothers evidently left Joseph's employment prospects in a precarious position, Priestley writing to Lindsey in July 1787 that,

> The two Mr Wilkinson's are entirely separated, and my expectations //from them// are less than ever. My eldest son, who is now under the elder, has nothing but his board, no tea, or clothes; so that even he will be, for I know not how long, a considerable expence to me.[65]

Over the following three years the dispute worsened, aggravating Priestley's concerns about Joseph's future. Notwithstanding a few promising accounts of the situation in his letters of 1789, Priestley wrote to Lindsey in July 1790 informing his friend that,

> I am sorry to perceive the two brothers are not likely to agree, and will probably decide their differences by law. Mr J. W talks

63 Ditchfield ed., *Letters of Lindsey*, 562.
64 18 Aug. 1790.
65 27 July 1787.

> of sending my son into France to make some inquiries concerning his brother's conduct there. These things are very unpleasant, and will probably be materially hurtful to us.[66]

At the same time, Priestley's second son William was employed under the eminent Birmingham merchant William Russell, yet William's prospects were equally uncertain. In October 1790 an occasion on which William's employers 'upbraided him too strongly' led Priestley to conjecture that 'the best thing that I can do for William will be to send him to America with Charles Vaughan. His temper, I fear, and high spirit, will hardly suit trade'.[67] A plan for William to be 'articled for 3 years with Mr Russell'[68] evidently failed to come to fruition, as on 17 October 1790 Priestley wrote to Lindsey that William, 'having at present nothing to do', is soon 'to go to Bradly, and be under his elder brother for some time'.[69] The next day he informed Lindsey of his intention to write to Benjamin Vaughan, in an attempt to procure William some temporary employment in Vaughan's country house, 'as his uncle expresses an unwillingness to take him'.[70] Priestley's letters of late October 1790 contain detailed accounts of the worsening situation, all of which are edited out from Rutt's edition of the letters.

By the end of the month Priestley again confided in Lindsey, writing that 'We are all as well as can be expected in this state of anxiety about our sons. Joseph has suffered much from the uncertainty in which he has been kept.'[71] The letters show that Priestley drew on the assistance of his wide circle of affluent and influential friends in an attempt to resolve these anxieties, consulting James Watt, the Scottish born Birmingham engineer, requesting Lindsey to call on Priestley's London bookseller Joseph Johnson to enquire into the possibility of Joseph being apprenticed as a bookseller, and asking Thomas Cooper, the political reformer, to look out for any employment prospects for Joseph at Manchester.[72] For William, Priestley asked Lindsey to contact the wealthy London reformer Thomas

---

66 6 July 1790.
67 13 Oct. 1790.
68 15? Oct. 1790.
69 17 Oct. 1790.
70 18 Oct. 1790.
71 27 Oct. 1790.
72 27 Dec. 1790; 9 Jan 1791.

Brand Hollis, requesting that,

> if he would do a specific thing, that might do him credit in the eye of the world, he might (as he has no children of his own) give a liberal education to my youngest son, to enable him to succeed me in the course that he approves, that there may [be] a friend to public liberty of the same name after I am dead.[73]

His deepening concerns are evinced by his admission to Lindsey that,

> The anxiety of mind that I have on account of Joseph makes me almost ill, and incapacitates me for any exertion […] I am sorry to trouble you so much with this business, but it affects me very nearly, and I cannot conceal from you and Mrs Lindsey whatever I feel.[74]

Writing again a week later, Priestley admits to an inability to concentrate on his controversial writings due to the strain produced by the worsening situation:

> For such is the state of my mind at present, that I could not do any thing of the kind. I own my weakness. I believe I am too much affected; but the disappointment is very great, and the difficulty of finding any suitable employment for Joseph seems to increase continually.[75]

Priestley's hopes of Joseph finding stable employment in Manchester, where in 1791 he had been apprenticed with a view to an eventual partnership, were cut short, probably as a result of the riots in Birmingham. In 1793 Joseph left England, sailing with his wife and child for America. Priestley recorded incidentally in a letter of August 1793 that 'Fortunately the last birth in the ship was vacated by a lady who was thought too far gone in a state of pregnancy to venture'.[76] Joseph is last mentioned in September, when Priestley writes that 'We have just heard from them again, and they were on Wednesday [at] last under weigh, and near the needles, all remarkably well'.[77] These passages were most likely excluded from Rutt's edition of the letters out of respect for the privacy

---

73 8 Feb. 1791.
74 10? Jan. 179.
75 17 Jan. 1791.
76 23 Aug. 1793.
77 7 Sept. 1793.

of the Priestley family. Joseph Priestley Jr.. himself had written to Rutt expressing his disagreement with Rutt's decision to publish Priestley's private correspondence and stating his refusal to make public a number of letters to Priestley in his possession on the grounds that 'the publication of some of the most interesting of them would give pain to the writers or their friends'.[78] Thus, it is no surprise that Rutt chose to edit out passages relating directly to Priestley Jr.. and his brother. However another reason for the omission of these passages might have simply been their perceived irrelevance. To contemporary readers however, they offer an insight into social history and shed light on Priestley's reasons for his eventual decision to leave England permanently in 1794.

In a similar vein Rutt omitted a large amount of material relating to Priestley's relationship with booksellers and merchants. A significant section of the passages missing from Rutt's edition illuminate Priestley's relationship with his principal publisher Joseph Johnson, as well as his dealings with lesser known figures such as the York bookseller John Todd and Priestley's distributor in Oxford, Henry Hinton.

John Todd (1736-1811) evidently assisted Priestley in the circulation of his early works throughout the north of England.[79] Operating from premises at the Stonegate in York, he distributed a number of Priestley's works of the late 1760s and early 1770s, including issues of the *Theological Repository* and Priestley's *Considerations on differences of opinion between Christians, with a letter to the Rev. Mr. Venn* (1769). The letters to Lindsey show that Todd assisted Priestley, not only with the distribution of his published works, but with the circulation of non-published material. Writing on 6 December 1770, Priestley instructed Lindsey to 'give Mr Todd a line' about a series of theological lectures composed by Priestley to instruct his congregation at Leeds, a revised version of which eventually formed volume one of his *Institutes of natural and revealed religion*, printed in 1772.[80]

Henry Hinton (1749-1816) was the proprietor of an iron-monger's shop at the Cornmarket in Oxford. Hinton evidently had some contact with the

---

78 Joseph Priestley Jr. to John Towill Rutt, 16 Dec. 1831, DWL MS 12.58 (61).

79 On Todd see *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. 81 (1811), 493; Helen Braithwaite, *Romanticism, publishing and Dissent: Joseph Johnson and the cause of liberty* (Basingstoke, 2003), 122.

80 6 Dec. 1770.

intellectual life of the university and acted as a retailer of Priestley's and Lindsey's theological writings. Little of his religious opinions can be deduced from the extant biographical accounts, yet some connection with Dissenters is suggested by the fact that he was listed as a subscriber to the Baptist minister Robert Robinson's *Ecclesiastical researches* in 1792.[81] In 1788 Lindsey referred to him as 'the Unitarian Iron-monger', noting that he held 'devotions on the Sunday at home' and that 'the young men now and then call upon him and talk with him'.[82] Priestley first referred to Hinton in a letter of May 1787, Hinton having written to Priestley to inform him of the popularity of *A letter to the Reverend Doctor Priestley* (1787) by George Horne, the Dean of Canterbury and President of Magdalen College, Oxford. Priestley makes reference to Hinton distributing pamphlets and informs Lindsey of his intention to send Hinton copies of his *Disquisitions relating to matter and spirit* (1777), *A general view of the arguments for the unity of God* (1783), and *An history of early opinions concerning Jesus Christ* (1786), the latter 'to lend to the more learned'.[83] Priestley forwarded Hinton's letter to him to William Tayleur, who passed it on to Lindsey at London. Lindsey was evidently previously acquainted with Hinton; in his reply to Tayleur, Lindsey noted that he had 'formerly and ocasionally [*sic*] ha[d] some intercourse with the worthy man'.[84]

Hinton was probably the only channel for the distribution of Priestley's and Lindsey's heterodox theology at Oxford. Writing to Lindsey on 26 January 1790, Priestley stated that 'I had sent 50 Copies of Defences to Oxford but you will see our bookseller is //broke//, and no body will sell them'.[85] Both Priestley's and Lindsey's descriptions evoke the clandestine nature of Hinton's distributive activities. Lindsey wrote to Tayleur of Hinton's house as being 'the mart where books are to be had, but it is in

---

81 On Hinton see Mary Clapinson, 'Hinton, Henry (*bap.* 1749, *d.* 1816)', *ODNB*; *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. 86 (1816), 381. Both accounts refer to Hinton's religious convictions but make no reference to any contact with Priestley or to connections with Dissenters. For the subscription see Robert Robinson, *Ecclesiastical researches* (Cambridge, 1792).

82 Ditchfield ed., *Letters of Lindsey*, 542-3.

83 6 May 1787.

84 Ditchfield ed., *Letters of Lindsey*, 542.

85 26 Jan. 1790.

more privacy, than you will find is *now* done at Cambridge'.[86] In a fascinating passage, again omitted from Rutt's edition, Priestley related an anecdote he had received from Judith Mansell which provides an insight into the world of artisan culture and heterodox theology:

> I was much amused with an account I have just received from Miss Judith Mansell, who is returned from a visit to Oxford. Her hairdresser, a Mr Mackenion, finding the last time he dressed her hair that she was going to Birmingham, inquired after me; and after much discours[e], which amused her much, he desired she would inform me, that there were at least 40 that do not bow the knee to Baal even in Oxford. He regretted much that he did not see you, as you went thru Oxford. He is very intimate, as you will suppose, with Mr Hinton. He said that the wife of one of the heads of houses was an unitarian, and that when he dressed her hair, th//e//y often shut the door, and had much free conversation. He seemed to be something like the Barber in the Arabian nights. He shut the door before he would talk on the subject with Miss Mansell, and detained her an hour extraordinary.[87]

Priestley's relationship with his principal London bookseller Joseph Johnson is depicted as being uneasy at times by a number of passages tactfully edited out of Rutt's edition. Lindsey's somewhat unflattering opinion of Johnson is evident from a letter to William Tayleur where he referred to the bookseller's 'too customary want of punctuality'.[88] The same opinion was evidently shared by Priestley, who on a number of occasions gave vent to his exasperation with the bookseller. Attempting to procure copies of Samuel Horsley's published sermons, Priestley wrote to Lindsey in October of 1789 complaining that 'I desired Johnson to send them long ago, but an order of this kind to him never produces anything'.[89] A week later, still attempting to locate the sermons, Priestley

---

86 Ditchfield ed., *Letters of Lindsey*, 509.

87 18 Aug. 1790. Priestley wrote to Judith Mansell from Clapton in 1791 and Philadelphia in 1797. The letters are held amongst the Joseph Priestley Papers at the American Philosophical Society. 'Allin Mackinnon' is listed as a 'Hair-dresser' in the 'Universal directory of Britain: city of Oxford in 1794', http://www.headington.org.uk/ oxon/people_lists/oxford_1794_universal/index.htm.

88 Ditchfield ed., *Letters of Lindsey*, 548.

89 21 Oct. 1789.

wrote that 'I shall be obliged to you if you will apply to his [Samuel Horsley's] bookseller, Robson. Johnson will never collect them for me'.[90] On discovering that the cotton manufacturer William Strutt and the physician Erasmus Darwin had not received a copy of his latest philosophical work, Priestley complained that 'Mr Johnson I fear has been very careless'.[91] An anecdote from a letter of February 1791 illustrates Priestley negotiating between his principal bookseller in London and his printers in Birmingham, and hints at a tension between Johnson's concern for his own business and his loyalty to Priestley as the main distributor of his works:

> A brother of Mr Bakewell of Burton, who is about to marry one of my hearers, tells me he called upon Mr Johnson for my Appeal, and other such publications, and was told that he had them not. Now, Mr Johnson knows that a large edition of that, and of the General View of Arguments, were printed here, and that he may have them if he chuses. If he will not sell these editions, let him print others of his own; but he should have them by him. I wish you would speak to him on the subject.[92]

Following Priestley's move to Birmingham in the 1780s, Lindsey seems to have acted as Priestley's link with the world of London tradesmen. From Lindsey's letters it is clear that throughout the 1780s Priestley made frequent trips to the capital, sometimes extending his stay to as long as a month. Priestley evidently used these visits to collect sources for the works in ecclesiastical history which he produced whilst at Birmingham. In April of 1784 Lindsey, in a letter to William Tayleur, described Priestley on a three-week visit to the capital 'laying in supplies' for his philosophical and theological pursuits.[93] Lindsey informed Tayleur that Priestley had 'already made a provision of many folio Vol[s]. of the Fathers which he was not possessed of himself, and I trust will do great things with them'.[94] However Priestley clearly used Lindsey to maintain contacts with the London booksellers from Birmingham. The letters of the 1780s and 1790s frequently request Lindsey to call at Johnson's as well

90 29 Oct. 1789.
91 21 June 1790.
92 28 Feb. 1791.
93 Ditchfield ed., *Letters of Lindsey*, 423.
94 Ditchfield ed., *Letters of Lindsey*, 423.

at the shops of the London booksellers James Robson, Thomas Payne, William Otridge, Peter Elmsley, Henry Gardner, and Samuel Hayes. Priestley often drew on the assistance of Lindsey to acquire books by English and continental theologians, presumably only available in the capital. Priestley's letters of the period occasionally include lists of works with references to catalogue numbers for Lindsey to send to Birmingham, Priestley writing on 29 October 1789 that 'I see but few catalogues here'.[95] A letter of December 1790, for example, contains a list of books for Lindsey to purchase from Samuel Hayes's shop at 332 Oxford Street, including works by the continental theologians Simone de Magistris, Johannes Pfefferkorn, and Jean Jacques Zimmermann.[96] Occasional passages offer vignettes illustrative the world of the eighteenth-century book trade, as when Priestley requests of Lindsey in February 1791:

> If you walk by Mr Payne's the bookseller, I wish you would tell him that the De Lolme History of the Flagellants said, in his Catalogue, to be with cuts, has not one cut in it, and therefore that I wish he would send a set to Mr Johnson or exchange this copy for one that has them.[97]

On 26 January 1790, Priestley wrote to Lindsey about a four-volume set described to him by Joseph Berington, the Roman Catholic priest stationed at Oscott, Handsworth, in Staffordshire, whom Priestley probably met through meetings of the Lunar Society at Birmingham.[98] Priestley requests Lindsey to call at Peter Elmsley's shop at 87 Strand, writing 'If you go by, I wish you would look at it, if it be not gone. I mean not to go to a very great price'.[99] A letter of February 1789 records Priestley returning a book by the German ecclesiastical historian Johann Lorenz von Mosheim to Benjamin White, a publisher and bookseller at

---

95 29 Oct. 1789.

96 26 Dec. 1790.

97 23 Feb. 1791.

98 Berington's attendance at a meeting of the Lunar Society at Priestley's house is described in Christiana C Hankin ed., *Life of Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck* (2 vols., London, 1858), vol. 1, 48. According to the testimony of a former servant at Priestley's Birmingham home, 'Mr Berington, the Catholic at Barr, used frequently to call to see him [ie Priestley], and many other Catholics', see Alan Ruston, 'A servant's view of Joseph Priestley', *Enlightenment & Dissent*, 8 (1989), 115-19.

99 26 Jan. 1790.

Horace Head at the corner of Fleet Street and the Strand. Priestley requested that Lindsey 'give my compliments to Mr White, and tell him that it is not the book I wanted. I shall be obliged to him if he will take it again. I think he will hardly refuse'.[100] On 22 July 1790 Priestley requested Lindsey to call at Henry Gardner's shop opposite St. Clement's Church in the Strand to purchase a copy of Carsten Niebuhr's *Travels through Arabia*, which Priestley used to illustrate his Biblical translations. Most of these passages were cut from Rutt's edition, presumably because of their perceived irrelevance. Yet the growing interest in the discipline of book history again confers a new kind of historical value on these passages. Priestley and his circle's relationships with booksellers, and the role played by the eighteenth-century book trade in the development of religious Dissent and radical politics is now an established field of academic research within eighteenth-century studies.[101] This record of Priestley's connections, through Lindsey, with the London booksellers provides detailed evidence of how Priestley obtained the materials he required for his theological works of the 1780s and early 1790s.

Whilst in Birmingham, Priestley relied on Lindsey, not just for books, but for other services provided by the tradesmen of the metropolis. On 22 July 1790 Priestley wrote to Lindsey that,

> I have sent my French Repeater to Mr Brown (Opposite Water Lane Fleet Street) to [be] repaired. Please to call on him, pay him h[is] demand, and bring it with you if you can. At least, urge him to send it as soon as possible.[102]

John Brown was a jeweller and watchmaker operating from a shop at 149 Fleet Street, a short walk away from Lindsey's chapel in Essex Street.[103] Priestley seems to have used Lindsey's proximity to the world of the London traders to maintain contact with craftsmen like Brown; he wrote again in February 1791 that 'As you walk by Mr Brown's door, I wish you would desire him to send the Watches by the coach, as I directed him by letter some time ago, and not in Mr Johnson's parcell'.[104] Although in Birmingham Priestley was ideally located to procure the materials he

---

100 5 Feb. 1789.
101 See Braithwaite, *Romanticism, publishing and Dissent*.
102 22 July 1790.
103 See Henry Kent, *Kent's directory for the year 1794* (London, 1794).
104 28 Feb 1791.

required for his experimental work,[105] he used Lindsey to maintain contact with William Parker (fl. 1776-1817), a glass manufacturer operating from premises at 69 Fleet Street.[106] On 5 July 1786 Priestley wrote to Lindsey requesting him to call at Parker's shop to pay a bill to Parker or to his son Samuel Parker.[107] On 4 May 1789 he requested that Lindsey ask Joseph Johnson to get a rule he was sending to Birmingham for Priestley put into a package from Parker.[108] Again, Rutt presumably omitted such passages on the grounds of their insignificance. Yet current concerns with the material aspects of history again render these passages of greater interest to a contemporary audience.

One further significant section of material edited out of Rutt's edition concerns the details of the attempt made by Priestley's Birmingham congregation to appoint a new co-pastor in late 1790 and early 1791. The letters of the 1790s detail the congregation sounding a number of prospective candidates. In October 1790 Priestley wrote to Lindsey that 'We have some hopes given us that an application from our congregation to Mr Jardine of Bath may not be unsuccessful'.[109] A month later he mentions that William Russell has 'written in confid[ence] to Mr Lewis, to know whether he would accept an invitation to be copaster with me'.[110] Writing in December, Priestley expressed his intention of using the opportunity of the new appointment to consolidate the Unitarian presence in Birmingham, writing to Lindsey that,

> we have thoughts of opening another and proper unitarian Chapel, where for some time we may officiate by turns, having

---

[105] In his Memoirs Priestley wrote that 'Mr. [Josiah] Wedgwood also, besides his annual benefaction, supplied me with every thing that I wanted made of pottery, such as retorts, tubes, &c.', Rutt I, i, 216.

[106] On Parker see Eric Robinson, 'The Lunar Society and the improvement of scientific instruments', *Annals of Science*, vol. 13, pt. 1 (1957), 1-8; Rutt, I, i, 216. Robinson describes Parker as 'probably the very best flint-glass maker in England' (5). Priestley recorded in his memoirs that Parker supplied him with a 'capital burning lense, sixteen inches in diameter', Rutt, I, i, 216.

[107] 5 July 1786.

[108] 4 May 1789.

[109] 13 Oct. 1790.

[110] 26 Nov. 1790. 'Lewis' is possibly Rev George Lewis of Mare Street, Hackney, listed as a member of the Unitarian Society for promoting Christian Knowledge and the Practice of Virtue, 1791. See *Unitarian Society* (London, 1791?).

> at first one service a day. If we can get a zealous unitarian in the other meeting, this may be done with ease, and indeed very well if Mr Coates continue here. [111]

However Priestley's hopes that David Jardine (1766-1797), Dissenting minister at Bath, would continue as his successor at Birmingham were short lived; on 9 January 1791 he wrote to Lindsey informing him of Jardine's decision to decline the invitation and of William Russell's intention to propose Thomas Watson, minister at Baffins Lane Meeting, Chichester, to the Birmingham congregation the following Sunday. By 28 February 1791 Priestley was fairly certain that Thomas Broadhurst (?1767-1851), one of the first students at New College, Hackney, would be offered the post. In March he wrote to Lindsey that 'I doubt not an invitation will be given to Mr Broadhurst to preach as a candidate for us, and I have as little doubt of his being approved'.[112]

However a long passage from a letter of 14 March 1791, omitted from Rutt's edition, explains the eventual decision of the vestry to revoke the offer and instead invite John Edwards (1768-1808), minister at Gateacre Chapel, Liverpool, to preach as a candidate. Priestley's letter details how a previous communication suggesting that Edwards had neglected his ministerial duties at Gateacre had been overturned by the testimonies of John Yates (1755-1826), minister at Kaye Street Chapel, Liverpool, and William Shepherd (1768-1847), minister at Gateacre. Priestley's memories of his own struggle to overcome a stutter which in his youth had seriously hampered his ability as a preacher may lie behind his somewhat disapproving assessment of the congregation's motives informing their preference for Edwards:

> what impresses many of our people very much (I own I think too much) is that Mr Edwards is said to have an excellent voice, and to be a lively preacher, whereas it is impossible to satisfy many of the people //here// that Mr Broadhurst is //not// a very heavy one, so that they say, his invitation would be far from being unanimous, if he did come.[113]

---

111 23 Dec. 1790.
112 7 March 1791.
113 14 Mar. 1791.

Edwards did preach as a candidate and was appointed, serving at the New Meeting in Birmingham between 1791 and 1802 before moving to the Old Jewry in London. Broadhurst moved to Manchester where he was minister of the congregation at Blackley between 1791 and 1793. Thus again, a body of material considered unsuitable for publication by Rutt (most likely due to the fact that most of the figures mentioned would have been living at the time) can now provide a small glimpse of the day-to-day workings of an important Dissenting congregation. Many more such passages will be brought to light by the new electronic edition: the story of an attempted burglary at Priestley's house at Birmingham in 1790, during the course of which a pistol was fired at one of Priestley's maidservants,[114] and an account of a legal dispute between Priestley's son-in-law John Finch and his cousin William, both of which were edited out from Rutt's text.

Conclusion

In a sonnet printed among a collection of his 'poetic effusions' in 1845 Rutt addressed Priestley, lamenting the fate that this 'friend of human kind' had suffered at the hands of his contemporaries: 'PRIESTLEY!', exclaimed Rutt, 'twas thine in polished times to feel / The dire excesses of a barb'rous age'.[115] The poem lays the blame for the Birmingham riots at the feet of the 'proud courtiers', 'bigots', and 'hireling tongues' that 'beggar[d] ages in one guilty day' and spoiled 'with Omar's rage the stores of science'. Yet in the concluding quatrain Rutt assured his eponymous hero of a future recompense:

> The sons of freedom shall applaud thy zeal,
> Her fadeless wreath shall grateful science bind,
> And guide to happier shores the friend of human kind.

In some ways Rutt's editorial work can be seen as an attempt to enact the argument of his poem. His attempt to build a lasting monument to Priestley through his edition of his life, letters, and works was also an attempt to restore Priestley's reputation as the figurehead of a liberal, Dissenting tradition. Rutt's edition attempted to make an exemplary life

[114] 27 Jan. 1790.

[115] Rutt, 'To Joseph Priestley, LL.D.', *Memorials of the late John Towill Rutt*, 61.

the embodiment of the values of a minority religious community, in much the same way that Rutt's subjects, Edmund Calamy, and Priestley himself, had done so effectively at earlier junctures in the history of English Dissent.[116] In this respect Rutt was partly successful: his edition has remained the authoritative source for Priestley's life and correspondence for successive generations. Rutt's edition of the letters will undoubtedly retain its value as an as yet unrivalled work of Priestley scholarship. However reading the new edition of the letters to Lindsey enables us to reflect critically on Rutt's editorial practices and to see how some of his decisions were shaped both by his own intentions and by the assumptions of the community of readers among whom he was working. Furthermore, the electronic edition will provide a fuller, if at points less flattering, picture of Priestley and his circle. Here we encounter less Rutt's rather idealised image of 'the friend of human kind', more an undaunted polemicist engaged in the political and theological controversies of his age, a zealous Dissenting minister at the head of a large provincial congregation, a concerned father and husband, a man equally capable of forging enduring friendships and of making bitter enemies, and a correspondent immersed in the intellectual and commercial worlds of the late eighteenth century.

Simon Mills
The Dr. Williams's Centre for Dissenting Studies

[116] See, for example, Priestley's edition of Edward Elwall, *The triumph of truth, being an account of the authentic narrative of the trial of Mr. Elwall, for heresy and blasphemy* (Leeds, 1771), which was republished in several editions throughout the 1770s. See Calamy's *An abridgment of Mr. Baxter's history of his life and times with an account of many others of those worthy ministers who were ejected, after the restauration of King Charles the Second* (London, 1713); for an overview of Calamy's editorial work see David L Wykes, 'Calamy, Edmund (1671-1732)', *ODNB*.

'BRIEF ENCOUNTER': ROBERT ROBINSON AND THE RIGHT TO PRIVATE JUDGEMENT

Gina Luria Walker[*]

This paper discusses Robert Robinson (1735-90), a British Rational Dissenter who was active in the 1770s and 1780s. Mainly self-educated, Robinson held one of the two most important Baptist charges in Britain beginning in 1761[1] and quickly became a lightning rod for Anglicans and nonconformists. Thereafter, he was important as grassroots activist, proto-socialist, translator of Huguenot theologians, reformist historian, early abolitionist, and mentor to younger Cambridge radicals, including William Frend and George Dyer, as well as the late Enlightenment feminist and Unitarian Mary Hays (1759-1843).[2] I will touch on the responses of some of his contemporaries to his unconditional adherence to the right to private judgement that have been overlooked in modern scholarship on the subject and the period. Robinson is still a neglected figure, although he founded the Cambridge Constitutional Society in 1780, promoted parliamentary reform, free press, unlimited toleration, and, at the local level, over many years made a striking difference in electoral politics.[3]

G M Ditchfield advises that the term 'Rational Dissenter' was used frequently during the 1770s to refer to those Dissenters from the Church of England who exercised their belief in the responsibility of Christians to interpret the Scriptures according to their own reason. This 'right to private judgement' produced heterodox interpretations of Christianity. Rational Dissenters distinguished between themselves and other

* I am grateful for the helpful comments and suggestions to earlier drafts of this piece by G M Ditchfield, Anthony Page, and the anonymous referees for *Enlightenment and Dissent*.

1 John Stephens, 'Robinson, Robert (1735–1790),' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004) [*ODNB* at http://www.oxforddnb.com].

2 For a discussion of Robinson's influence on Hays, see Gina Luria Walker, *Mary Hays (1759-1843): The growth of a woman's mind* (Houndsmill, 2006), 61–83: 'Sewing in the Next World'.

3 James E Bradley, 'Religion and Reform at the Polls: Nonconformity in Cambridge Politics 1774–1784,' *Journal of British Studies*, 23 (Spring 1984), 55–78; *Religion, revolution, and English radicalism: Nonconformity in eighteenth-century politics and society* (Cambridge, 1990).

'orthodox' Dissenters in their rejection of Calvinism and sympathy with belief in the divinity of Christ, but as a subordinate agent of God ('Arianism'). Alternatively, they rejected Christ's divinity while adhering to his teachings as the most perfect human being ('Socinianism'). In late eighteenth-century Britain, the term 'Rational Dissenter' was commonly used to deprecate heterodox believers. 'Rational Dissent' itself was 'increasingly portrayed as a subversion of spirituality, a repudiation of fundamental Christian beliefs, the sort of unhealthy speculation that led to deism and infidelity.'[4]

James E Bradley locates the 'two defining principles of English Non Conformity and British dissent, generally,' as the right to private judgement and 'the spiritual and voluntary nature of the church.' In a recent essay, Bradley asks, 'How was such abstract theology transformed into action in the civil realm, and how did it lead to radical political theory behavior?'[5] I will consider a brief encounter in Robinson's life that he prized highly, and in which his unwavering belief in the right to private judgement, that he expressed in its purest form as 'universal toleration,' was recognized and celebrated as actual 'radical political theory behavior.' Robinson was an early critic of British policies towards the American colonies.[6] According to George Dyer, Robinson's assistant minister, boarder, tutor to his children, and first biographer, Robinson followed 'with great accuracy' the events that led to 'the United States of America render[ing] themselves independent;' he was a 'zealous admirer' of the American constitution; and 'Of general [sic] Washington,' Dyer reports, 'he always expressed himself in terms of the highest respect.'[7]

---

4 G.M. Ditchfield, '"How Narrow will the limits of this Toleration appear?" Dissenting petitions to Parliament, 1772–1773', *Parliament and Dissent*, ed. Stephen Taylor and David Wykes (Edinburgh, 2005), 91-106; see also Knud Haakonssen, 'Enlightened Dissent: An Introduction,' *Enlightenment and religion: Rational Dissent in eighteenth-century Britain* (Cambridge,1996), 1–11.

5 James E Bradley, 'The Religious Origins of Radical Politics in England, Scotland, and Ireland, 1662–1800,' *Religion and politics in Enlightenment Europe*, ed. James E Bradley and Dale K Van Kley (Notre Dame, 2001), 199.

6 Robert Robinson, *Miscellaneous works of Robert Robinson*, ed. B. Flower (4 vols., Harlow, 1807), vol.1, 66.

7 George Dyer, *Memoirs of the life and writings of Robert Robinson* (London, 1796), 121. Based on information from *English Short Title Catalogue*. *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*. Gale Group. http://galenet.gale-group.com/servlet/ECCO, hereafter [ECCO].

In *Arcana* (1774) Robinson announced his views on conscience that were closely related to his theology and that endured through his life. In 1789 he wrote:

> I hate dominion over conscience, because I am clearly convinced it dishonours God, degrades man, tacitly denies the perfection of the divine word, dethrones the King of saints, and introduces all manner of wicked passions among Christians, withdrawing them from the example of the mild and merciful Master, and imparting to them the contentious and cruel disposition of bigots. [8]

Robinson wrote *Arcana* at a time when dissenting ministers were attempting to alter the terms of subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles required of them. He argued that the magistrate had no right to impose a test, describing the magistrate's rights over conscience as 'an injury to the state,'[9] and that the right to private judgement was the foundation of the Reformation. As an important example of the beneficial integration of theology and politics, he singled out the insistence of Quaker William Penn, in the initial article of the Pennsylvanian constitution, that 'the first fundamental of the government of this country shall be that every person that doth or shall reside therein, shall have and enjoy the free possession of his or her faith, and exercise of worship toward God, in such way and manner as every such person shall believe in conscience is most acceptable to God.'[10] By his own account, Robinson's views were influenced by the writings of Jacques Saurin (1677–1730), a Huguenot theologian of *Le Refuge*[11] who spent some of his exile in England. During the 1770s, Robinson translated four volumes of Saurin's sermons and wrote a life of Saurin based, in part, on interviews with English Dissenters who had known Saurin during his sojourn in England and heard him

---

8 Robert Robinson, letter to the Rev. Dan Taylor, 21 Feb. 1789, in William Robinson ed., *Select works of the Rev. Robert Robinson of Cambridge, edited, with memoir* [sic] (London, 1861), 262; published in the *Monthly Repository*, 12 (1817), 9–12.

9 Robert Robinson, *Arcana: or the principles of the late petitioners to Parliament for relief in the matter of subscription. In VIII. letters to a friend* (Cambridge, 1774), Letter IV, 'On civil magistracy', 48.

10 *Ibid*, 50.

11 This refers to the second Huguenot exodus following the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685).

preach. Saurin advocated the right of private judgement for all men (not just Christians) and pleaded for universal toleration. Broadly in agreement with Saurin's ideals, Robinson, in the preface to the translation of his sermons, underscored his intellectual independence even from him,[12] and his own age threw up new concerns and problems. During the 1770s, Robinson paid attention to the struggles in the American colonies against British domination even before the War for Independence and supported autonomy in church/state relations there as he did elsewhere.

* * * * * * * * * *

On Saturday evening, June 19, 1784, three Americans arrived in Chesterton, England, after a short ferry ride across the Cam River from Cambridge, and were warmly received at Roebuck House, the home of Baptist minister Robert Robinson. Included among Robinson's posthumously edited and published letters is his account of 22 June to a minister friend of the Americans' visit:

> What a short-lived thing is reverie! There sat I, in my own hall, in more than Indian regal rapture - over against me, my wife, making tea - on my right hand, the honourable Speaker of the American house of Congress - on my left, the great General Read [sic] second to Washington, in the American army - next to him, an envoi from the States' and along with us a circle of friends, listening to the honied accents of their tongues,

[12] Robinson wrote, 'It is not to be imagined, that a translator adopts *all* the sentiments of his author. To approve of a man's religious views in general is a reason sufficient to engage a person to translate, and it would be needless, if not arrogant, to enter a protest in a note against every word in which the author differed from the translator. In general, I think Saurin is one of the first of modern preachers: and his sermons, the whole construction of them, worth the attention of any teacher of Christianity, who wishes to excell [sic] in his way: but there are many articles taken separately in which my ideas differ entirely from those of Mr. Saurin, both in doctrine, rites, discipline, and other circumstances…. I have always flattered myself for differing from Saurin; for I took it for probable evidence that I had the virtue to think for myself, even in the presence of the man in the world the most likely to seduce me. Had I a human oracle in religion, perhaps Saurin would be the man.' Robert Robinson, 'The Preface,' *Sermons translated from the original French of the late Revd. James Saurin, ... By Robert Robinson* (5 vols., 2nd edn., London, 1784 [ECCO]), vol. 5, ix–xi.

> distilling with all the richest and most fragrant sounds of liberty, property, law, commerce, religion, and a future state of perfect and everlasting felicity.

Robinson continued: 'my American guests came on Saturday evening, - spent the Lord's day with us, - departed on Monday afternoon, and left me the choice of the cabin on the[ir ship the] *Washington*, and as much land in the States as I would wish to accept.'[13]

Robinson's visitors were all founders of the new republic. Joseph Reed (1741-85) was a Presbyterian and lawyer who signed the Articles of Confederation in 1777, served as second in command to General Washington in the Continental Army, and after acquitting himself well in several major battles at the end of the war, became a prominent figure in the new Congress and the new state of Pennsylvania.[14]

Len Addicott, Robinson's late twentieth-century biographer, identifies the 'envoy' Robinson refers to as John Jay (1745-1829), although Addicott offers no supporting evidence.[15] Jay served multiple roles in creating the new nation; most recently, he had negotiated and signed the Treaty of Paris (1783) that ended the war,[16] and in June 1784 was on his way back to America where he had just been appointed Secretary for Foreign Affairs. Descended from Huguenots, Jay became an Anglican while studying at King's College in New York City and was later a parishioner and Trustee of Trinity Church there, as well as President of the American Bible Society.[17] But if Robinson's dates are correct, then Jay was not in England on 19 June. He sailed back with his wife to the United States on 1 June 1784.[18] Another possibility is that the 'envoi' was Henry Laurens (1724-92), from Charleston, South Carolina, who served as the

---

13 Robert Robinson to the Rev. Daniel Turner, Abingdon, Chesterton, June 22, 1784, in Robinson ed. *Select works of Robinson*, I, 211-12.

14 John F Roche, *Joseph Reed: a moderate in the American Revolution* (New York, 1957).

15 Len Addicott, *Church Book: St Andrew's Street Baptist Church, Cambridge 1720-1832* (London: Baptist Historical Society, 1991), xvi.

16 Witherspoon drafted the instructions of June 1781 for the American peace commission that included Jay and Benjamin Franklin.

17 The John Jay Institute for Faith, Society and Law, at www.johnjayinstitute.org/.

18 'Chronology,' *Selected letters of John Jay and Sarah Livingston Jay*: *correspondence by or to the First Chief Justice of the United States and his wife*, by John Jay, Sarah Livingston Jay, Landa M Freeman, Louise V. North, Janet M. Wedge; compiled by

President of the Continental Congress from 1777-78, and was appointed as a peace commissioner to the negotiations that concluded in The Treaty of Paris in 1793. However, like Jay, Laurens left England on June 6 to return to the States, in his case because of ill health.[19] Other possibilities as the 'envoi' are Benjamin Franklin and John Adams, signers of the Treaty of Paris, but neither of them was then in England. Whoever the 'envoi' might be, he would have been appreciative of Robinson's backing for the American cause for independence from Britain and sympathetic to Robinson's deeply held belief in the right to private judgement in civil and clerical matters.

Robinson's third guest was Reed's travelling companion, John Witherspoon (1723-94), the president of the College of New Jersey (subsequently, Princeton[20]), a signer of the Declaration of Independence - the only clergyman to do so,[21] and from 1776 to 1782 a leading member of the Continental Congress, as Robinson indicated, although never elected its president.[22] Witherspoon was trained as a Presbyterian minister at the University of Edinburgh. In 1768 he was invited to become the sixth President of the College of New Jersey, where he and Joseph Reed (an alumnus of the college) were trustees.[23] In the winter of 1783-84, Witherspoon and Reed were sent to England by the college's Board on a goodwill and fundraising mission for the college that had been badly damaged during the intense fighting between the British and the colonists in Princeton.[24]

How had the American travelers found their way to Robinson in Chesterton, England? There is a conspicuous absence of evidence to provide an answer. There is no further mention of any of his visitors in

---

Landa M Freeman, Louise V. North, Janet M Wedge; contributor Landa M Freeman (Jefferson, NC, 2005), 21, 163.

19 Daniel J McDonough, *Christopher Gadsden and Henry Laurens: the parallel lives of two American patriots* (Sellinsgrove, PA, c. 2000), 265.

20 The name of the college was officially changed to Princeton in 1896.

21 L Gordon Tait, 'Introduction,' *The works of the Rev. John Witherspoon* (4 vols., Bristol, 2003), I, v.

22 Elias Boudinot, another Trustee of the College of New Jersey, was president of the Congress in 1782-83. He was present at the Trustees' meeting when Witherspoon and Reed were commissioned to travel to England but was not included in the mandate.

23 Alexander Leitch, *A Princeton companion* (Princeton, 1978).

24 John F Roche, *Joseph Reed* (New York, 1957), 214-5.

Robinson's papers before or after their visit, and no record of the event in the papers of Reed or Witherspoon has thus far been located. None of the titles of Robinson's fifty published works are included in Princeton University's collection of John Witherspoon's library that includes topical pamphlets on various religious and political subjects. Yet the visit, the visitors, and the invitation to Robinson to return with them to the new republic are evidence of a mutual sense of transatlantic understanding about the foundations of moral governance. In retrospect, the offer by the distinguished Americans to Robinson to emigrate to the new republic provides a compelling counterpoint to Robinson's divisive reputation among many of his public British contemporaries.

Without any harder evidence, we can conjecture that Robinson knew about his three visitors, perhaps read their writings, as he had those of Jonathan Edwards, an earlier president of the College of New Jersey. In turn, Robinson was known to the three Americans through his publications and, perhaps, for his reputation as the 'famous Reverend Robinson,' an ironic appellation used by British conservatives to whom he was a notorious gadfly. The list of his distinguished Establishment detractors seems to have included John Sturges, the Prebendary of Winchester;[25] Robert Lowth, the bishop of London, also Sturges' brother-in-law;[26] and Edmund Burke.

Robinson's reception was equivocal among other heterodox Rational Dissenters; for example, Theophilus Lindsey, who after resigning from the Church of England, 'in theoretical defiance of the law,'[27] created the first avowedly Unitarian chapel at Essex Street in London in 1774. Lindsey considered Robinson, at least in theological disputation on the nature of Christ, 'a person with some talents,' but prone to 'hasty prejudice, and giving a loose [sic] to his imagination,' as well as 'idle

---

[25] G M Ditchfield has generously provided the names of Robinson's critics. In 1779 Sturges (d. 1807) published 'Considerations on the present state of the church-establishment, in letters to the Right Reverend the bishop of London.'

[26] Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade, 'The Social Networks and Linguistic Influence: The Language of Robert Lowth and his Correspondents,' *International Journal of English Studies*, 5.1 (2005): 136.

[27] G M Ditchfield, 'Incompatible with the very Name of Christian: English Catholics and Unitarians in the Age of Milner', *Recusant History* 25.1 (May 2000), 52-73. Ditchfield adds, 'Unitarian worship was not legally tolerated until 1813 in Britain.'

talk, and unlearned sophistry.'[28] Lindsey's comments reflect his judgement that Robinson was 'theologically uncertain,' and, likely, also Lindsey's jealousy of Robinson's greater fluency as a preacher.

On the other hand, to his audience of nearly six hundred that came to hear his Sunday morning sermons at the Baptist meeting-house in Cambridge, that included dissident members of the Cambridge University community, Robinson was known appreciatively as the 'bishop of farms and barns.' He was distinguished for his lack of pretension, his generosity, his grassroots advocacy of Dissenters' rights and reform of Parliament, and, as the hundreds of readers of his printed works knew, for the enduring, uncompromising, and outspoken advocacy of the right to private judgement - including Catholics in his commitment to what he called 'unlimited toleration.'[29]

Robinson was not an integral part of the leadership of Rational Dissent in the 1770s and beyond like Joseph Priestley, Lindsey, and John Jebb, as Anthony Page points out, three 'clear and committed Unitarians'. Jebb knew Robinson at Cambridge and the two men respected each other, despite their theological differences. Robinson remained an independent Dissenter,[30] but through the period he produced a steady stream of commentary supporting Dissenting efforts by both orthodox and heterodox believers for relief from existing legal and cultural

---

[28] Theophilus Lindsey, *An examination of Mr. Robinson of Cambridge's plea for the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ. By a late member of the university*…. (London, 1785), 183. *Gale Collections Online*. Ditchfield also points out that Lindsey comments on Robinson in two letters: Lindsey to William Tayleur, 19 October 1781, John Rylands University Library of Manchester, Lindsey Letters, Vol. I, no. 43; and Lindsey to Newcome Cappe, early 1785, Thomas Belsham, *Memoirs of Lindsey* (London, 1873), 119n.

[29] Robert Robinson, *The general doctrine of toleration, applied to the particular case of free-communion* (Cambridge, 1781); Joshua Toulmin, *Christian vigilance. Considered in a sermon, preached at the Baptist chapel, in Taunton, on the Lord's Day, after the sudden removal of the learned and Reverend Robert Robinson. By Joshua Toulmin, M.A. To which is added, some account of Mr. Robinson, and his writings* (London, 1790 [ECCO]). See Martin Fitzpatrick's illuminating discussion of Priestley's views on 'universal toleration', 'Joseph Priestley, Political Philosopher,' in *Joseph Priestley, scientist, philosopher, and theologian*, ed. Isabel Rivers and David L Wykes (Oxford, 2008), 113-43.

[30] *Minutes of the General Assembly of the General Baptist Churches in England*, II, pp. 146f.

disabilities,[31] and urged his idiosyncratic perspectives in the print war to reform Parliament. In the immediate aftermath of the Revolution in France, he could no longer be ignored by defenders of the British Establishment.

In March 1790, the Protestant Dissenters once again petitioned Parliament to repeal the Test and Corporation Acts, in G M Ditchfield's words, 'the major barrier which stood between [male] Dissenters and the enjoyment of full civil equality.'[32] Charles James Fox, leader of the opposition Whig Party, sponsored the petition. During the debate in the House of Commons, Edmund Burke took the floor. Burke began by offering reasons for the loss of his sympathy with the Dissenting interests that had mounted previous efforts for repeal in 1787 and 1789. He had not supported those efforts despite the pleadings of his friend Charles James Fox, but he had not spoken against them. In the debate in 1790, Burke explained that the onset of the French Revolution eight months before had changed everything, including his mind: in the present, furious political climate, any shift in the relations between and among the monarch, the state, the British people, and, especially God, would propel England closer to chaos. Only the strictest adherence to existing, time-honored balances of power among the national church, the King as head of church and state, and the people would keep Anglican England immune from the plague of rebellion.

In his remarks, Burke buttressed the view that had gained momentum since the 1770s when the American colonists rebelled against British rule: religious dissent cloaked as parliamentary reform was tantamount to insurrection against the Church, the rule of Constitutional Law, and the Crown. To illustrate his concerns, Burke held up a copy of *A political catechism*,[33] published in 1782 by Robinson as evidence of the longstanding subversive intent of the Dissenters to foment secular and

---

[31] John Seed, '"A set of men powerful enough in many things": Rational Dissent and political opposition in England, 1770-1790', in Haakonssen, *Enlightenment and religion* (Cambridge, 1996), 140-68.

[32] G M Ditchfield, 'The Parliamentary Struggle over the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, 1787-1790,' *English Historical Review* (July 1974), 551–77.

[33] Burke refers to Robinson's *A political catechism* (1 & 2nd edns., 1782; 3rd edn. 1784). His description of Robinson's work in both his parliamentary comments and in a letter to Richard Bright (17 March 1790) suggests that Burke also refers to Robinson's *A*

spiritual revolution in Britain. Rather than advancing pure Christian belief as its title suggested, Robinson's work, Burke alleged, was 'a catechism of misanthropy, a catechism of anarchy, a catechism of confusion! grossly libeling the national establishment in every part and passage.' Even worse, Burke thundered,

> these catechisms were to be put into the hands of Dissenters' children, who were thus to be taught in their infancy to lisp out censures and condemnations against the established church of England, to be brought up as a rising generation of its determined enemies, while, possibly, the dissenting preachers were themselves recommending the same sort of robbery and plunder of the wealth of the church as had happened in France, where some men were weak enough to imagine a happy revolution had taken place; but where [Burke] knew the most miserable system of Government at this moment prevailed that ever disgraced the annals of Europe.[34]

Burke's blazing accusations about the tangled aspirations of British Nonconformists were not unfounded, at least in this instance. *A political catechism* was one of Robinson's many contributions to the Rational Dissenters' ongoing struggle for full citizenship at a time of hostility towards them and their plight by the Anglican majority.[35] Robinson's book was addressed to England's young men and took the form of a Socratic dialogue between a Parent and his son, George, just home from university, in telling exchanges on the controversial topics of 'MYSTERIOUSNESS, CONSTITUTION, ADMINISTRATION, REPRESENTATION, TAXATION, RESPONSIBILITY, GENERALISSIMO, AGGRANDIZEMENT, EMIGRATION.'

---

plan of lectures on the principles of Nonconformity. For the instruction of catechumens (1778; five editions published in 1781); see Edmund Burke, *The correspondence of Edmund Burke, 1729-1797*, ed. Thomas W Copeland et al. (10 vols., Chicago, 1958–78), vol.6, 83, n.2.

34 *The Parliamentary Register; or history of the proceedings and debates of the House of Commons*, Vol. XXVII. (London, 1790), 139, 179-88.

35 See James E Bradley, 'The Public, Parliament and the Protestant Dissenting Deputies, 1732-1740,' 71–90, and G M Ditchfield, ''How Narrow will the Limits of this Toleration Appear?' Dissenting Petitions to Parliament, 1772-1773', *Parliament and Dissent*, ed. Stephen Taylor and David L Wykes (Edinburgh, 2005), 91–106.

In the course of *A political catechism*, the Parent leads George to some unflattering conclusions about the current government's incursions into the religious and political liberties of its citizens, characterizing King George III as 'an ignorant libertine' for his irresponsible deployment of money, men, and other national resources, and, particularly, his championship of the war against the American colonists.[36] The book sold so briskly that a third edition was published in 1784. In the meantime, in 1783, the Society for Constitutional Information had published extracts from the catechism

The reciprocal responsibilities of citizens and government on the issue of natural rights are highlighted throughout the work in the exchanges between the Parent, or 'P,' and George, or 'G':

> P. What…are the private rights of men in society?
>
> G. I have understood, they are either that residuum of natural liberty, which is not required to be given up, or they are civil privileges, which society engages to provide in lieu of the natural liberties given up by individuals.
>
> P. So the British civil constitution is nothing but a declaration of the natural rights of mankind?
>
> G. So I think.[37]

In his 2 March 1790 speech, Burke also alluded to another of Robinson's didactic publications, *Plan of lectures on the principles of Nonconformity. For the instruction of catechumens* (1778), written to support what became 'The Dissenting Ministers' Act' (1779) that allowed Dissenting ministers to preach and serve as schoolmasters without requiring subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles. In this work, Robinson outlined his understanding of the theological, historical, and partisan bases for Dissenters' objections to the teachings and practices of the Church of England. He began with the fundamental tenet that 'the most free religious inquiry…is essential to religion' and 'is expressly commanded by Jesus Christ - HIS prophets and apostles;' that free inquiry 'injures no civil rights' because 'the three grand articles implied in it' are

---

[36] See G M Ditchfield, *George III: An essay in monarchy* (Houndsmill, 2002); James E Bradley, 'The Anglican Pulpit, the Social Order, and the Resurgence of Toryism during the American Revolution', *Albion* 21.3 (Fall 1989), 361–88.

[37] Robert Robinson, *A Political catechism* (London, 1782[ECCO]), 35.

'THE sole dominion of Christ - The right of private judgement - [and] entire liberty of conscience allowed by an universal toleration - neither of these interferes with secular things - All ennoble society - AND ENRICH AND AGGRANDIZE A NATION'[38]

Like *Political catechism*, Robinson's *Plan of lectures* continued to be reprinted until 1843 when an eighth edition appeared. The 1831 edition prefixed Robinson's title with *State religion indefensible*. The fifth edition published in 1781 contained a new preface in which Robinson described with some surprise angry responses to the work, including those by a 'noble peer' and the 'prebendary of Winchester,' John Sturges, who criticized Robinson's analysis in the House of Lords, and who wrote about them in a 'series of letters to the Lord Bishop of London.' In his account, Sturges took great exception to Robinson's assertion that 'all Human Legislation is oppressive to conscience.'[39] Addicott reports that *Plan of Lectures* 'caused such a stir in both Houses [of Parliament] it might have been a revolutionary manifesto,' although he provides no supporting documentation.[40] On the basis of these excerpts from two from among his fifty-odd published works, the wonder is that Robinson was not publicly identified as a political subversive years before 1790: by his own account, he knew as early as 1767 that more orthodox Dissenting ministers in London viewed him as '*a kind of outlaw, a wild savage*.'[41]

Burke's astute coupling of Robinson's texts focused on the twin

---

38 Robert Robinson, *Lectures on the principles of Nonconformity. For the instruction of catechumens* (Cambridge, 1778 [ECCO]). At the end of her life, Mary Hays made a present to Henry Crabb Robinson of 'a little memento of my friend, Mr. Robinson of Cambridge, a Pioneer in all the great events which have succeeded him, his Plan of Lectures on Nonconformity, which was presented to me by himself. It was taken to the House of Commons, and read there, as a proof of the disaffected spirit of the Dissenters.' On the original letter in Crabb Robinson's handwriting appear the words 'Robert Robertson's Catechism', a correction to Hays's confusion of the work Burke mentioned. Mary Hays letter to Henry Crabb Robinson, April 1842, Dr. Williams's Library, HCR 154 (a).

39 John Sturges, *Considerations on the present state of the church-establishment, in letters to the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of London* (London, 1779 [ECCO]).

40 Len Addicott, 'Introduction,' *Church book: St Andrew's Street Baptist Church, Cambridge 1720-1832* (London: Baptist Historical Society, 1991), xiv.

41 Robert Robinson, 'To a dissenting minister, Cambridge, April 6, 1767,' in Robinson ed., *Select works of Robinson*, I, 177–78.

lodestars of Robinson's theology and politics: the sacrosanct right to private judgement, and as a consequence, the privilege and responsibility of the people to determine their own social contracts, clerical as well as civil. Burke also discerned Robinson's 'social alienation' (Bradley's phrase)[42] from Establishment culture as a frightening trigger in the emergence of late Enlightenment radicalism.[43] In fact, Burke was sufficiently concerned about Robinson as one of a breed of political agitators that he invoked him again a few months later in his influential *Reflections on the Revolution in France and on the proceedings in certain societies in London relative to that event*, published in November, 1790.[44]

The catalyst for Burke's ferocious attack on the supporters of the ideals of the French Revolution[45] was a speech in observance of the anniversary of the Glorious Revolution given by Dr. Richard Price, a leading thinker among the Rational Dissenters and an advocate of the American Revolution.[46] Burke lit into Price, but no doubt had Robinson in mind too, when he lambasted the Dissenters for their optimistic prognostications for the future, accusing them of inexperience '*in all* [the nation's] *affairs, on which they pronounce with so much confidence*'.[47] For Burke's nineteenth-century editor, Edward John Payne, this brought to mind a passage from *Arcana*: 'Try experiments, as sound philosophers have done, and on them raise a legislative system!' He commented, in the manner of Burke, 'this is a specimen of the wisdom of the Rev. Robert Robinson, another of these political divines; once famous as a Baptist minister at Cambridge.'[48]

---

42 Bradley, 'The Religious Origins of Radical Politics'.

43 See John Seed's qualification of Bradley's view in ''A set of men powerful enough in many things',' *Enlightenment and Religion*, 140-68.

44 Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France, and on the proceedings in certain societies in London relative to that event. In a letter intended to have been sent to a gentleman in Paris. By the Right Honourable Edmund Burke* (2nd edn., London, 1790 [ECCO]).

45 Ditchfield reminds that in *The begetters of revolution. England's involvement with France, 1759–78* (Totowa, NJ, 1973), Derek Jarrett 'argues that Burke's real target in the *Reflections* was not so much the French Revolution (in its early stages) but the Circle of Lord Shelburne' that included Price and Priestley.

46 See D O Thomas, *Richard Price and America* (Aberystwyth, 1975).

47 Burke, *Reflections*, 14, my italics.

48 E J Payne ed., Edmund Burke, *Select works of Edmund Burke* (2 vols., Oxford, 1892-

The virulence of Burke's rhetoric directed at Robinson suggests that he recognized the maverick Robinson as a much read and therefore galvanizing - rather than representative - figure, in the diffusion of the idea of private judgement and the transformation of religious Dissent into political dissent[49] as we understand it in modern terms. The sojourn with the three Americans attests that Robinson's reputation reached even to America. It is unlikely that Burke knew of the visit of the three American rebels to Chesterton.

As ambassadors for the College of New Jersey seeking financial and moral support abroad, Witherspoon and Reed were not successful in the relatively anti-American climate of opinion in post-war England. Their stop at Chesterton, in part, may have been to seek solace and sociability from a like-minded host. Beyond comfort, the Americans called on Robinson at his home to pay tribute to a fellow believer in the right to private judgement in its extreme manifestations. Their invitation to immigrate to the States recognized his uneasy relations with his British contemporaries, as previous and subsequent offers to other Rational Dissenters had and would.[50] Richard Price had already been urged to come to America, but declined. A decade later Joseph Priestley eventually settled in Pennsylvania following the burning of his home, library, and laboratory by a Birmingham mob in retaliation for his support of revolution and his professed Unitarianism. The call to Robinson likely also was tendered because he, in common with the Americans, was passionate about the moral and political education of the young as crucial to the social progress the four men envisioned.

---

98), 302 note on p.13, 1.24. Payne (1844-1904) felt that Burke's criticism of the French Revolutionaries was somewhat harsh. He argued that his real target in *Reflections* was Price and his associates, and as far as that was concerned, Payne wrote, 'we sympathise in its effects on the malcontents in England' (Ibid., xv).

49 Russell E Richey, 'Did the English Presbyterians Become Unitarian?' *Church History*, 42.1 (March, 1973), 58–72.

50 A message from an archivist at Cambridge University is suggestive of the institution's anti-American sentiments in 1784: 'I think that if as eminent a man as Reed had visited the University, the fact would have long since appeared in one of the University histories; not least because of the then conservatism of the University and its antipathy to revolution, republicanism and change! I can find no reference to him however in any of the secondary literature. Yours sincerely, J Cox, University Archives, 3 July 2003.'

John Witherspoon's presence is especially suggestive of this intent. Like Robinson, Witherspoon was an active minister, a scholar, a linguist, and a teacher of moral philosophy, Reform Theology and History, Divinity, and Political Theory. He quickly became an American patriot: soon after arriving in New Jersey from Scotland he commented, 'A man will become an American by residing in this country for three months.'[51] At the college commencement in September 1770, James Witherspoon, John Witherspoon's son, gave a speech in which he argued 'that it was the obligation of subjects to resist a tyrannical king.'[52] President Witherspoon failed to impose any disciplinary consequences when the college's students 'burned a winter's supply of tea' with the effigy of the governor of Massachusetts to show their support for the Boston Tea Party in 1774.

In common with Robinson, Witherspoon was well-schooled in the history of political ideas and taught resistance to tyranny in his renowned Moral Philosophy course. His lectures at the College were based on the texts of English and Scottish Enlightenment *philosophes* including Clark, Wollaston, Campbell, Smith, Hume, and particularly Francis Hutcheson. Witherspoon was familiar with Continental, as well as English thinkers: according to the records of James Madison, one of his pupils, Witherspoon assigned required readings from the works of Grotius, Puffendorf, Barbeyrac, Cumberland, Selden, Burlamaqui, Hobbes's *Leviathan*, Machiavelli, Locke's *Two Treaties of Government* and other works, and Algernon Sidney.[53] Like Robinson, Witherspoon found support in the Bible for his political beliefs.[54] Witherspoon's texts - sermons, lectures, letters - argue, as did Robinson, that civil and religious rights are mutually dependent and reinforcing: 'I am satisfied,' Witherspoon said in his sermon, 'The Dominion of Providence Over the Passions of Men' (1776),

---

51 Tait, 'Introduction,' *Works of John Witherspoon*, viii.

52 Jeffry H Morrison, *John Witherspoon and the founding of the American Republic* (Notre Dame, 2005), 73. Major James Witherspoon died in 1777 at the Battle of Germantown.

53 Dennis F Thompson, 'Bibliography: The Education of a Founding Father. The Reading List for John Witherspoon's Course in Political Theory, as Taken by James Madison', *Political Theory*, 4.4 (Nov. 1976), 523–9.

54 Morrison, *John Witherspoon*, 78.

> that the confederacy of the colonies has not been the effect of pride, resentment, or sedition, but of a deep and general conviction that our civil and religious liberties, and subsequently in a great measure the temporal and eternal happiness of us and our posterity, depended on the issue….If therefore we yield up our temporal property, we at the same time deliver the conscience into bondage.[55]

Witherspoon may have considered Robinson a good prospect as a teacher for the College of New Jersey. Although Witherspoon was the product of Scottish Presbyterian education, he emphasized the 'nonsectarian nature' of the College since its founding in 1746.[56] Active as both president and politician, Witherspoon was also the tutor with primary responsibility for instructing the college's students in philosophy, divinity, rhetoric, history, chronology, and French.[57] It has been suggested that elite education in the early republic may have been influenced by the more progressive curricula in some Dissenting academies in England.[58] Robinson knew as friends, parishioners, and supporters some of the theological radicals in the Cambridge community - John Jebb, William Frend - and tutors at the New College at Hackney like Gilbert Wakefield. His own passion for reformist education was expressed during the last year of his life when Robinson collaborated with Capel Lofft (1751-1824) on plans for the establishment of a new Dissenting academy in Cambridge where Unitarian George Dyer was to be tutor.[59] Robinson's premature death prevented realization of the project.

In his letter of 22 June, Robinson called his correspondent's attention to the Americans' talk of 'liberty, property, law, commerce, religion, and

---

55 *Ibid*, 84–5.

56 *Ibid*, 47.

57 Leitch, *A Princeton companion*.

58 Francis L Broderick, 'Pulpit, Physics, and Politics: The Curriculum of the College of New Jersey 1746–1794', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., 6.1 (Jan., 1949), 42–68. For a discussion of the variations among curricula in the Dissenting Academies, see David L Wykes, 'The Contributions of the Dissenting Academies to Rational Dissent,' *Enlightenment and religion*, 99–139.

59 Roger Meyenberg, *Capel Lofft and the English sonnet tradition, 1770-1815* (Tübingen, 2005), 13. John Stephens gives 1781 as the date when Robinson planned the Cambridge Dissenting academy, 'Robert Robinson' (*ODNB*).

a future state of perfect and everlasting felicity.' Robinson and his visitors were Protestants, but of differing training and creeds. However, on that occasion in Chesterton, heterodoxy, apparently, was less important than their shared belief in the right to private judgement among the four activists for civil liberty. Robinson concluded his account of the Americans' visit by blessing them and their young republic, praising the new country in the words of a psalm. 'Happiest of countries!' he wrote, 'Peace and prosperity attend you! I shall never see you; but if I forget the ability and virtue that struggled to obtain, and actually did obtain, all that mankind hold dear, let my right hand forget her cunning.'[60] Robinson's brief encounter with Reed and especially Witherspoon allows us to imagine a moment when theological differences and political disaffection transcended secular and religious identities and progressed beyond schism and sectarianism to a new form of toleration and alliance[61] that Robinson had long anticipated.

Robert Robinson believed unequivocally that America and the Americans were not science fiction, and that across the Atlantic there was a 'happiest country,' a New Jerusalem.

Gina Luria Walker
The New School
New York

[60] *Psalm 137*, Verse 5.

[61] See also Anthony Page, *John Jebb and the Enlightenment* (Westport, 2003), and 'Liberty has an Asylum', *History* (2002), 204-26, for evidence of John Jebb's concurrent encounters with John Adams in 1783.

RECONSIDERING KANT'S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Howard Williams

The purpose of this short article is to shed light on how my understanding of Kant's political thought has developed - and in a good deal more incidental way indicate how its understanding in the English speaking world has changed - since I began studying it in the 1970s. In the intervening period there has been an enormous growth in the number of publications on the topic and in the significance of Kant as figure in the history of political thought. Partly this growth has been generated by the esteem which John Rawls accorded to Kant's moral and political philosophy in presenting his writings and the significant use to which he put Kantian ideas in his *A theory of justice* (1971) and his later *Political liberalism* (1993). Partly also it has been brought about by the influence enjoyed by Kantian inspired ideas, such as the 'democratic peace thesis' and human rights cosmopolitanism in political studies and international relations in general. These factors combined with the enormous shift that has been brought about in world politics by the end of the Cold War have brought Kant to the centre of the stage in political philosophy in a manner that was impossible to anticipate. The increase in Kant's influence in political and international theory now makes disputes about his interpretation of more immediate interest and their applicability/ inapplicability a good deal more hotly contested than when I first entered the field. This article takes advantage of a review of a more recent book I have published on the topic to highlight ten key changes I have made in my appreciation of Kant.

In a review of my *Kant's critique of Hobbes: sovereignty and cosmopolitanism* [*KCH*] in *Kant-Studien*, 2, 2007,[1] Georg Geismann suggests that a reader may experience a sense of *déjà vu* in that the book repeats many of the same mistakes as my earlier *Kant's political philosophy* [*KPP*] (Oxford: 1983). The mistakes that seem particularly to concern him are my treatment of the connection between ethics and politics in Kant and my apparent misunderstanding of Kant's concept of

[1] 256-61

freedom. In several articles and contributions to edited volumes over the years Geismann has presented a picture of Kant's political philosophy as a wholly distinct enterprise from his general moral philosophy and one independent therefore of the main precepts of the critical philosophy.[2] Kantian liberty or political freedom is seen by Geismann as wholly distinct from the general concept of freedom Kant develops in the First and Second *Critiques*. Needless to say this is entirely different from the view I present in both books of Kant's political philosophy as an integral part of his system as a whole. The Copernican Revolution affects, I have held always, Kant's political philosophy as much as it does his epistemology and ethics. Pleased as I am by Geismann's suggestion that I have remained consistent in my interpretation of Kant, I am very glad of the opportunity it has now offered me to point out the respects in which my approach has changed in the intervening twenty years, both as a result of taking note of the numerous reviews of *KPP* and by maintaining and deepening my reading of Kant and Kant scholarship. It is disappointing to learn from Geismann's review that not all Kant scholars share my reading of his work but I was guided, as is Geismann, by the objective of providing the most plausible account that is supported by the evidence. The evidence clearly permits several different lines of interpretation and I am glad to enter into a dialogue as to its possible implications.

The major change that has taken place in my appreciation of Kant since the appearance of *KPP* is that I have become less equivocal about the moral position that Kant presents. Although in the earlier work I was drawn to Kant's view that morality requires us to act on principle, I was not certain that he had spelled out fully, or persuasively, the context in which action should take place. I am now more convinced of the merits of Kant's universalistic, a priori approach to morality. Whatever starting point that is adopted in establishing a moral point of view, abstraction - placing ourselves in the shoes of others and arguing our case before an imagined public audience, susceptible to and judging on the basis of a common reason - is unavoidable.

The earlier work was influenced strongly by the idea that a more concrete ethics in the style of Hegel and the young Marx might represent

---

[2] E.g., 'Recht und Moral in der Philosophie Kants', in *Jahrbuch für Recht und Ethik*, 14 (2006) 3-124

a better path to follow in social and political philosophy than Kant's more abstract individualistic approach. In KPP I argue that on ethics 'Hegel's criticisms of Kant are not entirely without merit. Kant's ethics is certainly not as clear-cut in its recommendations as Hegel's own. The individual is always left in doubt by Kant as to exactly what is his duty.' (193) The would-be good citizen is left in no doubt by Hegel as to how he should act where conflict may occur between public and private standards - the public standards must come first. With Kant, however, there are circumstances that can arise in which the individual has to follow his own conscience regardless of the priorities of the state or the community. Kant seeks always to harmonize community morality and individual conscience; he rules out the subordination of individual conscience to the standpoint of the community that underlies Hegel's *Philosophy of right*.[3]

Indeed, in *KPP* I saw many virtues to Kant's position but still held out the possibility that they might have been incorporated in a more communitarian approach. This is particularly clear in the ninth chapter where I consider 'Two Marxist views of Kant's Political Philosophy' by glossing sympathetically the interpretations offered by Lucian Goldmann and Herbert Marcuse of Kant's social doctrines. Attempts to buttonhole Kant - from both the right and the left - as a peculiarly 'bourgeois' thinker belie the complexities of his philosophy. Kant was undoubtedly influenced by the novel capitalist developments of his time but he was not a slave to them. Communitarian ideas are necessarily rooted to a time and a context - the working class, the nation, or the 'rising middle class' - and Kant's effort to transcend social and historical circumstance in his political thinking merits support.

My view now is more the other way - the virtues of communitarian approaches have to be integrated within a Kantian standpoint. In the chapter on 'Independence' in *KCH* I devote some space to demonstrating the plausibility of Kant's attempt to integrate the notion of fraternity which originated in the famous triadic formula of the French Revolution

[3] 'The conscience is therefore subject to judgment as to its truth or falsity, and its appeal solely to itself is directly opposed to what it seeks to be – that is, the rule for a rational and universal mode of action which is valid in and for itself. Consequently, the state cannot recognize the conscience in its distinctive form, i.e. as subjective knowledge, any more than science can grant any validity to subjective opinion, assertion, and the appeal to subjective opinion.' *Philosophy of right* (Cambridge, 1991), 135.

within the concept of the citizen's independence as a co-legislator of the commonwealth. In the section on Independence in *KPP* (144-5) this line of thought is not considered, instead it is preoccupied with the limitations of Kant's conception of internal citizenship.

A second important change is that I no longer think that Kant has an excessively problematic 'internalist' account of freedom. I claim in *KPP* that 'like so many of the rationalist philosophers who preceded him, Kant puts forward an internal, or subjective, account of human freedom'. I compare Kant with Spinoza for whom 'men were only truly free when they were contemplating God' (35). I now see this approach as failing properly to capture Kant's concept of practical freedom which sets the human individual in a radically different context from that given by the traditional metaphysical outlook. *KPP* in my view places undue emphasis on the wholly pure dimension of Kant's account of freedom - his theory of autonomy as presented in the *Groundwork* - at the expense of the active (including political) dimension of his account. In some senses this error was understandable since traditionally the bulk of the attention to Kant's practical philosophy has been given to the pure aspect and a lot less to the pure *and* applied aspect. *KCH* seeks to compensate for this in the disputed chapter on freedom where I set the three dimensions to Kant's concept of freedom: the transcendental; the practical; and the legal/political which Geismann's review highlights. I now view the latter two dimensions in an activist, socially engaged light.

A third respect in which I have changed my position is that I have come to agree with Kant that a radical, wholly bottom-up, approach in politics is fraught with difficulties. Another way of putting this is to say that I no longer believe that mass democracy provides a straightforward solution to political difficulties. I believe I have come to a clearer view of the relationship between Kant's concept of the republic and modern democracy. I now think that Kant's view of representative government is more workable than a direct participatory democracy. In the debate between Rousseau and Kant about the general will I am now more drawn to Kant than Rousseau. I conceive as the ideal a deliberative democracy which works fully within the representative model presented by Kant. Whereas in *KPP* I express somewhat skeptically that Kant 'cannot foresee public and self-interest being directly combined, rather men have to be ruled by another for them to realize their common interests' (176) as though it were possible for everyone politically to rule themselves, I now

acknowledge that a separation of powers is both necessary and desirable. As I put it in *KCH*, Kant is right to baulk 'at the notion of an absolutely authoritative general will commanding the society from the bottom up'(130).

A fourth feature of my altered reading of Kant is that I think that I now demonstrate a stronger appreciation of the role of publicity in political improvement. Kant unequivocally defends the freedom of expression not merely as an outlet for a people's discontents over the guardianship of their rulers but also as one of the principal means for bringing about reform. *KPP* focuses a great deal on the brittleness of Kant's principle when 'the protesting citizen' is 'faced by a tyrant or dictator'(157). This extreme case is of course an important test of Kant's thinking, but in emphasizing the example where the agreement between the citizen and the ruler is undermined by the latter the citizen is unfairly let off keeping to his side of the agreement. The protesting citizen should indeed seek to pursue legitimate criticisms against the putative tyrant; however, reserving the right to return to a 'state of nature' should not be an option for either the ruler or the subject in an established civil condition. I appreciate more fully the value of the bargain between philosophers (who gain the right to express themselves freely) and rulers (who gain the obedience of their philosopher critics) which provides the context for an enlightened government. This is reflected in *KCH* where I say Kant believes that 'the power of sovereignty should be exercised in the public gaze and be subject to the criticisms of the learned classes'(211).

Fifth, I believe I now have a better understanding of the connection between domestic and international politics in the Kantian perspective. *KCH* in my view shows a fuller appreciation of the international dimension of Kant's social contract. Although the final chapter of *KPP* is devoted to the international aspect of Kant's writing, with special emphasis being placed on *Perpetual peace* (and to a lesser extent on *Religion within the boundaries of mere reason*), there is insufficient appreciation of the extent to which the flourishing of the domestic sphere depends on the success of the world-wide project. *KPP* indeed notes that for Kant 'the problems of internal order within states and external order amongst states are inextricably linked' but it inclines towards a two-step process where the 'same style of approach to the reform of the world political system' is taken 'as to the reform of the domestic political

system'(244). However, there can be no complete sorting out of the domestic political system that can occur before the international system is reformed. The transformation of the one has to take place at the same time as that of the other. As I note in *KCH*, the development of independent citizenship within the state proceeds successfully only with the simultaneous adoption of cosmopolitan goals. Kant 'persuasively extends the boundaries of citizenship, seeing independent individuals as connected to each other in a worldwide civil society.' What connects them is their law-making capacity - either directly or through their representatives. With the growth of representative government there is a common task that all citizens share throughout the world: devising laws for themselves that can be consensually agreed and justly applied (157),

KCH brings out better, I think, the provisional nature of right or law at the national level given the continuance of the international state of nature. By provisional here is meant the incompleteness of the legal order produced by the establishment of sovereignty within the nation state - as occurred in Europe from the seventeenth century onwards. As Kant sees it, the modern state (which follows the Hobbesian or Westphalian model) does not provide a complete safeguard for the security of an individual's property. The prime aim of government, as John Locke sees it, is frustrated. Security is indeed provided vis-à-vis other members of the nation state concerned but it is not provided in relation to the subjects of other states, these other states themselves, and not at all in relation to human beings outside the state system (e.g. indigenous populations). In the absence of a peaceful international federation amongst the developed nation states a condition equivalent to the state of nature exists amongst them. The eruption of war that takes place amongst and within nations is a symptom of this lack of security and brings out the provisional nature of right. This international state of nature has to be overcome to transform the provisional right we have to property within our state into a continuous and permanent form of right. Kant is unique amongst the political theorists of the eighteenth and nineteenth century in presenting

[4] Of course anarchists, like Bakunin and Kropotkin and the revolutionary communists Marx and Engels, denied altogether the justice of national states and called for their overthrow, however Kant's thinking works more with the grain of the national state system.

internal justice as only a provisional form of justice.[4] He presents a challenge to the taken for granted condition of war amongst nations which is entirely appropriate in today's increasingly interdependent world.[5]

Sixth, in *KPP* Kant's international relations thinking was presented as a utopian sketch, albeit with many contemporary resonances. I thought of it as a standard by which to measure present day theorizing about world politics. Now I am more convinced that it presents a workable goal and I certainly believe it a worthwhile project to seek to refine his ideas to meet with current circumstances. Arguably Kant was right to think that implicit in the Westphalian system of his time was a more workable world order. The stipulations of *Perpetual peace* are an integral part of his system of right which need to be implemented if right in general is to prevail. *KPP* presented *Perpetual peace* more as an addendum to Kant's principal arguments on politics and rights in his earlier essays and his 1797 Doctrine of Right (Part one of the *Metaphysics of morals*). Now I see Kant's political thinking as an integrated whole where *Perpetual peace* is seen as both growing out of the systematic political theory of the Doctrine of Right and as also completing the practical dimension of the whole critical project.

Seventh, above all *KCH* has allowed me to remove the concerns expressed in *KPP* that Kant was somehow complicit in the defence of an authoritarian liberalism. In *KPP* I say for instance 'that if Kant is to be seen as a liberal, he must be seen, above all, as a liberal in the German context' and go on to suggest 'the limitations of Kant's liberalism' might be seen as 'indicative of the limitations of German political development that come to a tragic head in the Nazi period'(127). I have come around to the view that Kant's liberalism is one soundly based on the idea of a constitutionally regulated popular sovereignty. Although cautious about political change, which, he believes, should take place through a process of metamorphosis rather than revolution, Kant is earnest in his republicanism. Another, more historically sensitive, way of putting this is to say that we have to look outside Kant's thinking to discover why European liberalism (most dramatically of course in Nazi Germany) collapsed in the 1930s. *KPP* tends to suggest that Kant's liberalism did

[5] Cf. Elisabeth Ellis, *Kant's politics: provisional theory for an uncertain world* (New Haven, 2005), 70 & 114.

not have the resources to combat authoritarianism. My view now is that the resources are sufficiently available but need to be properly deployed. As I put it in *KCH*, Kant's 'republicanism is no simple visionary ideal. It presents the classical alternative to Hobbes's autocratic/oligarchic political theory. With an eye to events in Britain, France and the United States, Kant modernizes Cicero's republicanism'(231). This is a republicanism that is not docile in relation to society's rulers but demands of them both their obedience to law and the freedom of expression for citizens.

Eighth, I believe that *KCH* offers a clearer presentation of the relationship between Kant's political theory and the French Revolution. *KPP* played down the extent to which Kant saw eye to eye with the revolutionaries in their republican principles. *KPP* suggested Kant was placed in an untenable position by the undoubted reservations he expressed about the radical measures adopted by the new French regime (particularly his deep antipathy to the execution of the King) and his support for the key principles of the revolution. I say for instance that 'the enthusiasm which Kant shows for the French Revolution' is 'highly qualified' and that his 'argument is far from sound'(210-11), and I go on to suggest that when 'he has to will the means to achieve the republican aims and ideals he espouses, Kant's pragmatic conservatism gets the better of him'(213). I now see the suggestion that 'Kant's mistake is to see only anarchy and chaos resulting from a revolutionary challenge to the existing order'(213) as contradictory in that Kant does see that good can arise indirectly even from reprehensible challenges to civilizational standards such as war and revolution. In *KCH* I suggest that Kant's position can be defended as part of his evolutionary conception of politics and is surely to be preferred to Hobbes's outright hostility to all aspects of revolution. 'Slow reform is the policy that Kant recommends and not rapid revolution. He does not deny that revolutions end the reign of tyrants and temporarily remove corruption, but he doubts the effects can be lasting.' Kant is 'suspicious of unrestrained political power but he is also skeptical of the ability of a society to reform itself overnight'(23).

Ninth, in *KPP* no attempt was made to situate Kant's political thinking in relation to figures of the popular Enlightenment in Germany. The chapter on Garve in *KCH* attempts in a small way to make good this

defect. Maybe a contrast with other figures, like Moses Mendelssohn (as Geismann indicates) may have revealed more, but Garve was a long time critic to whom Kant paid close attention and was a philosopher who made much of the attempt to link British empiricist philosophy to current German ideas. In response, as *KCH* puts it, 'Kant warned about the dangers he took to be inherent in this Epicurean or utilitarian philosophy.' In Kant's view, according priority in our aims to 'the pursuit of happiness' leads to an 'incoherent moral and political doctrine.' Enlightenment for Kant implies 'the subordination of the pursuit of happiness (an aim we could not wholly renounce as natural beings) to the pursuit of virtue'(68).

Tenth, I think that *KCH* offers a fuller and better discussion of Kant's idea of equality than *KPP*. As several commentators have pointed out,[6] *KPP* accepts only in an indirect way that the redistribution of income and wealth might be a legitimate objective of Kantian politics. *KCH* puts the goal of redistribution more directly in the sphere of right and provides examples of the way in which this might be achieved. Nonetheless like *KPP*, *KCH* argues that inequality too has a role to play in spurring on the human race to progress.

A major change has taken place over the years in my understanding of Kant's concept of the welfare of the state (*Heil des Staates*). It is true that for Kant the idea of the well-being of a state has more to do with the proper arrangements among the various arms of government than it has with the well-being of individual members of the society. *KPP* focuses very strongly on this formal side of Kant's account of welfare (194-5). It brings out how Kant believes that priority has to given to ensuring that a proper balance is attained among the powers of the state in order to achieve justice. A primary concern for Kant in determining the well-being of a state is that the executive, legislative, and judicial arms of government are kept distinct, yet also work in harmony or unity. This harmony of the distinct branches of government in accordance with the principles of right constitutes in Kant's political philosophy, in Cicero's phrase, 'the safety of the people'. In contrast the happiness of the citizens is a secondary concern: there can be no compromise with the principles of legality.

---

[6] Cf. Susan Williams Holtman 'Kantian Justice and Poverty Relief' *Kant-Studien*, 95, no. 1, 86-106.

This is a very powerful point that Kant makes and its importance made me overlook in *KPP* the significance of what Kant holds to be another crucial aspect of the responsibilities of the State, namely, to make provision for the poor and those who through no fault of their own have become dependent on society as a whole. In *KPP* I mistakenly suggested that 'Kant's concept of the state provides the sovereign with the authority to help the poor' but it 'does not establish the right to do so'(197). *KPP* argues wrongly that the right of the government to help the poor derives from ethics rather than law. I should have seen that Kant's concept of right includes in it the possibility of aiding members of the society who are all parties to the social contract when they are unable to maintain themselves. In this respect Kant's concept of the social contract is more far reaching than I believed: it takes him beyond a solely individualist perspective (one I emphasized in *KPP*) towards a mutualism that ties the freedom and flourishing of one individual to the freedom and flourishing of others. The government should not indeed pursue welfare on the individual's behalf but it should seek to create the optimum conditions where individuals can pursue their own welfare for themselves. As *KCH* puts it, from a Kantian perspective:

> 'Our grave social and cultural inequalities are much to be deplored and it is one of the most urgent tasks of the human species to seek to reduce them'(127).

Finally the treatment of individual independence in *KCH* contains a novel section highlighting the international dimension that the concept takes on in Kant's thinking - not appreciated in *KPP*. *KPP* notes that independence replaces brotherhood in the famous triad 'liberty, equality, fraternity' and presents it largely as a symptom of the individualism of Kant's political philosophy. The difficulties that Kant experiences in determining precisely who is to be regarded as an independent citizen in a developing capitalist economy (148) play a prominent part in the discussion in *KPP. KCH* takes a different view presenting independence also as an attempt to create solidarity amongst nations of the world that are to be linked through their independent legislative representatives. Here he 'persuasively extends the boundaries of citizenship, seeing independent individuals as connected to each other in a worldwide civil society. They are connected through the role of law-making' (156).

None of this proves that *KCH* is a better book than *KPP* but it shows that *KCH* follows a significantly different line of argument on key issues concerning Kant's political philosophy. As the list demonstrates there are a considerable number of areas where my understanding of Kant's political thinking and its implications have changed and become more complex. The continuities are indeed marked: Kant is located within the context of modern political theory, engaged with his contemporaries and the major figures of the tradition but giving political theory a novel moral-cosmopolitan turn. But I have become more aware how Kant's political theory addresses many of the key issues that concern us today. There are many other elements of difference between the two works that I have not been able to note here, but I hope readers will be sufficiently intrigued to seek to discover for themselves where the alterations are to be found and to evaluate for themselves the contribution it makes to Kant scholarship and political philosophy.

Howard Williams
Aberystwyth University

'An Extraordinary Destiny': Mary Hays, Dissenting Feminist

Mary Spongberg

Marilyn L Brooks ed., ***The Correspondence (1779-1843) of Mary Hays,*** Mellon Critical Editions and Translations, vol. 13, Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 2004, pp.xx + 632; hdbk., ISBN 0-7734-6357-7, £89.95; $149.95; **Gina Luria Walker ed.,** ***The Idea of Being Free: A Mary Hays Reader,*** Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2006 pp.343, £9.99; $16.95; pbk, ISBN: 1-55111-559-X; **Gina Luria Walker,** ***Mary Hays (1759-1843): The Growth of A Woman's Mind,*** Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006, pp.287; hdbk., ISBN: 978-0-7546-4061-5, £50; $99.95; Ashgate Online, $89.96.

Since the late eighteenth century Mary Hays has occupied an unfortunate critical space, akin perhaps to the place she must have felt she occupied for sometime in her life, awkwardly positioned between the rational philosopher William Godwin and the 'romantic' feminist Mary Wollstonecraft. Known principally for the scandalous 'novel' *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796), Hays was grouped by contemporaries along with those women named in Richard Polwhele's rabidly anti-feminist poem 'The Unsex'd Females' (1798) as 'a Wollstonecraftian'. When critical attention turned to Hays in the mid-twentieth century, she was first categorized as a 'disciple of Godwin', one of a number of women who formed 'a sort of philosophic seraglio' around him.[1] This slightly scandalous assignment echoed Polwhele and implied that Hays' primary interest in Godwin was erotic. Early biographers of Godwin such as Ford K Brown reported that Hays proposed marriage to Godwin 'in 1795 or early 1796'[2] - an unsubstantiated claim implying that Hays was in love with William Frend and William Godwin simultaneously. Unhindered by

[1] This term was used by M Ray Adams in 'Mary Hays, Disciple of William Godwin', *PMLA* (*Proceedings of the Modern language Association*), 55:2 (1940), 472, and described women such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Amelia Opie, Maria Reveley, Eliza Fenwick, and Elizabeth Inchbald.

[2] Ford K Brown, *The life of William Godwin* (New York, 1926), 109.

fact, such statements were bolstered by unflattering descriptions of Hays by Samuel Coleridge and Robert Southey, as if by rendering her ridiculous, the possibility of such a proposal might also be rendered true.[3] There are echoes here too, of other contemporary accounts of Hays, written by enemies such as Elizabeth Hamilton, who parodied Hays with the character of Bridgetina Botherem, in her satirical novel *The memoirs of modern philosophers*. Although Hays was only one of a number of Godwin's circle skewered by Hamilton's sharp wit, she became identified with Bridgetina and later commentators have confused fact with fiction.

The rise of second wave feminism saw the recovery of Mary Wollstonecraft and with this, the rediscovery of Mary Hays. Wollstonecraft's dramatic life has, however, long-overshadowed Hays' relatively staid existence, and consequently her political ideas were framed in ways that made them seem less radical, less dramatic and less potent. Claire Tomalin's depiction of Hays in her biography of Wollstonecraft is typical in its representation of Hays as enthralled by Wollstonecraft to the extent that upon reading the *Vindication*, 'she laid a side for the moment a half-finished attempt to cover the same subject' and 'became Mary's most fervent disciple'.[4] While scholars such as Tomalin have done much to draw Hays into the discussion of Enlightenment feminism, she has suffered by comparison with her beautiful and brilliant friend. Hays' career as a radical woman of letters predated her relationship with both Wollstonecraft and Godwin. It

---

3 F K Brown makes clear there is no mention of a proposal in Godwin's diaries, *The Life of William Godwin*, 111. Godwin's more recent biographer William St Clair does not mention a proposal, but nonetheless implies that Godwin held an erotic fascination for Hays, and that she 'could not conceal her disappointment' upon hearing news of Godwin's marriage to Wollstonecraft. He makes no mention of William Frend in this account. Throughout St Clair's account of the Godwin-Hays-Wollstonecraft relationship there is a sneering dismissal of Hays whom he describes as enjoying the 'small fame given to those who come second'. See William St Clair, *The Godwins and the Shelleys* (London, 1989), 141-156.

4 Claire Tomalin, *The life and death of Mary Wollstonecraft* (London, 1974), 143. See also Kathleen M Rogers, 'The Contribution of Mary Hays', *Prose Studies*, 10:2 (1987), 131-142. Gary Kelly describes Hays work as less 'overtly political' than that of Wollstonecraft and Godwin and essentially casts her as acting 'under Wollstonecraft's direction'. *Women, writing and revolution 1790-1827* (Oxford, 1993), 109.

continued long after Wollstonecraft's death and the break with Godwin that ensued from this tragedy, her life however has largely been defined by the fraught friendship she shared with them during their intense, short-lived period of revolutionary domesticity.

This focus has ensured that scholars have rarely engaged with the breadth and complexity of Hays' *oeuvre*, and have had little understanding of how her writings were critical to feminism as it morphed from an eighteenth-century discourse of rights, into a politics informed by experience, sensibility and reaction against the misogynistic excesses of the French Revolution. Indeed Hays' career following the death of Wollstonecraft has been framed by historical accounts that mark the nadir of Enlightenment feminism with her demise. In line with this trajectory Hays' career has been split into two distinct phases. The first phase characterised by a growing commitment to 'revolutionary feminism' under the tutelage of Wollstonecraft, and the second defined by a repudiation of radical politics following Wollstonecraft's death. This trajectory has also ensured that her major works *Female biography* (1803) and *Memoirs of queens, illustrious and celebrated* (1820) have been read as marking a conservative shift in her politics and thus have received only scant critical attention.

With the publication of Marilyn L Brook's *The correspondence (1779-1843) of Mary Hays, British novelist* (Lewiston, 2004), and two books by Gina Luria Walker, *The idea of being free: a Mary Hays' reader* (2006) and the intellectual biography *Mary Hays (1759-1843): the growth of a woman's mind* (2006), Hays is now being subjected to the sort of critical attention she has always deserved, but has not often commanded. Moving out of the shadow cast by her association with Wollstonecraft and Godwin, a new image of Hays is being generated that sees her emerging as a significant figure in the history of feminism, the history of Dissent, the history of Romanticism and the history of life writing.

Marilyn L Brooks' *The correspondence (1779-1843) of Mary Hays, British novelist* offers scholars, for the first time, a complete collection of all the available correspondence of Hays from the time of her engagement to the young Dissenter John Eccles in 1779 to her last years spent exiled from radical circles. Hays was a compulsive correspondent, and much of her early writing took the epistolary form. She believed that letter writing

was a way of replacing, or improving on conversation, and thus took seriously the task of correspondence. Until Brooks' collection appeared, scholars had to examine her letters in disparate collections, or have drawn upon the *Love letters of Mary Hays*, cautiously edited by her great-great-niece Anne F Wedd. Dependence on this volume has enhanced the sense of Hays' more sentimental tendencies. Wedd wrote of her great-aunt 'she was the type of young woman caricatured by Jane Austen in "Love and Friendship", and later represented with mild satire in the character of Marianne Dashwood'.[5] The image of Hays as a 'monster' of sensibility pervaded early scholarship and reflects more accurately the Hays caricatured in the Anti-Jacobin press.[6]

The Wedd collection contained many errors, abridgements and incorrect attributions.[7] Both Brooks and Walker reprint the introductory section of Wedd's collection 'the only self-consciously autobiographical account that survives of several that Hays was known to have written'.[8] It tells of the covert courtship between Hays and Eccles from the moment that their parents rejected their wish to marry in 1779, until Eccles sudden death from fever eighteen months later. Brooks publishes all the letters passed between Eccles and Hays, unabridged and with commentary, while the *Reader* offers a selection of letters that show the quest for erudition that underpinned her relationship with Eccles, and that anticipated her later writings on behalf of her sex.

Both editors greatly enhance our understanding of Hays during this critical period, indicating how formative her relationship with Eccles was to her development as a feminist. Brooks' analysis focuses on the generic qualities of the letters, the ways in which both correspondents adopted a self-consciously literary mode of communication, moulding their relationship into the narrative of a sentimental novel. According to

---

5 A F Wedd, *The love-letters of Mary Hays* (London, 1925), 1.

6 For example Barbara Taylor, who relies on Wedd's *Love letters* as a major source for her depiction of Hays, writes that she 'performed her life like an erotic soap-opera, Rousseau's Julie in burlesque'. See *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist imagination* (Cambridge, 2002), 188.

7 Marilyn L Brooks, *The correspondence of Mary Hays*, 31.

8 Gina Luria Walker, *The idea of being free*, 35.

Brooks, Hays was 'structuring her young life by constructing a narrative for it' and she sought to make her own personal story telling more authentic by adopting mythic, sentimental models from popular literature.[9]

Gina Luria Walker's introduction to their correspondence in *The idea of being free,* suggests that the letters between John and Mary 'presage Hays' later, public representations, in which sexuality, gender and Dissent were newly allied'.[10] In this context, the letters laid the groundwork for the political concerns that shaped her life. For Walker, Eccles is not principally a lover, but the first of a series of men to whom Hays' dedicated herself in her quest for knowledge. In Walker's account Hays initially rejects Eccles as a lover, proposing instead that he be her 'monitor' or mentor. Drawing on the precedent of Heloise and Abelard, she asks that he teach her what he knew as a man without using his knowledge to hurt her as a woman'.[11]

Hays initially drew her understanding of the relationship between Heloise and Abelard from Alexander Pope's poem 'Eloisa to Abelard'.[12] The figure of Heloise shapes Walker's compelling intellectual biography of Hays. The publication of Pope's poem in 1717 led to revival of interest in Heloise in England. Various versions of her letters to Abelard were translated and published in epistolary collections, letter-writing manuals and books of grammar. The letters, abbreviated and embellished, and removed from their medieval and religious context, presented a 'contemporized and romantic image of Heloise and Abelard'.[13] Hays desired the erotics of pedagogy the pair evoked, and the poem itself provided 'an epistolary model for Mary and John to emulate, in which the lovers are rational, high-minded, virtuous, ardent and subversive'. Later, Rousseau's Eloisa allowed Hays another precedent, and through the *Nouvelle Heloise*, 'she sensed the combustible sexual potential when woman and man came together in the pursuit of knowledge'.[14]

---

9 Brooks, *Correspondence*, 13.

10 Walker, *Idea of being free*, 35.

11 Walker, *The growth of a woman's mind*, 20.

12 It appears that Hays chose the model of Heloise before she read Rousseau.

13 Cecilia A Feilla, 'From "Sainted Maid" to "Wife in all her Grandeur": Translations of Heloise, 1687-1817' *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 28:2 (2004), 8.

14 Walker, *Growth of a woman's mind*, 12.

Following Eccles death Hays wrote their letters up into a narrative of their relationship that she hoped 'would prove an interesting manuscript for friends'.[15] As well as serving a memorial function, this narrativisation of their relationship was the inevitable result of their self-consciously literary courtship and it anticipated Hays' later attempts to make exemplary her life experience. The 'acquisition, archiving and publication of the written word' became a life-long preoccupation. This early correspondence deeply influenced the ways in which Hays would engage with others for the rest of her life. As Walker writes in *The growth of a woman's mind*, Hays was 'more comfortable with other people as correspondents than in person and responded to others' texts as if these embodied the writer. The erotic corollary of this was that she spoke more frankly of love and sex in her letters than face-to-face with the objects of her desire'.[16]

Hays' letters to Eccles reveal an 'abiding frustration at the gulf between male and female education', and when caught in an ambiguous state as 'virgin widow' Hays again drew on the example of Heloise to transform herself into a 'learned lady'.[17] In the decade she took to recover from Eccles' death, she plunged into an intensive course of self-education that led her into contact with the controversial Dissenting minister Robert Robinson. In choosing the maverick Robinson to mentor her in her quest to become learned, Walker tells us, Hays was responding to 'both his public character as to the private man who educated his daughters as he did his sons'.[18] Hays would credit Robinson with saving her life, as she confessed to Henry Crabb Robinson, he '[lifted] me by the energies of his genius from the morbid effects of a deep-rooted grief'.[19] As their correspondence shows, Robinson was critical to the evolution of Hays' feminism, and long before meeting Wollstonecraft, Hays drew on the training she received from Robinson and other Dissenters, to apply heterodox scriptural exegesis to the female condition.[20] The excerpts from Huguenot sermons, included with the letters between Hays and Robinson

15 Brooks, *Correspondence*, 13.
16 Walker, *Growth of a woman's mind,* 11.
17 Walker, *Growth of a woman's mind,* 33.
18 Walker, *Growth of a woman's mind,* 36-37.
19 Brooks, *Correspondence*, 238.
20 Walker, *Growth of a woman's mind,* 40.

in *The idea of being free*, offer another example of how the 'literary channel' between France and Britain functioned at the end of the eighteenth century, demonstrating the influence of French theology on English feminism.[21] Hays' familiarity with the writings of theologians such as Jacques Saurin 'provides some explanation for her early and continuing rebellion against the historical commandment that chastity is the pre-eminent virtue for women'.[22] The graphic portrayal of sexually 'wronged' women in Hays' *Emma Courtney* and *The victim of prejudice* may be traced to this influence. In the biographical sketches she wrote of women such as Manon Roland and Mary Wollstonecraft, Hays 'ultimately advocate[d]' Robinson's idea 'of "universal toleration" be extended to real women'.[23] All three works cast new light on this immensely formative period in Hays' life, documenting her 'conversion' to Unitarianism and its impact. They demonstrate her importance to the history of Dissent, particularly in its relation to the emergence of feminism in this period. In this respect they are markedly different from works on Dissenting women by Kathryn Gleadle and Ruth Watts, who have represented Hays as a mere addendum to Wollstonecraft's life, an eccentric and essentially counter-productive exponent of 'the equal rights of …our sex'.[24]

As many of the letters in both collections attest Hays' 'views were not only tolerated but sought' by leading men in the Dissenting Community.[25] She wrote sermons and was invited to join in controversies and discussions. The confidence she gained from theological inquiry among

---

21 The understanding of transnational community catalysed by 'sympathy' rather than nationalism was first articulated in Margaret Cohen and Carolyn Dever's collection, *The literary channel: the international invention of the novel* (Princeton, 2002).

22 Walker, *Growth of a woman's mind*, 40-41.

23 Walker, *Idea of being free*, 40-41.

24 The sole mention of Hays in Kathryn Gleadle's work is to suggest that that she shared Unitarian beliefs with Mary Wollstonecraft: *The early Feminists: radical Unitarians and the emergence of the Women's Rights Movement* (New York, 1995), 21. Watts draws upon Lucy Aikin's comments to fellow Dissenter Susannah Taylor to dismiss Hays. Aikin observed equivocally that if gentlemen read Hays' book [*Female biography*] they would 'repeat with tenfold energy that women have no business with anything but nursing children and mending stockings'. *Gender, power and the Unitarians in England 1760-1860* (London, 1998), 94-95. Gleadle repeats this comment in her *Radical Writing on Women 1800-1850* (London, 2002), 26.

25 Brooks, *Correspondence*, 240.

the Nonconformist community provided her with the catalyst to enter into the 'republic of letters'. The appearance of her *Cursory remarks… Inscribed to Gilbert Wakefield, B A*, published under the pseudonym 'Eusebia', thrust Hays into the middle of a theological controversy as she joined Anna Laetitia Barbauld, Joseph Priestley and Theophilus Lindsay 'to defend the practice of communal worship that made intellectual life accessible to women'.[26]

Hays immersed herself in the history of ideas from a Unitarian perspective. The more she learnt from the 'Dissenting *philosophes*' the more she became aware of the partial nature of the education offered at Dissenting academies, the absence of female knowledge from their curriculum. The lessons she learnt on the peripheries of these institutions informed her unique version of Dissenting activism and intense feminism for next fifty years. Brooks' and Walker's discussion of Hays participation in the politics of Dissent complements and complicates Barbara Taylor's brilliant analysis of the proto-feminism of left-wing Protestantism in *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist imagination* (2002), indicating a truly radical Hays, more powerfully informed by these politics than Wollstonecraft. While Wollstonecraft's ghost has been said to haunt Victorian feminism,[27] Hays was known to reforming Protestant women such as Harriet Martineau and Elizabeth Gaskell, and thus unlike Wollstonecraft, spoke directly to the next generation of feminists, suggesting a longevity of influence previously unrecognised.

It was through these Nonconformist circles that Hays first read Wollstonecraft in 1792. The two became friends and Hays asked Wollstonecraft to read the manuscript of her *Essays and letters, moral and miscellaneous*. Wollstonecraft's comments on the manuscript are famously severe, although as Walker notes, the severity may in part be due to the fact that Wollstonecraft recognised in her new friend a shared desire to be taken seriously by powerful men.[28] Such observations reveal that Walker's biography is not only immensely significant because of the new insights it provides into Hays' intellectual development, but also because it allows new ways of thinking about Wollstonecraft.

---

26 Walker, *Idea of being free*, 117.

27 Barbara Caine, 'Victorian Feminism and the Ghost of Mary Wollstonecraft', *Women's writing*, 4:2 (1997), 261-271.

28 Walker, *Growth of a woman's mind*, 61.

The idea of being free includes a selection of pieces from *Letters and essays* and as Walker's commentary makes clear, this was no poor second to the *Vindication*. While the text abounds with references to her new friend, it also bears the stamp of Hays' first mentor Robert Robinson and other leading figures of Dissent, laying out a unique instructional curricula for women modelled on the programs Hays saw in use at Dissenting academies such as the New College. Here too, Hays used the example of her own life as an educational device for others, becoming 'the object lesson from which other informally trained women might be encouraged to learn how to learn'.[29]

Perhaps most significantly all three books cast Hays relationship with William Godwin in a different light. Earlier studies have reiterated the sense that Hays' radical politics was ostensibly the result of Godwin's tutelage and that her place in the world of Enlightenment Dissent is best understood in relation to his. Both Brooks and Walker present a more complex analysis of Hays' relationship with Godwin, situating it as part of her long-term programme of self-education.

Hays had introduced herself to Godwin, so she might borrow a copy of his *Political justice* in 1794. At the time she was embroiled in an unhappy love affair with the William Frend, and sought Godwin's advice on dealing with her peculiar situation 'philosophically'. Godwin was initially happy to become Hays' 'genius in the moon' and encouraged her to document for him the stages of her life, so he might chart her progress. Hays' letters to Godwin have largely been ignored by earlier commentators, and so the careful reading given to this source by Brooks and Walker offers much that is new and revealing about their relationship. Both demolish the abiding image of Hays as an uncritical disciple of Godwin, spouting large sections of *Political justice* with little understanding and even less decorum. As Walker suggests Hays' letters to Godwin show that while Hays flattered Godwin by describing him as her 'tutelary genius', their exchanges were more equal than such a title suggests.

Indeed as Brooks notes while the correspondence with Godwin is marked by servility, this tone functioned to soften Hays' growing critique of his philosophy. Both Brooks and Walker demonstrate that Hays was

[29] Walker, *Idea of being free*, 160.

perturbed by Godwin's inability to factor the female condition into his philosophical speculations. In their correspondence Hays continually foregrounds the injustices of these sexual distinctions, which she believed distorted women's adoption of truth, virtue and sincerity.[30] After several years of correspondence with Godwin, Hays confessed she felt that philosophy had done her no personal good, writing in 1796 'I have acquired the power of reasoning on this subject at a dear rate - at the expense of inconceivable suffering'.[31]

Hays sought to work through the trauma of her unrequited love for Frend, and her unsatisfactory philosophical relationship with Godwin, with the production of an autobiographical 'novel', *The memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796). Written as a 'warning' rather than an example, Hays novelised her unfortunate attachment to Frend, quoting directly and extensively from her correspondence with Godwin. Although Godwin had initially encouraged Hays in this endeavour, he was nonetheless unhappy with her depiction of him as Mr Francis in the text, and complained to her upon reading the manuscript that respecting the story she 'had too little invention' and was 'too fastidious and too addicted to philosophical habits of truth'.[32] Yet it is this truth that makes *The memoirs of Emma Courtney* such a brave and compelling novel. Walker compares Hays' innovation in this text to Rousseau's in *The confessions*, suggesting that her arrangement of the text, her incorporation of the letters of real people and the her use of them to determine the direction of her narrative were entirely new in novel writing.[33] As in her earlier works Hays rendered her life exemplary, drawing on her experience of depression, rage, sexual desire and frustration to pose questions about the nature of female existence. Hays however did more than generalise the autobiographical into political critique, her life itself became political critique, as she upbraided Godwin for his commitment to rationality and his desire to diminish the evidence of her experience by adding incident and interest to the text. 'My story is too real,' she told him, 'I cannot violate its truth'.[34]

---

30 Brooks, *Correspondence*, 370.
31 Brooks, *Correspondence*, 373.
32 Brooks, *Correspondence*, 380.
33 Walker, *Growth of a woman's mind*, 133-134.
34 Brooks, *Correspondence*, 456.

Perhaps most innovative of all was her suggestion that female sexuality was a valid form of knowledge, an idea that Wollstonecraft too embraced in her last work *Maria, or the wrongs of woman*. Brooks controversially contends that while critics have consistently embedded Hays with the Jacobins, her letters show that her philosophical inclinations lay in exposing the flaws within this discourse. In this context, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* might be read as one of the first Anti-Jacobin novels.[35] Such a comment reveals the very paucity of descriptors, such as Jacobin and Anti-Jacobin, to describe feminism as it emerged in the 1790s. The attempt to insert women writers such as Mary Hays (but equally Wollstonecraft, Mary Robinson, Elizabeth Hamilton and Amelia Opie) into essentially masculinist ideological positions, has impoverished our understanding of feminism during the 1790s, and limited our knowledge of the ways in which these women contested masculinist politics, as well as our understanding of the ideas they shared with each other and the criticisms they made of each others' work.

If Hays had suspected that she was a victim of Godwinian sincerity before she published *Emma Courtney*, its reception thoroughly convinced her. Her friendship with Godwin continued in spite of such criticism, largely through the mediation of Wollstonecraft whom Hays had (re)introduced to Godwin in January 1796. Wollstonecraft empathized with Hays writing to her: 'Those who are bold enough to advance before the age they live in, and to throw off, by the force of their own minds, the prejudices which the maturing reason of the world, must learn to brave censure.'[36]

Hays published the first *Memoir of Mary Wollstonecraft* in October 1797 and completely fell out with Godwin in the year following her death. Both appear to have lost confidence in the others' ability to assess Wollstonecraft's legacy. While earlier commentators such as Gary Kelly have implied that this work marked a retrograde shift in her politics, and such ideas have influenced the few detailed studies of *Female biography* that have been published recently.[37] Walker's magisterial reading of *Female biography* deftly challenges such an impression and it is perhaps

[35] Brooks, *Correspondence*, 381.

[36] Brooks, *Correspondence*, 311.

[37] Gary Kelly dismissed *Female biography* as 'a piece of hack-work', although admitting that it continued 'her feminist discourse of the Revolution debate in several ways'. See

her analysis of the intellectual heritage that shaped the production of *Female biography* (1803) that makes her book so immensely significant.

Both Brooks and Walker have offered brilliant insights into the life of one of our most important feminist foremothers, and have ensured Hays the place in the canon of feminist theorists that she has long deserved. More significantly however, their recovery of Hays presents scholars with new ways of thinking about the relation between feminism, Romanticism and Dissent, and new possibilities for rewriting the history of feminism in the early nineteenth century.

Mary Spongberg
Macquarie University

Gary Kelly, *Women, writing, and revolution, 1790-1827* (Oxford, 1993), 234. For an alternate perspective see Mary Spongberg, 'The Ghost of Marie Antoinette', in Lynette Felber ed., *Clio's daughters*: *British women making history 1790-1899* (Newark, 2007).

Stephen Eric Bronner, *Reclaiming the Enlightenment: toward a politics of radical engagement,* New York, Columbia University Press, 2004, pp. xiii + 181, ISBN: 0231126085, £14.50.

The events of September 11 2001 have prompted a widespread return to fundamentals. Some have embraced religious fundamentals with renewed tenacity while others have emphatically urged the need to stand by the secular principles which they regard as essential for progress. Bronner stands firmly in the secularist camp since, for him, the attack on the Twin Towers prompts a clarion call to proclaim clearly and unequivocally the centrality of the Enlightenment in shaping all that has been good in the West and as a source of hope and human betterment in the world at large.

This short book is, then, an unapologetic and deeply committed apologia for the Enlightenment. In the tradition of the Voltairian *écrasez l'infâme* it presents a critique of the claims of organised religion especially in its fundamentalist forms (though he retains some respect for a private 'religiosity' so long as it does not make claims on the public sphere). Reacting against the growing association of terrorism with religious fanaticism Bonner makes the claim that 'the larger mainstream religious organizations have - historically - opposed virtually every scientific advance, every new philosophical movement, and every progressive political development' (165). To employ inappropriately religious language, there is a Manichean quality about his depiction of the custodians of the faith of the Enlightenment as angels of light combating the forces of darkness. Virtually every progressive and indeed truly moral advance in modern Western society is seen as deriving from the Enlightenment. One of the more notable such advances attributed to the Enlightenment is the abolition of slavery: yet the well-documented and surely politically critical contributions of the Quakers and the Evangelicals led by William Wilberforce are overlooked. Theories of resistance are sheeted back to the Enlightenment (135) without any consideration of the ample literature on the role of the Reformation (and especially the Calvinists) along with the Counter-Reformation in promoting such theories. Since science is one of the major agents of progress, it follows that it is diametrically opposed to religion which again overlooks the growing volume of scholarship on the way in which these two modes of thought were historically intertwined despite points of

conflict (a useful guide to much of this literature being John Brooke's *Science and religion: some historical perspectives* [Cambridge, 1991]).

As a tract for our times this is a book that has its focus more on the present than the past and is less concerned with a scholarly analysis of movements of ideas in the eighteenth century than urging the application of what are considered the chief tenets of the Enlightenment in our own times. Central to the book, then, is the proposition that there was an identifiable and enduring core to the Enlightenment and that it can be equated with such central liberal tenets as the promotion of human rights, the separation of church and state and a respect for science both as a model of thought and a means, in the Baconian phrase, to achieve the 'relief of man's estate'. Bonner is impatient with the fissile tendencies of recent Enlightenment scholarship, with its tendency to discern multiple Enlightenments or to splinter the Enlightenment along national lines. Indeed, his committed and impassioned advocacy of the continuing importance of the Enlightenment message does provide some corrective to the tendency to weaken its historical importance by dissolving the Enlightenment into a range of different forms. The need for a decisive restatement of Enlightenment values makes Bonner give even shorter shrift to the critics of the Enlightenment whether they be post-modernists or those who, in the tradition of Adorno, connect the Enlightenment and its disenchantment of the world with the rise of twentieth-century totalitarian movements.

By contrast, Bonner retains a respect for Ernst Cassirer's classic but for many Enlightenment scholars rather dated *The philosophy of the Enlightenment* (German first edition, 1932). It is a work that meshes well with Bonner's concerns since it clearly conveys the unity of the Enlightenment and the way that the *philosophes*, for all their different backgrounds, contributed to a common project and a shared set of ideas. It also gives prominence to the German element in the Enlightenment - something which is of considerable importance in this book since, as a Germanist, much of Bonner's analysis is refracted through the German responses to the Enlightenment. To readily follow such an analysis requires a familiarity with the major trends in German nineteenth and twentieth-century thought that not all from the English-speaking world might readily command.

Bonner's is a work that may not add greatly to the canon of works on the eighteenth-century roots of the Enlightenment, but its committed and vigorous advocacy of Enlightenment values does much to illustrate the abiding value and the intellectual resilience of what the Enlightenment stood for. To Bonner such values are the only path to a better world and indeed he concludes his book with the assertion that the *philosophes* 'project the type of world that every decent person wishes to see' (167). One need not be a post-modernist to suggest that the there may be other paths to decency along with those prescribed by the Enlightenment, but Bonner's deep commitment both to a better world and to the values of the Enlightenment draws us back to some of the West's most central values. In the best traditions of the *philosophes* Bonner has put deep scholarship at the service of the public good.

John Gascoigne
School of History and Philosophy
University of New South Wales

Daniel Carey, *Locke, Shaftesbury, and Hutcheson: contesting diversity in the Enlightenment and beyond,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. x + 260, ISBN: 052184 5025, £51.

Carey's rich and illuminating book is a contribution to a largely neglected aspect of the intellectual history of the British enlightenment. Its subject is diversity as reflected in moral differences from one culture or nation to another and the way three major philosophers acknowledged and responded to it. While the book's central theme is the relation of moral philosophy to cultural anthropology, part of its interest is that it also connects this theme to toleration and philosophy of mind, to name a few. It also links differences between Enlightenment thinkers, on the one hand, to debates in the ancient world between skeptics and stoics and, on the other, to debates in contemporary anthropology as well as reflection on multiculturalism and human rights. Both links, ancient and modern, help us to appreciate and take the measure of an enlightenment controversy. While there are differences between ancient, enlightenment and contemporary versions of the issues, they are for Carey variants of underlying themes.

Carey's starting point is Locke's acknowledgement and exploitation of moral diversity in the first book of his *Essay concerning human understanding* (*EHU*). There Locke draws on historical and anthropological evidence to show that such diversity exists. He uses its existence to support his argument against innate *principles* and *ideas* while at the same time he acknowledges that there are innate *inclinations*, notably the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain. What distinguishes the latter, he argues, is that while they function as principles of action, they are not principles of knowledge for regulating action (I.3.§3). In short they illuminate human psychology rather than an agent's knowledge of what ought to be done.

As Carey notes, Locke has two basic arguments against innate principles and ideas. The first, independent of cultural diversity and the most fundamental, is that if principles and ideas can be accounted for by the use of our natural faculties as he claims they can, the argument for their innate origin collapses. From early on in *EHU* Locke connects morality to reason in particular (I.3.§1, 4), even if reason's current weakness requires human beings to rely on divine revelation in practice. For Locke, true morality consists of divinely ordained law subject to divinely administered reward and punishment, and is the subject of an underdeveloped demonstrative science; even if for critics his real agenda was to undermine morality by resolving it into nothing more than fashion and convention. After all, in book II of *EHU*, does Locke not provide an analysis of the idea of morality into what appears to be just that? For Locke, however, the scope of the *idea* of morality is one thing; the nature of true moral principles, quite another. What fashion and convention share with true morality on his view is the assessment of the rightness and wrongness of action from the standpoint of law and its enforcement.

In the first book of *EHU*, Locke's focus is on his second argument. He uses it not as a direct assault on innate principles and ideas, but to refute a common argument that convinced many who subscribed to them (I.2.§2). For, so the argument goes, there must be innate ideas because the universal acceptance of certain practical principles could not be otherwise explained. Against this argument, Locke invokes diversity including the differences between one individual and another within a single community, but, as Carey observes, cultural diversity strikes him as a far more conclusive consideration. For the evidence of such diversity, he

relies in large measure on anthropological accounts in works on travel, which, as Carey also observes, were a significant presence in his library. His disposition to accept such accounts Carey illuminatingly sees in light of the work of the Royal Society, and the project for a natural history of man as an off-shoot of its interest in natural history generally. As Carey also argues, however, Locke is sometimes disposed to run beyond the evidence his sources strictly provide, notably on the lack of universality in acknowledging God's existence. Carefully read, those accounts of remote societies frequently mitigate the claims they make elsewhere in the same work (76-85).

Locke is the starting point, but Carey's real focus is the debate his argument from diversity generated. He argues that we miss a significant source of Locke's thinking if we do not make the effort to see him through the eyes of those who opposed him. The chief representatives of that opposition are the third Earl of Shaftesbury and Francis Hutcheson. Shaftesbury is especially interesting to Carey as a notable champion of the ancients, Platonism and Stoicism in particular. His opposition to the views of his old tutor (although he takes care not to attack him by name in published work), encourages us to see Locke as drawing on argumentative modes and strategies reminiscent of the Skeptics, Sextus' tenth mode most notably which was designed to produce suspension of judgment in ethics by cataloguing the diversity of laws and customs. And, indeed, Locke uses examples such as cannibalism, as the Skeptics did. Even if Locke was not influenced directly by the ancient Skeptics, could they not have exercised their influence indirectly through more moderate modern Skeptics with whose thought Locke was certainly familiar? True, Locke may have been influenced by skeptical examples of moral diversity, for which Carey makes a good case. True, skeptics, ancient and modern, have directed such considerations against innate ideas and principles. But to see Locke as deploying characteristically skeptical *argumentative modes and strategies* in this context is perhaps to see him too much through the eyes of his critics. Unlike skeptics, Locke carefully limits his use of moral diversity and the arguments he develops to bolster it in support of counterexamples against an argument for innate ideas and principles without showing an inclination to challenge the power of our natural faculties to yield knowledge or their competence to discover true moral principles.

Carey is aware that Locke is generally not viewed these days as a fellow traveller of Hobbes, a skeptic or a relativist. The net effect of setting him in the skeptical tradition when it comes to morals, however, is to revive the interpretation which places Locke in the Hobbesian camp. And so it seems the structure of his overall account predisposes him. For when he later turns to modern anthropological counterparts such as Clifford Geertz and Ruth Benedict, they are positioned as relativists in line with Skeptical responses to the Stoics. So long as one remains clear that this is only Locke viewed tendentiously through the eyes of critics, there is perhaps little harm. Importantly, it should not obscure from us that the differences between Shaftesbury and Locke over morals, even when Locke is viewed outside the skeptical tradition, are striking enough and leave in place the issue of what the existence of moral diversity proves or fails to prove. Not that there aren't skeptical elements in Locke's thought or for that matter Shaftesbury's, but they don't appear to centre on the inferences to be drawn from the existence of moral diversity. Towards the conclusion of his book, indeed, Carey strikes a different note where the emphasis is on how Locke, unlike some contemporaries, finds no difficulty maintaining 'an anthropological awareness of diversity while remaining committed to natural law' (217), where Locke's commitment to reason constitutes the foundation from which he takes issue with Stoic inspired approaches.

Carey lists a series of significant differences that separate Shaftesbury from Locke on morals and religion. He views Locke as wrongly tying morality to religion, Christian Scripture, externally imposed law and the promise of rewards and punishments in a future life to motivate compliance. For Shaftesbury, moreover, what Locke's God ordains is good only because God ordains it, not ordained because it is good. By contrast, Shaftesbury claims morality needs an entirely different footing where it, jointly with the motives to act morally, emerge from a teleological account of human nature based on universal order and human sociability. For him moral action to count as such must be performed for its own sake and not for the promise of future rewards or threats of punishment. His aim is to separate morality and religion, finding in the former thus separated a source of stability that contrasts sharply with religion as a source of endless conflict and corruption. In drawing these contrasts, Carey represents Locke as committed to an 'unsociable portrait

of human motivation' (200). This, however, may be too easily assumed from Locke's epicurean view of human motivation. The pleasures Locke shows that he values such as those taken in rational conversation with a friend and the high value he sets on friendship point, on the face of it, to a different view of what he saw as his commitments. This query to the side, the account that emerges of Shaftesbury is illuminating.

For Carey, while Shaftesbury casts doubt on Locke's catalogue of *extreme* moral diversity, he accepts that moral diversity exists, but only as 'the product of art or accident' (117). For him, it is compatible with an underlying uniformity that manifests itself through prolepses, or what he is prepared to call innate ideas although he is also ready to abandon that expression. Shaftesbury's espousal of such a doctrine, accordingly, does not rest on universal consent. Neither, however, does Locke's case against innate ideas and principles rest on the existence of diversity, as was noted above. For supposing this uniformity exists, why wouldn't our natural faculties be adequate for arriving at the knowledge of it, particularly when Shaftesbury concedes that this knowledge may only arise following the development of reason? According to Carey: 'The real question [for Shaftesbury] was not whether "propositions" about right and wrong were innate but whether the inclination toward society was natural or the product of art or accident. Clearly he believed that if this trait of human nature were conceded, then the rest of his conclusions about the permanency of moral distinctions would follow' (117). So Shaftesbury may have believed, but just how would the rest of his conclusions follow, particularly given that he viewed this trait in its pure state as the exclusive preserve of an elevated class that shared his tastes? And if the view turns on inclinations, and not propositions, how do they function as 'criteria of truth' as the stoic inspiration for his view leads Carey to maintain? (122) There are loose ends here that Shaftesbury's general disinclination for argumentative rigour may have led him to overlook.

Hutcheson, who was more technically rigorous while sympathetic to Shaftesbury's approach to sociability and to the ancients, attempted to evade Locke's objections by viewing morality not as a product of reason, but of a moral sense 'which approved of benevolent actions instinctively' (154). He was inclined, accordingly, to accept that morality could be explained by reference to our natural faculties within the scope of natural

investigation from which, however, he believed that certain knowledge rather than mere Lockean probabilities could be achieved (160). As Carey remarks, however, the moral sense is not simply conceived as a passive faculty that registers impressions, but judges (166) and governs our inclinations (169-70). The pressing difficulty for him was to reconcile his account of the moral sense with the evidence of diversity, particularly given that on his view the moral sense took its rise 'prior to the exercise of reason' (217). His response was not to deny the existence of diversity, but to argue, following Shaftesbury, that it was not as widespread as sometimes supposed or that its basis was not fully understood. For him even the exposure of children might be explainable as arising from benevolence. Barbarous, it might be, but the barbarity resulted not from the moral sense, but from the misapplication of reason in assessing the consequences of possible courses of action (178).

In his book Carey combines synoptic vision with a very detailed appreciation of the origins and arguments of a variety of fundamental texts and inquiries from three historical periods into human knowledge and human nature. As such its appeal extends well beyond students of the enlightenment and engages an interest in an enlightenment controversy among those who may not have appreciated how deeply rooted their own controversies may be not only there, but in the ancient world as well.

J Dybikowski
University of British Columbia

Robert DeMaria Jr., ed., ***British Literature 1640-1789: An Anthology,*** 3rd edition, Malden, MA and Oxford, Blackwell, 2008, pp. liv + 1135, ISBN: 1405119284, pbk., £24.99.

We live in an age of anthologies. Or so, at least, one can imagine some latter-day Hazlitt or Carlyle beginning a mordant diatribe. But head-shaking or hand-wringing are surely not appropriate responses to the undoubted proliferation of the form. Indeed, it might not be too much to claim that the best of these compilations have helped steer many literature students between the Scylla of mass civilization and the Charybdis of minority culture. The fat book in the rucksack has surely helped ensure

that *The rape of the lock* and *The rambler*, not to mention *The thresher's lament* and *The Negro's complaint*, still live in the twenty-first century.

Of course the format, like everything else sublunary, has its limitations. In the case of literature, the elephant which cannot get into the room is that loose, baggy monster, the novel - which is quite a consideration over these last three hundred years of English literature. Even important longer poems such as *Paradise lost* or *The seasons* may be considered to occupy too much precious space. Whole plays, which can hardly be excerpted, are often included, but two appears to be the absolute maximum (in the example under review *The way of the world* and *The school for scandal*). And it goes without saying that any anthology will disappoint most of its readers at least once by a particular exclusion or inclusion.

Yet the justification for the anthology as a teaching tool remains compelling. True, the internet now provides a vast number of primary texts for the eighteenth and other centuries. But these, by virtue of their dispersed quality and paucity of annotation, are paradoxically more useful to the postgraduate or established scholar than to the younger, more and interdisciplinary over these last few decades. While other electronically-nurtured student. The undergraduate - perhaps not too well-prepared and certainly pressed for time - needs focus, structure, consistent annotation, reading comfort in various situations. The large printed book, if it is not too heavy to carry, fulfils all these needs. One might envisage an electronic version of the same thing, it is true, but such an 'Ebook' would still be a book, and not an aleatory linking of infinite nodes. The average undergraduate has quite enough of that sort of laterally-branching material to hand.

More positively still, the edited anthology provides the opportunity for the anthologist to give an overall 'reading' of the culture in question. This reading will typically be far from authoritarian in tone. A good anthology is precisely an invitation to both teacher and student to answer: 'Yes, but…'. In this respect the eighteenth century has been fortunate in that literary scholarship on the period has been particularly vibrant. While period specialists, such as those on the Romantic era, have been rather cumbrously arguing about 'the canon', eighteenth-century scholars have fearlessly explored the borderlands of religious inspiration, ghostly apparitions, medicinal cures, Molly culture, Priapic cults, lives of crime, gardens and wildernesses, rationalistic utopias and much more. This in

turn has led them to conceptualize 'literature' as including Boswell and Gibbon, Mary Astell and Mary Wollstonecraft, Stephen Duck and Olauduh Equiano. The editor of the Blackwell anthology, Robert DeMaria Jr., himself an expert on that polymath Samuel Johnson, is very much open to this variety.

Breadth and inclusiveness have been an obvious result of this. This Blackwell anthology includes Civil War newsbooks and Old Bailey trials as well as solid chunks of Hobbes, Locke, Burke and Paine. Even within the more traditional literary areas, such as poetry, we find expansion based on the spadework of many scholars (which DeMaria fully acknowledges and sensibly uses where appropriate). Of course, it is reasonable to ask whether this is an unmitigated good. To which the answer must first be that this opening out was entirely necessary. DeMaria himself reminds us of just how male-centred the average eighteenth-century anthology was thirty years ago. Mention of black or labouring class writers only reinforces our sense that much has been done to undo destructive cultural biases which had crept into eighteenth-century studies in the last two hundred years.

However, having acknowledged both the necessity of this greater inclusiveness and the sheer cultural riches it has yielded us (think of the revival of the reputation of Aphra Behn to go no further), we can see that some new rebalancing was needed when anthologies were becoming packed with fragmentary extracts from authors who could not realistically be taught on an undergraduate module, too little of their work was given and, even had more been given, a half-hour's seminar attention to them would have been insulting to their memory. DeMaria acknowledges this by reducing the number of authors in this third edition. But 'rebalancing' could be misunderstood. It does not mean reinstating the old, almost exclusively male, canon. What it means is greater selectivity across the new, wider canvas, so that major figures, 'old and new', male and female, can be set alongside each other. In short, we have much Aphra Behn to set alongside Dryden, tranches of Charlotte Smith to set alongside Cowper and good opportunities to cross the period from Astell to Wollstonecraft or from Locke to Burke. It is true that in the present case this does not quite 'do the job' in terms of what ideally needs to be there. DeMaria himself notes the need to do fuller justice to Equiano, for example. Then indeed, any further 'overflow' of the anthology could be

accommodated online, to allow the envelope to be pulled in a particular new direction, so achieving the best balance of printed and online materials.

Although one can always carp over details of anthology content, I shall not do that here beyond the case DeMaria himself mentions, simply because I recognize that every one of my claims could be met with an equally valid claim from the material included. While I personally might rather read Farquhar than Sheridan, I could equally imagine any 'contest' between them as an honourable draw. One more general negative one might suggest, though, is that the unusual 1640-1789 date-span of this anthology still doesn't entirely convince. Logic would suggest that either beginning and ending the anthology with tempestuous revolutionary and counter-revolutionary polemics (say, 1640-1797) or confining oneself more to the relatively calmer interval (1660-1789) in which Enlightenment and the *ancien régime* enjoyed an 'impossible' yet strangely fruitful *ménage à deux*, would both be more logical choices. But, within its chosen span, the anthology is finely chosen and excellently annotated. It was a simple, but superb, inspiration to make so much use of Johnson's *Dictionary of the English language* to illuminate the often subtle differences between eighteenth century usage and our own (e.g., 'familiar - affable; not formal; easy in conversation').

Indeed, it seems appropriate to conclude this review by quoting Johnson's Preface to that great work in relation to DeMaria work's on British Literature 1640-1789 (substantial extracts from the Preface can of course be found in the anthology). Johnson, even in his 'gloom of solitude' reminds us and himself that 'useful diligence will at last prevail, and there can never be wanting some who distinguish desert'. On DeMaria's revised anthology as on his own dictionary, Johnson also provides the wise, balancing conclusion: 'In this work, when it shall be found that much is omitted, let it not be forgotten that likewise much is performed.' One suspects that DeMaria, the sage Johnson scholar, would content himself with that mutedly defiant claim.

K E Smith
University of Bradford

Jack Fruchtman Jr., ***Atlantic Cousins: Benjamin Franklin and his visionary friends,*** New York, Thunder's Mouth Press, 2005, pp. 404, ISBN 1 56025 668 0; hbk £14.99, $26.00; pbk (2007) £11.99.

Jack Fruchtman Jr. has made some valuable contributions to the study of Enlightenment and Dissent though his book on *The apocalyptic politics of Richard Price and Joseph Priestley* (1983) and various articles, in particular one on David Hartley in this journal in 1992. Several publications on Tom Paine and Helen Maria Williams have established Fruchtman as an important scholar of trans-Atlantic radicalism in the age of revolution. This latest offering has a whiggish flavour - this is not surprising, as it is something that provoked J C D Clark when he reviewed Fruchtman's biography of Paine in the *Times Literary Supplement.* The title suggests it is aiming at a similar audience to that which made Jenny Uglow's *The Lunar Men: the friends who made the future* (2002) very popular.

Atlantic cousins is an energetically written tale of how Benjamin Franklin and his 'visionary friends' worked to create the modern democratic world. Franklin is used as a starting point for a book that consists of chapters on some of his 'liberal' friends who 'wanted to achieve the end of tyranny, rank and privilege' (3). The book is structured around a series of mini-biographies linked together by a common association with Franklin. While anyone who has read the correspondence of Joseph Priestley will attest to the warm attachment between him and Franklin, the inclusion of some of the other figures are less easily justified. While Marat and Mesmer were undoubtedly visionaries of a sort who add colour to this book, it is probably stretching it a little to label them among Franklin's friends. Throughout *Atlantic cousins* characters are discussed in the light modern liberal values. Thus, George Whitfield's 'liberal ideas were blemished by an unfortunate reliance on slavery' (4) and Benjamin Rush 'had some rather intriguing and outlandish ideas … that are truly bizarre by today's standards' (57-58). Of the attack of on 'monarchy, rank and privilege' in Tom Paine's *Rights of man,* 'we would be hard pressed to find a more severe critique of these three evils' (125). Espousing 'ideas that seem progressive by twenty-first-century standards' Condorcet even 'supported gay rights, as

we call them today' (233). While Fruchtman is keen to highlight the contribution of his subjects to modernisation, he is nevertheless good at explaining the many distinctive features of their eighteenth-century thought; such as Priestley's apocalyptic belief that the return of Christ was near, assuring Thomas Belsham that 'you may probably live to see it; I shall not. It cannot, I think be more than twenty years' (166).

Atlantic cousins is an attractively produced book, illustrated with the portraits of eleven of the 'visionary men' with whom Franklin associated and 'whose liberal ideas and ideals have carried into our own time' (20). It reads with the energy and pace of a dramatic novel, and as a result there are inevitably generalisations and statements with which specialists might take issue. For example, Fruchtman has John Horne Tooke as 'one of the original founders' of the Society for Constitutional Information (160) - this is technically incorrect as the SCI was founded in 1780 while Horne Tooke joined over a year later in 1781, and in E C Black's words he 'was strangely inactive during the initial phase of reform agitation, preferring to devote himself to the *Diversions of Purley* (*The Association* [Cambridge, Mass., 1963], 187n.). According to Fruchtman, the founding of the SCI 'provoked serious consternation and real fear in Westminster, because the authorities now realised these people were not merely quirky or loud-mouthed blokes like Wilkes. They were actually talking to each other about taking revolutionary action against the government' (155). While Eliga H. Gould has arguably underplayed the radicalism of this group in his important study of *The persistence of empire* (2000), Fruchtman probably exaggerates their revolutionary enthusiasm - at least for the early 1780s. The problem is that they at times sounded more radical than they arguably were, but Fruchtman does convey well the challenging tone of British radicals.

This is a work of popularisation rather than original research. Intellectual history can be off-putting or inaccessible to undergraduate students, and Fruchtman has performed a valuable service in producing an engaging account of 'ideas in context' in a particularly interesting and important era. It is heartening to see a scholar aim beyond our specialist audience to introduce compelling figures like Price and Priestley to a wide audience and judging by the reader responses on Amazon.com, Fruchtman seems to have had some success. Full of interesting facts, anecdotes and

helpful explanations of eighteenth-century science, *Atlantic cousins* breathes the enlightened optimism that animated Ben Franklin and his friends in the revolutionary era.

Anthony Page
University of Tasmania

William Gibson, *Religion and the Enlightenment, 1600-1800: conflict and the rise of civic humanism in Taunton*, Bern, Peter Lang, 2007; ISBN-10**:** 3039109227; ISBN-13**:** 978-3039109227; pp.385, £42.

In this study of Taunton Professor Gibson sets out to chronicle the history of the town in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but his purpose is altogether more ambitious. His objective is to examine what he sees as an historical conundrum, the transformation of England from a turbulent and rebellious kingdom in the seventeenth century to one of political stability in the eighteenth, where change was determined at the hustings and in parliament. In summary he believes that 'at the heart of this book lies the assertion that the religious views of the people of Taunton motivated them politically' and, in a neat turn of phrase, that religion was 'a call to arms in the seventeenth century, and a call to abandon them in the eighteenth' (12). He sees religion as inflaming political militancy during the Civil War and Monmouth's Rebellion, but soothing and moderating opinion after the 1688 Revolution and channelling the citizens of Taunton towards constitutional methods. In his opinion the key to this switch from militancy to constitutionalism was the moderate and rational preaching of the town's Anglican and nonconformist ministers in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Indeed 'such rational and moderate preaching may represent the closest that provincial England came to the Enlightenment' (11).

Professor Gibson is one of an increasing number of historians who have demonstrated the continuing importance of religion in the eighteenth century. The difficulty comes with the nature of Gibson's particular thesis and the evidence marshalled to support it. We are told that during the period, between 1689 and 1740, 'in both Anglican and Nonconformist sermons … there was an over-whelming emphasis on reason, rationalism, moderation and tolerance' (266). 'The significance of this theology was

that it bombarded and influenced the people of Taunton as strongly as had the rigid discipline of Biblical texts of Newton and Alleine' earlier in the seventeenth century. 'The religious impetus that fired and propelled the people of Taunton violently to demand religious changes from Charles I and James II had been replaced by one which taught the civic virtues of moderation, reasonableness and tolerance' (267). But preachers reflect, and perhaps follow, the opinions of their congregations as much as they lead. Ministers who advanced unpopular views either preached to bare walls or were dismissed. Indeed can historians rely upon published sermons to provide evidence of what was actually said? Surviving collections of manuscript sermon notes would suggest that the handful published were untypical of the sermons that were delivered from the pulpit week by week. What did hearers make of such sermons? Did they absorb the particular message that the historian has identified? At least from sermon notes we know what some of those in the pew thought was important.

There are further doubts about the evidence. Though noting the doctrinal divisions amongst Dissenters in Taunton, this is not taken into account by the author when discussing the impact of this 'rational and moderate preaching'. There was strong opposition to such preaching leading to a secession from Paul's Meeting as the author notes in passing. Moreover, Henry Grove, whose advanced philosophical ideas are discussed in detail, was a tutor rather than a minister, and never served a pulpit in Taunton. How did his ideas 'bombard and influence' the inhabitants of the town? Perhaps in answer to this question the author follows those historians who see the Dissenting academy as a vehicle for the spread of heterodox ideas amongst Dissenting congregations through the ministers they trained. He quotes Peter Toon's claim that academies such as Taunton, Bridgwater and Exeter were 'the greatest contributing factor to the growth of Arian and liberal doctrines' (249), but Toon is hardly an authority on the Dissenting academy. In turn Gibson believes that students trained at Taunton, in an unfortunate phrase, 'spread like spores' among the Dissenting congregations of the West Country and beyond, carrying 'with them the rational and heterodox teachings of Warren, Grove and Amory' (274). Micaih Towgood, educated at Taunton, and described by F J Powicke as being responsible for the introduction of Arian ideas to Exeter, is used as an example (277), but Towgood's role is

exaggerated. He was only one of a number of Arians in Exeter by this date, as Alan Brockett's book *Nonconformists in Exeter* makes clear. Nor can the closure of Taunton Academy under Amory be attributed to 'a decline in the number of Dissenters locally and nationally, and a surplus of academies training ministers' as Professor Gibson believes (272). Not only was Warrington Academy opened in 1757 to supply the loss caused by the closure of so many other academies, but Presbyterians in particular failed to train enough ministers throughout the second half of the eighteenth century. Similarly orthodox claims that Dissenting academies were responsible for the spread of heterodox ideas have been challenged by more recent studies. Academies had to reflect the needs and requirements of Dissent. If they failed they lost support and closed as happened at Taunton under Amory when the academy was perceived to be too heterodox. Indeed Gibson quotes Richard Clarke's letter to Doddridge that the Academy under Amory 'grows more and more out of repute daily' (251). Evangelical and Calvinist academies could not prevent an embarrassing number of expulsions or withdrawals for heterodoxy. Similarly those academies which rejected religious subscription educated students who became high Calvinists and some who even conformed. Gibson notes that the orthodox John Enty was a student at Taunton and there are other examples. We are told that the Dissenting academies 'were the powerhouses of liberal Arian thought in the eighteenth century' (253). The picture is altogether more complex.

The contrast drawn between the militancy of Taunton's inhabitants in the seventeenth century and the moderation claimed for the eighteenth also seems overdrawn. The Restoration appears altogether a more convincing break, but would not of course fit the author's thesis since he sees the changes in preaching as taking place in the eighteenth century. Yet Quakers gave up their earlier militancy and adopted a peace testimony at the Restoration as a means to ensure their survival, and although there were a series of uprisings in the early years that alarmed the new regime, the threat from the soldiers of the former republic amounted to very little. Professor Gibson will rightly point to the involvement of the town in the Monmouth Rebellion and the Glorious Revolution, but the catalyst in both cases was an invading army rather than local militancy. The absence of violence and extra-parliamentary action in eighteenth-century Taunton can also be overstated. Professor Gibson himself describes various forms

of popular protest, including direct action and riots, such as the disturbances associated with the 1754 election. His account of the tribulations that the radical Unitarian Joshua Toulmin faced in the early 1790s as a result of his support for the French Revolution and unpopular reform movements underplays the violence Toulmin and his family actually experienced.

If Professor Gibson's ambitious thesis for the role of religion in transforming the outlook of the inhabitants of Taunton can be questioned, his account of its continuing importance in the eighteenth century is convincing. The book offers a good narrative history of the town in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, covering the development of Protestantism and later Dissent, as well as an account of its politics and the cloth trade that formed the basis of the local economy for so much of the period. It is a work of synthesis rather than of original research. It therefore relies upon a range of secondary sources of varying quality and age, some of which are not perhaps sufficient for the interpretation placed upon them. The final quarter of the eighteenth century receives less attention. For example, although an account is provided of freemasonry in Taunton it is never really developed. Did Dissenters and the better sort of craftsmen in the woollen manufacture spawn the clubs and associations that John Money has so successfully explored for Birmingham? The absence of a newspaper for Taunton in the eighteenth century removes an obvious source of information, but presumably the town's news and advertisements were carried by other papers? The religious changes at the end of the eighteenth century, with the evangelical revival and the emergence of Unitarianism are never really explored. Nevertheless the book does bring home the significance of Dissent in Taunton. It is clear Dissenters formed a much greater proportion of the population of Taunton than probably of any other town. As a consequence, though excluded from the corporation, they came to dominate parliamentary elections as well as the local economy.

David L Wykes
Dr. Williams's Library, London

Jonathan I Israel, *Enlightenment contested: philosophy, modernity, and the emancipation of man 1670-1752,* Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. xxiv + 983; hbk. ISBN 97801 9927922, £30.00; pbk. ISBN 9780199541522, £19.99.

The fruit of massive scholarship, Jonathan Israel's work (surely the *mot just*) places the historiography of the Enlightenment on a new plane and, with it, our understanding of the forces which have shaped modernity. Building on his earlier *Radical Enlightenment: philosophy and the making of modernity* (2001), Israel spells out programmatically and with a virtuoso command of sources across the breadth of Europe a new understanding of the Enlightenment - and, indeed, also foreshadows a second weighty volume which will trace these themes across the second half of the eighteenth century. For Israel the true essence of the Enlightenment and the source of its lasting vitality and dynamism lies in the Radical Enlightenment of which the three great exemplars were Spinoza, Bayle and Diderot and the main areas of incubation the late seventeenth-century Dutch Republic and early eighteenth-century France - though with some support from Italian thinkers such as Vico as well as some hitherto little known German critics of revealed religion. In Israel's analysis these figures were radical to the core and sought the wholesale demolition of the religious bases on which European society had been built. The view that figures like Bayle or Vico maintained some remnants of religious belief which, in the face of the vigorous assaults of Enlightenment rationality, moved towards a form of fideism is decisively dismissed by Israel.

The characteristics of the Radical Enlightenment were the advocacy of goals which meant a root and branch reform and, where necessary, overthrow of existing society. In the place of religion there was to be reason, which totally and unequivocally dismissed any claims to revelation; and in the place of political authority based on hereditary principles and a hierarchical ordering of society, there was to be democracy predicated on notions of the equality of humankind. From these premises followed other fundamental changes: patriarchal authority was to be abolished to allow equality of men and women including sexual freedom and forms of imperialism based on racial or cultural superiority were to be eradicated.

In Israel's account one of the main obstacles to achieving the goals of the Radical Enlightenment was the Moderate Enlightenment which, with its concessions to the forces of traditional religious and political authority, acted as a brake on the fundamental challenge to, and eventual demolition

of, the pillars of belief and hierarchy on which the Old Regime was built. In contrast to the Continental origins of the Radical Enlightenment the Moderate Enlightenment was largely of British manufacture though it was exported and had very considerable influence particularly in France of the 1730s and 1740s becoming virtually the ideology of much of the French establishment. Its hold, however, was to be weakened there by the resurgence of the Radical Enlightenment in France which provided, in Israel's account, the seed bed for the ideology of the French Revolution. This resurgence gathered momentum from the period 1748-52 in large measure because of the increasing influence of one of the key figures of the Radical Enlightenment, Denis Diderot, and of his great Encyclopaedia. It is the conflict between these two forms of the Enlightenment, Radical and Moderate, which provides much of the central structure of this substantial work and accounts for its provocative foretitle, *Enlightenment contested.*

Such a view of the Enlightenment brings to the fore much that has been neglected in Enlightenment studies. The contribution of nations other than Britain, notably the Dutch Republic, Italy and the Germanic lands (including Scandinavia), is given greater prominence as are early eighteenth-century French freethinkers like Meslier or Boulainvilliers. The increasing tendency to make British figures such as Locke or Newton central to the Enlightenment and to its heritage is actively contested. For Israel, Locke is a key example of the way in which the Moderate Enlightenment failed to break decisively with the forces of tradition which held back the full realisation of the goals of the Radical Enlightenment. This was particularly true since Locke retained a deep and continuing commitment to theological values. Israel, then, energetically espouses a dualistic understanding of the Enlightenment in which his sympathies are very plainly with the radicals. Israel makes no secret of the fact that a central objective of the book is to promote the values he associates with the Radical Enlightenment. For his close scholarship is intended to demonstrate that it was the Radical not the Moderate Enlightenment which is the true core of the Enlightenment and its shaping influence of the modern world.

Yet such dualism has its dangers. In the first place the distinction between the true Radical and the compromised Moderate Enlightenment risks discrediting the Enlightenment as a meaningfully unified historical

concept and of thus working against the espousal and promotion of Enlightenment values which is one of Israel's central objectives. Israel, himself, in a rather different context, decries the 'danger in the fashion for stressing the plurality and diversity of the Enlightenment' (864). If we are to understand the Enlightenment as comprising two antagonistic movements with only one really embodying 'the true Enlightenment' we are left with a house divided against itself which, we are told (admittedly by a source very much at variance with the Radical Enlightenment), cannot stand. Given the messiness and provisional character of individuals' attempts to make sense of the world in terms of the ideas they have both inherited and acquired, it surely makes more sense to speak of a spectrum of Enlightenment outlooks with (to be simplistic) undiluted radicals like Spinoza on the left and adherents of the 'Christian Enlightenment' (a phrase employed by Israel) on the right and with all manner of gradations in between.

For ideas to have purchase in the social and political arena they have to be given forms which will have meaning to those whose lives are shaped by the institutions and practices of the world into which they have been born. There may have been some brave spirits who advocated a total overthrow of the existing ideological order, but in practice even a figure such as Diderot had to make his compromises to sustain his own life and that of those around him - Diderot the advocate of a sexually freer society also wrote letters to his daughter forcibly warning her of the dangers and social costs of premarital pregnancy. What made the Enlightenment a movement that changed the world was that it provided the intellectual resources to reshape existing institutions as well as, on occasions, the ammunition to destroy them.

For the Enlightenment to take root and to influence so many its central ideas had to be translated into forms which could be disseminated through existing institutions. Tracing this social basis to the spread of the Enlightenment has been the work of a generation of scholars of the Enlightenment but, in Israel's view, this preoccupation with the social setting of Enlightenment ideas has gone too far. One of the reasons his book is so important and innovative is that it seeks to re-establish the importance and primacy of ideas. Yet for the complex ideas of a figure like Spinoza to have an impact on a larger public they had to be translated into more palatable forms which had meaning to those reared on

traditional intellectual frameworks. One of the main tasks of those whom Israel associates with the term the 'Moderate Enlightenment' was to meld the old and the new in ways which had meaning to their contemporaries and to introduce them in contexts (which could even include traditional institutions like universities and even churches) where they could influence a greater public than the few who had the time and expertise to read complex learned texts. Though Israel's book is a useful corrective in pushing the pendulum back from the social context to the ideas themselves there is room for taking further the issue of the filiation of ideas from text to practice with rather more recognition of the existing literature on the social context of the Enlightenment.

What makes this book both a work of great scholarship as well as of passionate engagement is Israel's conviction that the values of the Radical Enlightenment are of far more than historical interest since he sees them as fundamental to the project of modernity and of a truly civilised society. 'The social values of the Radical Enlightenment', he vigorously affirms, 'in short, have an absolute quality in terms of reason which places them above any possible alternative …' (869). In his account there is a fundamental nexus between such truly humane values based on equality and the dismissal of any notion of the transcendent and the replacement of dualism by monism by Spinoza and other figures of the Radical Enlightenment. One can certainly see how such radical undercutting of the religious bases of the Old Regime could serve as an acid which ate away at its values. Less evident is the issue of how belief in a non-teleological mechanistic/hylozoic world view could provide the basis for a new set of values. Some of the most radical figures of the French Enlightenment like La Mettrie or, in a more provocative form, De Sade, did not think so and cheerfully took the view that materialism and amorality went together. Not surprisingly, since it is an issue that lies at the core of the book, Israel engages closely with the debates that surrounded La Mettrie's position but, in arguing against the conclusions which La Mettrie drew, some form of teleology seems to creep back. 'Diderot', writes Israel, 'no less than Spinoza or La Mettrie banishes all teleology from our world-view … nevertheless, there remains a physico-moral quasi teleology…' (812).

This, then, is a work which enriches our view of the Enlightenment and puts back into clear view many of the figures who have been lost and

obscured in our traditional accounts. It provides a ringing endorsement of the importance of the Enlightenment and its values not only in shaping the world since the eighteenth century but also of its critical importance in providing moral balance in the world of today. That it occasions debate as well as admiration is a tribute to its embrace of the critical reasoning which is one of the most enduring and valuable bequests of the Enlightenment.

John Gascoigne
University of New South Wales

John Issitt, *Jeremiah Joyce: radical, dissenter and writer,* Ashgate, Aldershot, Hampshire, 2006, pp. 202, ISBN 0 7546 38006, £55.00; Ashgate Online: £49.50.

This is a welcome biography of an important Unitarian activist. In the pages of this journal D O Thomas once took J H Plumb to task for making Priestley's views on the poor stand for those of Dissenters in general (*Enlightenment and Dissent*, 4 [1985], 65-67). The figures of Price and Priestley have long loomed large in our view of late eighteenth century Unitarianism. But we should avoid automatically assuming that the views of these two intellectual clergymen were representative of other Unitarians (or rather, to underline the point, other Arians and Socinians). Given the volume, quality and influence of their work, Price and Priestley will no doubt continue to attract attention. But there are many other interesting Unitarians who can provide material for at least one modern scholarly biography that would enrich our understanding of Enlightenment and Dissent. With attention in recent years turned toward the social and cultural aspects of Enlightenment politeness, sociability, the book trade, gender relations, and so on, detailed biographies of what we could call 'sub-canonical' or 'B-grade' intellectuals and activists have become more valuable. Biographies of figures such as Theophilus Lindsey, Andrew Kippis, Joseph Towers and Capel Lofft could add to our understanding of 'ideas in context' and the lived culture of Enlightenment in England. Viewed in his light, John Issitt's biography of Rev. Jeremiah Joyce will be a useful source for scholars working across a range of fields and interests.

This is a clearly written book that provides a very good guide to Joyce's life and prolific publishing. The book is divided into three parts that discuss Joyce as political radical, Unitarian Dissenter, and science writer. On the whole the book is well structured, with each part broken into a number of chapters, and with sub-headings used liberally within chapters. There are also a number of illustrations reproduced from Joyce's educational writings. While Issitt has included a useful list of Joyce's published works, it is a pity there is no general bibliography. While there is little attempt to speak to the hotly contested broader historiography on the nature of religion and politics in eighteenth-century Britain, Issitt has read carefully in the primary sources and makes good use of specialist scholarship by the likes of Grayson Ditchfield, R K Webb and articles from *Enlightenment and Dissent* and *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society*.

Born the son of a wool comber in Hertfordshire, Joyce attended sermons at the Essex Street Chapel while completing a seven-year apprenticeship as a painter of glass. With the support of Hugh Worthington and a bursary, Joyce trained as a Unitarian minister at the New College Hackney. While he often delivered sermons at Essex Street, Joyce failed to secure his own ministry until near the end of his life and had to rely on a combination of patronage and a highly industrious output of popular educational texts. Issitt is clearly sympathetic to the fortunes of this tradesman turned intellectual:

> To move from being an artisan who got his hands dirty, to a minister, a profession ring fenced by the middle and upper classes, represented a major elevation on the social ladder. This move presented him with the stark realities of social class, realities he never wholly overcame. Throughout his life Joyce was never to be fully accepted into the community of middle class Dissenters and remained perpetually alienated from the community surrounding him … Whilst Joyce never tried to hide or distance himself from his origins, the society in which he moved would never let him forget it (18).

His blunt manners could be off-putting to some, but others were attracted to his candour, and during the period of his most intense literary output in the early 1800s Joyce was frequently in the company of William Godwin.

Issitt makes good use of fragmentary and circumstantial evidence to outline a close relationship between Joyce and Lord Stanhope, by whom he was employed as a family tutor. Issitt argues that Joyce may have to some extent acted as Lord Stanhope's political agent, noting that Stanhope resigned from the London Revolution Society in August 1790, which was around the same time that Joyce joined. The aristocratic cousin of the prime minister seems to have withdrawn in order to protect his social standing, while maintaining contact through a tutor whose address in the minute book of the Revolution Society is listed as 'at Earl Stanhope's' (see mss. in the British Library). In 1794 *The Times* newspaper reported the arrest for 'treasonable and seditious practices' of Rev. Jeremiah Joyce, identifying him as 'private secretary to Earl Stanhope and tutor to the present Lord Mahon' (49). Issitt is thoughtful in his assessment of the relationship between the two citizens, noting that 'although it is impossible to ascertain the precise relationship between Joyce and Stanhope, from the evidence of Joyce's subsequent literary production … Stanhope came to function more as Joyce's patron than his employer, and may have felt to some degree indebted to Joyce whom he might well have judged had borne the brunt of some of Pitt's fire that had really been intended for himself' (61-62).

While Issitt has made little use of the vast body of scholarship that the early 1790s has inspired, he does a good job of narrating in detail the fortunes of Joyce during his arrest for treason. I, for one, had not noticed until reading this book that among the swag of radical literature in Joyce's possession seized by the authorities were six copies of the anonymous *Two pennyworth more of truth for a penny* (1793). Written by Ann Jebb, a Unitarian and widow of a founder of the Society for Constitutional Information, this pamphlet was a forthright reply to the Loyalist Association's *One pennyworth of truth* (see A Page, 'A great politicianess', *Women's History Review*, 17:5 [2008]). This may explain why she seems to have published nothing more after that. For their part, Joyce and Lord Stanhope went quiet politically after 1795.

Joyce provides an excellent example of a radical Unitarian tendency to respond to Pitt's 'terror' by turning attention to the long-term 'improvement' of society via education. Part 3 of this book provides a very useful outline of the impressive range of Joyce's publications in the early 1800s. He produced condensed versions of works by the likes of

Adam Smith and William Paley that were a combination of abridgement and paraphrase, and high selling works that popularised science. Joyce clearly worked long hours for little recognition, with many of his writings anonymous and the genre of educational and popularising text sniffed at as unoriginal hack-work by the leading literary lights of the romantic era.

This good book unfortunately contains some errors. Interestingly, Issit makes the same mistake as Jack Fruchtman Jr.: while John Horne Tooke did much in his busy life, he was not a founding member of the Society for Constitutional Information (see my review of *Atlantic cousins* in this issue). Issitt incorrectly states that Richard Price delivered his *Discourse on the love of our country* at the 'Reform Society' in November 1789 (32), where he should have written 'Revolution Society'; but gets it right a few pages later (39). But such minor errors aside, this is a valuable book that will prove of use to scholars of Enlightenment, Dissent, politics and print culture.

Anthony Page,
University of Tasmania

Michael R Lynn, *Popular science and public opinion in eighteenth-century France,* Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2006, pp. ix + 177, ISBN: 0719073731, £50.00.

Michael R Lynn has written an informative overview of the popularization of science in pre-revolutionary France. Until a generation ago, the history of science in eighteenth-century France was most often treated as an annex of intellectual history. Studies by historians, philosophers, and literary scholars focused on debates between Cartesians and Newtonians, for example, or linked developments in natural philosophy to the broader cause of the *parti philosophique* after mid-century. The recent interdisciplinary work of Ken Alder, Jessica Riskin, Mary Terrall, J B Shank, and others, however, has moved science studies during the French Enlightenment from the rarified air of the royal academies and the abstract struggles between reason and faith to the everyday preoccupations of many French subjects throughout the kingdom.

Lynn continues this trend by situating the popularization of science within at least three current historiographical tendencies. First, he views

scientific demonstrations by 'mid-level savants' before enthusiastic audiences as a constituent component of the eighteenth-century French public sphere, a concept initially articulated by Jürgen Habermas and endlessly elaborated by historians over the last three decades. Second, he traces the commodification of science over the century, both in terms of the public lectures for which popularizers charged fees and in terms of the instruments and scientific paraphernalia available for sale. Daniel Roche, Colin Jones, Cissie Fairchilds, and Michael Kwass, have insisted in recent years on the importance of a consumer revolution in France in the years before 1789. At the high end of the social scale, Lynn informs us, Madame de Pompadour owned 'more than fifty scientific instruments, models or machines' (52). The royal mistress's interest in science underscores Lynn's last point: the importance of women in the new audience for physics and the other natural sciences. Curious women in many ranks of society were not just reading novels and going to the theatre; they were also attending public science lectures and purchasing memberships in the end-of-the-century *musées* where popularizers presented the newest ideas about nature. The story of French women and eighteenth-century science does not begin and end with the philosopher in Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle's *Conversations on the plurality of worlds* trying to seduce a scientifically-minded marquise by moonlight, nor with Madame du Châtelet whispering sweet Newtonian nothings into Voltaire's ear.

Popular science and public opinion in eighteenth-century France is an adroit mix of generalization and case study. The first three substantive chapters discuss the careers and aims of the scientific popularizers; the composition, economics, and geography (largely Parisian, in Lynn's presentation) of their audiences; and the institutions, such as the *salons*, *lycées*, and *musées*, that brought them together. The final two chapters study the history of rabdomancy, or the use of divining rods, and the spectacle of ballooning in the 1780s. Much like the popularizers he studies, Lynn revels in presenting the spectacle of their performances in these chapters. Jean-Antoine Nollet, for example, active at mid-century, specialized in displays of the 'electric kiss', an experiment in which a young boy would be suspended from the ceiling by silk cords, then electrified by means of a machine, causing him to act as a magnet. Nollet would then dim the lights, and encourage a young girl in the audience to

approach the boy and kiss him. Amused onlookers would watch as the two youngsters came close enough for sparks to fly between their lips (31). But audiences were also drawn by the potential utility of the new scientific displays. At the beginning of the century, diviners not only disclosed underground water and mineral deposits, but also uncovered criminals and recalcitrant Huguenots. The commercial and military applications of ballooning were immediately evident to onlookers, even if the huge hot-air contraptions proved resistant to navigation. The French interest in eighteenth-century science was not limited to its amusement value. Like Diderot and d'Alembert in the *Encyclopédie*, who insisted on including the trades alongside the arts and sciences, both popularizers and their audiences were interested in the practical, commercial applications of their displays. Lynn's work contributes to the pre-history of technology and its industrial applications in France, just as the studies of Larry Stewart, Jan Golinski, and Margaret Jacob have illuminated the cultural origins of British industrialization.

Some readers may be dissatisfied with Lynn's chronology. Although the chapter on divining rods features a strong contrast between Jacques Aymer, a peasant rabdomancer circa 1700, and Barthelemy Bléton, another well-known diviner in the late 1770s and 1780s, most of Lynn's discussion is less carefully postmarked. While some examples are drawn from the reigns of Louis XIV and Louis XV (1643-1715 and 1715-1774, respectively), most of the book's evidence comes from the last fifteen years of the Old Regime. The *musées*, for example, are clearly a phenomenon that began in the late 1770s, and the Montgolfier ascension which inaugurated the Atlantic-wide ballooning craze occurred in 1783. In fact, debates over the uses and abuses of public science were only beginning to heat up in 1789. In a brief conclusion, Lynn notes that popular science changed during the Revolution due to the professionalization of science education, the new focus by the state on the utility of science, and the desire of the *savants* to work directly for the nation (148). But Paul Metzner's recent book *Crescendo of the virtuoso: spectacle, skill, and self-promotion in Paris during the age of revolution* (California, 1998) suggests that men like Nollet, Bléton, and the Montgolfiers were not entirely absorbed by the needs of the Revolutionary state after 1789, and the presence of Mesmerism,

Swedenborgianism, and other illuminist and quasi-occult practices in Revolutionary and Napoleonic Paris argues that the boundaries between the popular and the academic were still quite porous in the first decades of the nineteenth century.

Jeffrey S Ravel
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Emilio Mazza & Emanuele Ronchetti eds., ***New Essays on David Hume,*** Milan, Franco Angeli, 2007, pp. 480, ISBN 13: € 27.00.

This new set of essays on David Hume is a welcome initiative of the editors of the *Rivista di Storia della Filosofia*. The essays are grouped under the rubrics 'Of the Understanding', 'Of Morals and Criticism', 'Of History, Politics and Religion' and 'Hume Novelties'. The last rubric is ironic, because it contains a preview of David and Mary Norton's critical edition of the *Treatise of human nature*, which has already been published. It gives me the opportunity to warn the reader that the Norton's have taken a number of unwarranted liberties with the text (See my *Een dialoog over Hume, Over zijn herschrijving van het Traktaat over de menselijke natuur* [Amsterdam 2007: Boom], noot A; the English version *A dialogue on David Hume: on his revision of a treatise of human nature* is available online and in book form at Amazon.com)

Peter Jones' contribution is an oddity rather than a novelty. He reviews another set of essays on Hume edited by M Frasca-Spada & P J E Kail (*Impressions of Hume*, Oxford, 2005) and comments near the end: 'The almost uniformly feeble and superficial commentary on Humean matters by members of literature departments over the last thirty years must be deplored as much as the indefensibly jargon-ridden opacity of philosophers, whose work is inaccessible outside the charmed circles' (455). If he wishes to apply his commentary to the *New essays* as well he would be killing two birds with one stone.

Jones' comment on the charmed circles of philosophers is not totally inappropriate. The epistemological essays by Marina Frasca-Spada ('Simple Impressions in the Treatise'), Catherine Kemp ('Contrariety in Hume'), P J E Kail ('Leibniz's Dog and Humean Reason') and Dale Jacquette ('Hume on the Infinite Divisibility of Extension and Exact

Geometrical Values') are neither jargon-ridden nor opaque, but the impartial spectator may wonder how they fit in with Hume's intentions. The worst offender is Charles Pigden. He writes that 'it is the legendary Hume and his fallacious arguments that I discuss in this paper. I reserve the real Hume for another occasion' (199). I hope that when he returns to the real Hume he will learn to quote Hume correctly. The italicized addition to his quotation that 'reason is, *and ought only to be* the slave of the passions' (L A Selby-Bigge ed., revised P H Nidditch, *Treatise of human nature* [Oxford, 1978], III, 3, iii, 415) seems relevant for the analysis of moral belief and motivation.

Kemp argues that if two seemingly similar events have contradictory outcomes this is a way to discover the real cause of either event. That is a helpful comment, but as it is about the only piece of formal causal analysis should we not ask why Hume, who spent pages on how we acquire beliefs and why all beliefs are causal, remains silent on how we discover causes? Frasca-Spada gives a useful account of the many problems provoked by Hume's definition of a simple idea as being the copy of a simple impression. She concludes by writing 'that simplicity, just like resemblance, is not a brute fact about some of our perceptions, but rather results from our mind's reflecting on the operations of its own selective attention' (54). I wonder whether Hume would have agreed with this opportunistic interpretation of his *minima sensibilia*. His point was that what we cannot experience is a sophism and that hence the idea of infinite divisibility is absurd. Jacquette defends 'Hume's positive doctrine of spatial extension as finitely divisible more specifically into sensible extensionless indivisibles' (99). I cannot see how he can save Hume from being a dogmatic atomist who argues that because no one can see, hear, or feel beyond a certain minimum reality must exist as indivisible particles. At stake is Hume's thesis that 'reason alone can never give rise to any original idea' (*Treatise of human nature*, I, 3, xiv, 157). So mathematics by itself cannot discover things that are useful and real. The career of mathematics at the core of the sciences proved Hume wrong. Discussing the sections on the reason of animals Kail explains Hume's view on the limitations of inductive reasoning in man and animal. He forgets to mention Hume called reason 'a wonderful and unintelligible instinct in our souls' (*Treatise of human nature*, I, 3, xvi, 179). That

instinct must make some difference between man and animal, even to Hume.

The problem with the essays I have just cited is that they refer to an epistemological system, which remains implicit and does not necessarily refer to Hume's system. The literary and historical essays in this volume are certainly not superficial and can stand on their own, because they do not need a system for explanatory purposes. Emilio Mazza ('In and out of the Well: Flux and Reflux of Scepticism and Nature') displays a wonderful erudition in dealing with sceptical sources. He notes that the *Enquiry concerning human understanding* curtails the role of scepticism to 'durable' and 'useful' results (128). 'Yet, the *Treatise* is more dynamic: it describes the movement from within, rather than its results from the outside. In the *Enquiry* speculative curiosity goes hand in hand with the "useful"' (129). He lets the sceptic ask whether what 'can be known by common prudence and discretion' will satisfy the philosopher. Hume evidently thought so, because 'the only one [relation], that can be traced beyond our senses, and informs us of existences and objects, which we do not see or feel, is *causation*' (*Treatise of human nature*, I, 3, ii, 74). So there is hope for the researcher and the philosopher. (We should keep in mind that *philosophy* in Hume's days could also mean a formal scientific approach or just science). In a first-class essay Roger Emerson ('Hume and Art: Reflections on a man who could not hear, sing or look') presents us with a Hume that is deaf to music, does not notice the niceties of buildings or landscapes and uses art to concentrate on philosophical problems and who ignores the art (257). Hume was a philistine in matters of taste. Annette Bayer ('Hume's Excellent Hypocrites') writes a delightful piece of literary criticism. Hypocrisy in Hume's *History* often fulfils a useful function and is sometimes necessary to save faith as when Queen Elizabeth displayed grief and dismay at the news of Queen Mary's execution.

What we need in the first place is a firm view of Hume's intensions and in this respect the fact that Hume rewrote his *Treatise* is helpful. Even in this new set of essays the authors tend to disregard the fact that he wrote 'that the following Pieces [the two *Enquires*] may only be regarded as containing his philosophical sentiments and principles' (*Enquiry concerning human understanding*, ed. T L Beauchamp [Oxford, 2000],

1), in this way repudiating his *Treatise*. A clear understanding of what is going on in the process of rewriting would be helpful in deciding the long standing polemic about Hutcheson's influence on Hume. Norton (following Kemp Smith) maintains that Hutcheson was a formative influence on the young author of the *Treatise*. In his essay published in this volume Moore ('The Eclectic Stoic, the Mitigated Skeptic') presents an array of arguments to prove that their philosophical approaches were so different that there can be no question of a formative influence. Luigi Turco ('Hutcheson and Hume in a Recent Polemic') comparing certain Hutcheson texts with the *Treatise* clinches the matter in favour of Moore. He ends his essay with: 'Lastly, it is not so obvious, at least in the eyes of an eighteenth-century philosopher, that one can nonchalantly claim - as Norton does - that that there are similarities of views on the question of morality, regardless of religious attitudes' (197). Indeed Hume and Hutcheson lived in different worlds: a world with and a world without God. However, I do not think this is the end of the story. With some exaggeration we can say that Hutcheson is at the end of Hume's philosophy when Hume demonstrated how we can have a civilized morality without an appeal to God, in this way joining the school of Hutcheson on his own terms.

James Harris ('Hume's Four Essays on Happiness and Their Place in the Move from Morals to Politics') adds a novel note to this polemic. In his essays on the 'Stoic', 'the Platonist', 'the Epicurean' and 'the Sceptic' Hume distanced himself from the Ancient schools of philosophy and their modern followers in his attempt to establish an empirical science of man. Perhaps we should be a bit careful in using the categories of Stoicism and Epicureanism to characterize eighteenth-century thinkers. Moore has some strong arguments for Hutcheson's attachment to Stoicism, but the fact that he calls him an eclectic Stoic may mean that even for Hutcheson the paradigm of Stoicism had become threadbare.

Then we have a set of essays, which deals with the reception of Hume's ideas. In a conversation, which takes place in Heaven (?), Hume takes John Rawls to task for his theory of justice. Flavio Baroncelli ('Rawls and Hume: a Fable') gives an amusing account of their conversation. Rawls gets the worst of the argument and the reader, down here on earth, will take sides with Hume, if only because Rawls gave a rather poor lecture on Hume - see his *Lectures on the history of political philosophy*

(S Freeman ed. [Cambridge Mass., 2007], 159 ff). Mark Spencer ('Hume's Reception in eighteenth-century Philadelphia') tells us that the Philadelphia audience was surprisingly receptive to Hume's thought. 'Even Hume's reputation as an infidel was not sufficient to rule out a significant readership or a sympathetic reception, especially for Hume's political and historical writings' (307-308). Already in 1751-52, 'Hume's name was starting to trickle out in criticisms of the essay on miracles' (313). This is one of the many interesting details in M A Stewart's essay ('Hume in the Service of American Deism') and is proof of Hume's rapid success in colonial America. The main gist of his story is that Hume's essay 'Of the Liberty of the Press' was put to use in a controversy over an allegedly piece of deist propaganda. Of course Hume's guarded appraisal became distorted. The intervention of William Smith, a Scot who immigrated to America and who became an influential educational reformer, is also of some interest. That Hume's analyses of the civil war and the revolution of 1688 were used by counter-revolutionary writers during the French Revolution of 1789 was already known from Laurence Bongie's study. Emanuele Ronchetti ('Appropriating Hume: Joseph de Maistre, Benjamin Constant and the "History of England"') adds to this the amusing account how Joseph de Maistre used Hume's *History* for counter-revolutionary and Benjamin Constant for revolutionary purposes. The appeal proves the strength of Hume's historical account. Next to Jones' this volume publishes a second review by Alice Cohen - 'The making of a Philosophical Classic: the Reception of David Hume in Europe'- of a collection of essays edited by Peter Jones (*The reception of David Hume in Europe* [London-New York, 2005]). She concludes that Kant eclipsed Hume during the nineteenth-century and that it was logical positivism that revived the interest in Hume. As she deals with the *Treatise* in particular it is odd she fails to mention that the *Treatise* was virtually unknown during that century and it was not the logical positivists who rediscovered Hume's crucial text but Norman Kemp Smith in 1905/1906.

This leaves John Wright's essay ('Kemp Smith and the Two Kinds of Naturalism in Hume's Philosophy') to be discussed. It comes first in this volume, but I kept it to the last, because it allows me to make a concluding remark on how the *Treatise* is a key to unlock Hume's philosophy. Kemp Smith, Wright argues, noticed a Newtonian naturalism in the first book of

the *Treatise*. This means that we can claim reliable knowledge through causal analysis. Then in book II and III Hume developed another kind of naturalism in which - like Hutcheson - he appealed directly to human nature in his analysis of the passions and consequently of morality. According to Kemp Smith these two types of naturalism were at war with each other, which according to Wright is not necessarily the case. Wright's final question is why Kemp Smith reinterpreted Hume's philosophy in the way he did. He writes: 'Like T H Green he was opposed to the subjectivism he found in the empirical philosophers of the latter half of the nineteenth century, but unlike Green he thought their most famous eighteenth-century forerunner had actually overcome subjectivism' (36).

Kemp Smith had an enormous influence on generations of Hume scholars and his influence has not been entirely beneficial. The crux of the matter is that Hume's philosophy is uncompromisingly subjectivist and it is this subjectivism that allows him to make the easy transition from a kind of positivist interpretation of belief to an analysis of human passions, which have no basis in facts of the outside world. The switch is heralded by that famous sentence in the Conclusion to book I: 'Most fortunately it happens, that since reason is incapable of dispelling these clouds, nature herself suffices to that purpose' (*Treatise of human nature*, I, 4, vii, 269). His positive message in book I is that through causality we can derive reliable information about the outside world. On the other hand beliefs remain entirely subjectivist and Hume has to admit that 'liveliness' as a criterion for the conviction of truth is unreliable and does not allow us to make the distinction between 'belief' and 'fiction'. In book II Hume is no longer interested in this distinction. At the beginning of the *Treatise* Hume distinguishes 'the impressions of sensation and of reflexion'. Book II deals with the passions as the impressions of reflexion, but Hume does not explore the relations between the two types of impressions. He is content with the message that through the passions human beings can manage to develop a functional morality. Don Livingston has quite rightly made the simplicity of Hume's messages the focal point of his philosophy (D W Livingston, *Hume's philosophy of common life* [Chicago 1984]).

It is important to see, I think, that these two positive messages were the

only ones that interested Hume. He was not an empiricist, not a logical positivist, not a phenomenologist, not even an idealist. Hume's philosophy is unique in this respect, because he stands alone. The secret of his complicated philosophy is its practical application.

F L van Holthoon
University of Groningen

Isabel Rivers and David L. Wykes, eds., ***Joseph Priestley, Scientist, Philosopher, and Theologian,*** Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, pp. 252; ISBN, 978-0-19-921530-0; £45.00; $90.00.

As the editors point out, Joseph Priestley was given two entries in the original *Dictionary of National Biography*, but when the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* was issued in 2004, a single entry had become possible. That change was owing to the explosion of Priestley scholarship in the past forty years, notably among historians of science who have done so much to place Priestley's science in the context of his religious and philosophical views. But immense strides have also been made in elucidating his non-scientific career, not least by contributors to this journal. Priestley's touching and sometimes exasperating eagerness for controversy meant that he laid about him over many areas of the eighteenth-century intellect and usually got as good as he gave, so the progress of knowledge in that broader arena has in turn widened and deepened our understanding of Priestley himself.

Studies of Priestley are now so voluminous that, a great synthesist himself, he in turn demands synthesis. But it is characteristic of present-day scholarship that the summing up of a vast subject will most likely be done collaboratively, in this case in the first volume of a series from Dr. Williams's Centre for Dissenting Studies. That is entirely appropriate. While Priestley was Unitarian in theology from the end of the 1760s, Unitarianism as a denomination did not exist in his lifetime; rather, he saw himself first as a spokesman for, and goad to, Dissent as a whole.

In an introduction as remarkable for its brevity as for the clarity of its distillation, the editors lay out the complex evolution - legal, political, and doctrinal - of English religion in the hundred years or so before Priestley

began to write. The first chapter, by David Wykes, is an admirable summary of Priestley's life, from his Yorkshire origins through his crucial education at Daventry Academy and the inauspicious beginning of his ministerial career at Needham Market to its capstones at Leeds and Birmingham, and then through the long, unhappy denouement that began with the Birmingham Riots in 1791 and ended in his exile in Northumberland, Pennsylvania, where he died in 1804. Due note is taken of the two periods of absence from the pulpit, as a teacher at Warrington Academy in the 1760s, and in his service as librarian (and resident intellectual) to Lord Shelburne in the seventies, the most productive periods in an active life.

The second chapter, by W H Brock, is a superb survey of Priestley's scientific work, from his early fascination with electricity and optics to his eventually settling on research in the nascent study of airs. Brock places Priestley's accomplishments firmly in the context of other scientific inquiry of his time and succinctly dismantles the superior attitudes of earlier historians of science who tended to dismiss him for not having arrived at the conclusions of other, later practitioners, especially Lavoisier. Brock lays out the context of the 'phlogiston problem' and explains Priestley's resistance to Lavoisier's views (whose potential value he recognized), at least in part, by his inability to reconcile them fully with what he had himself demonstrated. Brock helpfully places Priestley's scientific inquiries in the intellectual and social context of his role as a public intellectual, and makes clear the currents in recent historical inquiries that have affected reconsideration of Priestley's work. This essay is a perfect example of what the kind of synthesis represented by this volume should be.

James Dybikowski's similarly effective chapter places Priestley's work as a metaphysician and philosopher of religion under three main heads - associationism, necessarianism, and materialism - while laying out Priestley's obligations to others (notably Hartley) and setting him in the philosophical context of his time. Here pride of place goes to the Scottish common-sense school associated with Thomas Reid, whose criticism gave Priestley opportunity for slashing criticism in return; a less prominent role is assigned, rightly, to the sceptic David Hume. Dybikowski, like Brock, also places Priestley helpfully in the context of recent historical work. One quibble: there appears to be a contradiction

between Dybikowski and Brock on the origins of Priestley's materialism (pp.81-2, 67-8), in particular the place of Roger Boscovich in that conversion. Brock seems to me to be right. A small point perhaps, but it suggests a lapse in either the collaborative format or in editorial oversight.

Martin Fitzpatrick's chapter on Priestley's political philosophy is constructed around a revealing series of distinctions, notably Locke's conservative position on popular sovereignty as against Priestley's radicalization of it (with extended reference to H T Dickinson's revisionist work) and the intellectualist cast of Priestley's radicalism against the more overt activism of many contemporaries. Fitzpatrick rescues Priestley from the older view of him as 'a footnote to the development of Jeremy Bentham's utilitarianism', while making clear, without the fruitless search for an exact citation, why Bentham professed himself obligated to Priestley; but he does not neglect the elements in Priestley's thought that could underpin an activist role for government when circumstances required it. The chapter demonstrates Priestley's more sweeping, yet pragmatic views of civil liberty as against Richard Price's more restricted interpretation, and the broad views of religious liberty that distinguished Priestley from most of his contemporaries, extending to his advocacy of liberty for Roman Catholics and even to his willingness to think about the ultimate absorption of Christianity in something grander. This last point is placed in the context of Priestley's distinctively apocalyptic views, which (with due attention to parallels in Priestley's master Hartley) are admirably accounted for. Towering over all is Priestley's commitment to the ultimate power of religious freedom. Finally, Fitzpatrick argues importantly against deriving too much from Priestley's extensive controversial writing instead of his major reflective works.

G M Ditchfield's chapter marks a shift in strategy. He does not offer primarily a summary and interpretation of Priestley's views in the light of recent research; rather, an essentially monographic essay on a contextual problem faced by Priestley and likeminded contemporaries. Ditchfield's argument centres on what thirty years ago we might have called a *conjoncture*: the campaign of 1772-4 for relief from the obligation to subscribe the Thirty-nine Articles, in the Feathers Tavern petition and a parallel Dissenting agitation. Priestley's part in the controversy is shown in a pamphlet war with Benjamin Dawson, a Dissenting minister who had turned Anglican in 1758 and who, while remaining a sympathizer with his

old brethren, was an active promoter of the anti-subscription movement. Priestley did not approve of halfway houses and, even though Dawson was a contributor to Priestley's *Theological Repository,* he did not shrink from dramatically accusing Dawson of hypocrisy in seeking the advantages that might come from conforming and in daring to maintain Socinian views while having subscribed to the Articles.

More broadly, Ditchfield addresses the question of the difficulties of collaboration between Anglican Latitudinarians and Rational Dissenters. He illustrates the point with the refusal of Francis Blackburne, who like many others in the Establishment could not share Priestley's wider interpretation of toleration, to take part in the Feathers Tavern agitation. But Ditchfield's principal and most revealing demonstration is the long, principled reluctance that preceded the departure of Theophilus Lindsey, Blackburne's son-in-law, from the Church for Unitarianism, a dilemma to be found again (as Ditchfield points out) in a succession of nodal points in the Victorian church. This case rests, of course, on Ditchfield's own admirable scholarship, as the footnotes make plain.

The last two chapters in the book rely similarly on the authors' own work, for the simple reason that, with minor exceptions, the rather meagre existing scholarship does not demand the kind of synthesis displayed in the first four chapters. The first of the two, by Alison Kennedy, deals with Priestley's views of history, a vital component of his intellectual outlook that, though not unrecognized (again, notably, by Martin Fitzpatrick in this journal in 1998), has had to wait until now to be surveyed with the proper breadth. Kennedy does not deal with Priestley's scientific histories, well covered in Brock's chapter; rather, she admirably assesses the sources and impact of Priestley's historical work in his Warrington years. (Oddly, neither she nor Brock notes that Priestley's historical work, specifically the *Chart of biography* of 1764, was a primary justification offered for his election to the Royal Society in 1766.) Of course, Kennedy's principal concern is Priestley's historical approach to theology. She demonstrates his affinity with German thought, usually thought to gain relevance only in the next century, and, above all, traces the effects of Priestley's historical outlook on Unitarian theologians of his own time and, most importantly, on the later, influential Unitarian historian John Kenrick. This chapter makes one eager for Kennedy's forthcoming book.

Jenny Graham likewise has the subject of Priestley's years in the United States largely though not entirely to herself. Her chapter is essentially an abstract of her 'Revolutionary in Exile: The Emigration of Joseph Priestley to America, 1794-1804,' published in the *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* in 1995, with additions from subsequent work, including her own two-volume study of English reform politics in the last two decades of the eighteenth century (2000). Particular note should be taken of her attention to English emigration to the United States in the middle 1790s, a subject she does not own but has told us more about than anyone else to date. One regret: Priestley's nemesis in America, William Cobbett, gets relatively less attention in this chapter than Graham gives him in the monograph. It would have taken only a few words to demonstrate the brilliance of Cobbett's opportunism, his masterly English style, and his astonishing later, in some ways redemptive, career back in England. In a perverse way, he was a worthy opponent who here seems an isolated, inexplicable phenomenon.

The authors and editors of this volume, Dr. Williams's Centre, and Priestley scholars generally are all to be congratulated on its appearance. If not the first book to which future generations of students should turn - they should certainly start with Priestley's own account of his life and Robert E Schofield's biography - it will be an essential next step in understanding a towering, wide-ranging, and too often underestimated figure in the English Enlightenment and, indeed, in the following century.

R KWebb
University of Maryland, Baltimore County

Robert Rix, *William Blake and the cultures of radical Christianity*, Aldershot, Ashgate Publishing, 2007, pp. 182, ISBN 978-0-7546-5600-5; £55.00, $99.95; Ashgate Online: £49.50.

If it is a truth universally acknowledged that William Blake was a religious radical, it is also a truth which until recent times has been more textually inferred rather than biographically established. A great step forward in terms of establishing Blake's radical milieu was made by Jon Mee in *Dangerous enthusiasm* (1992), though the emphasis there was on radical politics in the 1790s. But the book set a precedent in closely

tracing links between what had previously been condescended to as by-ways of cultural history and Blake's prophetic texts. It is a great strength of Robert Rix's new study that it similarly makes a coherent narrative out of Blake's interaction with radical religious cultures over a rather longer period.

On the one hand, previously taken-for-granted connections of Blake's work - such as his embracing of, and rejection of, Swedenborgianism - are given precision and temporal direction. On the other, clear connections are shown between spiritual influences which were somewhat atomistically seen by earlier scholars. These links might in turn be either within or between the acknowledged leading influences on his work. With Swedenborgianism, for example, we learn both of its internal connections with animal magnetism and supporting scientific theories, and on the other of its competition with Priestley and the radical dissenters for the loyalty of religious seekers. In both cases we are seeing late eighteenth century movements of thought as more porous and interconnected than we might earlier have thought. For readers of this journal in particular the tracing of overlapping public interest in the 'rational enlightenment' of (say) Kant, Price and Priestley and the 'enthusiastic sects' around Swedenborg and others will doubtless be of particular interest.

The Swedenborg connection is traced interestingly. We see in detail the early schisms of the New Church - some of these dissensions being early- and well-buried by the victors in the controversies - and the ways in which the antinomian tendencies of Blake were probably shared with a dissident tendency within the connexion. It is true that the general grounds of Blake's dissatisfaction with Swedenborg have been extensively discussed elsewhere (as one might expect, given Blake's trenchant and increasingly negative marginal annotations of the sage). But literary-critical books on Blake often leave one with the slightly unsatisfactory sense that Swedenborgianism was an early delusion, easily transcended by an artist already on his way to the status of innovative visionary. Rix, on the other hand, with typical precision and persistence, shows us grounds both for Blake's initial enthusiasm and for the enduring, if by mid-life denied, influence of Swedenborg on him. A key example could be the important issue for that time of eternal damnation. Swedenborg's universalism, his

holding to the idea that God could not be angry with his creation, and that hell must be much more 'the mind's own place' than a pre-existing pit for sinners, would clearly remain a linchpin of Blake's own thought.

At other times we see brought together material otherwise reasonably well-known but not necessarily connected with Blake. The visit of John Wright and William Bryan to the millenarian society at Avignon in early 1789 was recounted two hundred years ago by Southey in his *Letters from England*, as was the career of the prophet Richard Brothers. But Rix is particularly good at tracing the interconnections between these figures. Bryan, for example, had been an apprentice under William Sharp, Blake's fellow radical London engraver, while Wright had heard Swedenborgian preachers Ralph Mather and Joseph Salmon during their progress through the north of England. Both would come under the influence of Brothers in the 1790s. We can see clearly here the process of radicalization of some 'left' Swedenborgians at the same time as Robert Hindmarsh and others were ensuring that the New Church itself became known for its loyalism. The career of John Clowes, rector of St John's, Manchester, illustrated how Swedenborgianism could point both ways, towards loyalism and dissent. Clowes opposed the separation of the New Church from Anglicanism but was still accused (though cleared) of heresy on the grounds of anti-trinitarianism.

All this does help us to situate Blake more firmly in a complex map of shifting and overlapping subcultures (the plural in Rix's title is precise), even if it cannot bridge the gap between our copious knowledge of those cultures and our often fragmentary biographical knowledge of Blake himself. After all, we are still being surprised here: most scholars would not have suspected until recently that Blake would still be involved in the production of a radical material around 1820. However, what Rix does do is rid us of false dichotomies. Blake as influenced by Moravianism or not, Blake as Swedenborgian or not, Blake as totally anti-Priestley or not: all these dichotomies come to seem unreal as we see how many of his contemporaries would move from one radical stance to another, would mix religion with natural philosophy, would combine coherently things that have come to seem separate. The search to uncover the corruptions of true Christianity, and to reveal the true message of religion for the contemporary world, could closely bind Priestley and Swedenborg, for

example, despite the vast differences in their philosophies. The eclecticism which we have come to find in Blake's prophetic works turns out to have been almost mainstream in the radical religious culture of the 1790s. It is not to make a rash move of triangulation to claim that what we find both in Blake's works and in the lives of his contemporaries was also likely to be found in the undocumented hours of Blake's life in Lambeth.

It is not the aim of Robert Rix's study to provide detailed commentary on the prophetic works - indeed, its main job is done if it provides us with a more stable starting-point for reading them at all. But it does throw particular light on certain neglected aspects. Thus, for example, Book One of Blake's aborted poem 'The French Revolution' is well-known to have been an intended publication of radical publisher Joseph Johnson in 1791. (The proofs tell us that the intended price was the relatively accessible one shilling). But it is less well-known that Johnson had sold from his bookshop some Swedenborg-influenced work before 1790 such as that of Thomas Thorild and would publish in that year a Latin hymn to the revolution by Alexander Geddes. It seems then that Blake's poem would be excluded from Johnson's publishing catalogue not because of its millenarianism but because of a conscious attempt of the rational dissenters around 1790 to dissociate themselves from any confusion with religious enthusiasts (a review of Thorild in Johnson's *Analytical Review* made clear both the shared ground and the sharp divisions). A rational vision of a new heaven and new earth were now to be very clearly distinguished from a non-rational one such as Blake's.

The fullest textual commentary in the book however is fittingly on *The marriage of heaven and hell*. Again, Rix scores by his precision. That *The marriage* is a satire on, or parody of, Swedenborg has long been a critical commonplace. But here we see how precisely Blake reverses the Swedenborgian equations. Swedenborg in *The true Christian religion* recounts himself converting Luther from his doctrine of by faith alone, whereas Blake shows his narrator as confronted by an Angel who condemns him in the name of the Law. The narrator calmly suggests a journey to the spiritual world to see who is right. Very often the prophet's own formulations are turned back on him. Swedenborg's condemnation of the old churches as being like 'stagnant water' is redirected towards what Blake sees as the dogmatism of New Church legalists. It should be

noted that this is not just a matter of claiming that Blake's references in *The marriage* are precise in historical terms. That is not the key point, and indeed could lead to a narrow legalism in Blake interpretation. The deeper point which Rix establishes in relation to *The marriage* is that its stance towards the world it critiques is not one of broad, rhetorical gesturing, or indeed of postmodern play, but one of precise, forensic exploration. Here we do seem to come near the real Blake of active engagement, painstakingly engraving his letters and his designs one after the other.

There are occasional stylistic or proof-reading lapses, but overall the editing standard is good and the writing is distinguished by an unusual pace and concision which incorporates wide-ranging scholarship without clogging narrative momentum. If the price per page seems high we should perhaps reflect that this may now be the literal price we have to pay for the continued health of the printed academic monograph in an age prone to emphasizing synoptic overviews or online sources. Whatever the merits of these, Rix's study triumphantly demonstrates that there is no substitute for a well-researched, well-shaped monograph. This book, a fitting companion to Mee's pioneering study, will surely still be being borrowed from libraries and read with interest and profit by scholars and students several decades hence.

K E Smith
University of Bradford

Paul Russell, *The riddle of Hume's 'Treatise': skepticism, naturalism, and irreligion,* Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008, pp. 448, ISBN-13: 9780195110333, £54.00.

David Hume's religious thought has long been a topic of controversy. For Hume's contemporaries, that debate is nicely summarized by a conversation reported to have taken place at the time of Hume's funeral. As Hume's body proceeded from his home on St. David Street in Edinburgh to his burial site at Calton Hill, someone in the crowd is said to have remarked, 'Ah, he was an Atheist'. To which another replied, 'No matter, he was an *honest* man'. The starting point for this closely-argued book about Hume's religious thought is the tension between skepticism and naturalism lying at the heart of David Hume's *A treatise of human*

nature - something Hume scholars will recognize as Richard Popkin's 'Humesproblem'. It is this 'core tension' that 'constitutes a deep riddle lying at the heart of the *Treatise*' and, therefore, any 'acceptable interpretation of this work must aim to solve it' (vii). Arguing against the 'standard historiography', Russell maintains that 'it is problems of religion, broadly conceived, that hold the contents of the *Treatise* together as a unified work' (viii). That is the foundation of his 'irreligious interpretation' of Hume. Moreover, from this perspective Hume's *Treatise* 'must be judged as one [of] the great works of the Radical Enlightenment, deserving a prominent place within an anti-Christian philosophical tradition that includes works by Hobbes, Spinoza, and their freethinking followers in early eighteenth-century Britain' (viii). To support that case, Russell aims - in clear, jargon-free prose - to reconstruct the various contexts informing a better understanding of Hume's *Treatise* and his thought as a whole.

In Part I, Russell peals back the layers of late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century English, Scottish and continental European philosophical thought. He gives particular attention to the importance of the Boyle Lectures for understanding British philosophical thought of the time as one divided between 'religious philosophers' and 'speculative atheists'. We might think of Russell's project in part as an attempt to inject Hume into the context of Jonathan Israel's 'Radical Enlightenment', a context in which Hume ought to be considered 'the *jewel in the crown*', even though Israel has made little mention of him in his account thus far (although Israel's volume on the later Enlightenment no doubt will). But Russell also delves into Hume's more immediate intellectual influences. Pierre Desmaizeaux is important here, and even more interesting are Russell's sections on philosophers who lived close to the Hume family home at Chirnside (in the Scottish Borders), especially Andrew Baxter (a more likely author of the *Specimen*, Russell argues, than William Wishart who is commonly thought to have written that attack on Hume's *Treatise*) and William Dudgeon, who has 'claim to be Scotland's most active and prolific radical freethinker at this time' (45). Russell's argument for Dudgeon's potential influence on Hume is compelling, nevertheless it would have been much stronger had Hume at any place in his published books or surviving papers mentioned Dudgeon by name.

Parts II through IV are largely concerned with arguing for the influence on Hume of other writings often overlooked by Hume scholars - especially Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* and *The elements of law*. Russell's evidence here is far-ranging, including Hume's own references to Hobbes, some of which come from Hume's *History of England*, although Russell skips a passage therein where Hume writes that Hobbes, '[t]hough an enemy to religion … partakes nothing of the spirit of skepticism; but is as positive and dogmatical as if human reason, and his reason in particular, could attain a thorough conviction in these subjects' (William B Todd, ed., *The history of England, from the invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution in 1688* [Indianapolis, 1983], vol. 6, 153). While Hume may have been more critical of Hobbes than Russell lets on, Russell's main point, that this Hobbesian context allows us to better appreciate that even though Hume rarely mentions 'God' by name in the *Treatise*, 'the debate concerning our idea of God is implicated and involved in almost every aspect of Hume's project *throughout* the *Treatise*' (96) - is noteworthy. Here and throughout, Russell is critical of those who approach the *Treatise* from the perspective of current philosophical problems and concerns, rather than from the historical perspective to which they belong. For instance, on the question of Hume on space and time, Russell explores the context offered by Samuel Clarke and John Toland. Russell's discussions of 'atheists' and 'sceptics' are equally attuned to eighteenth-century understandings of those terms: 'Clearly', he argues, 'the skeptic's procedure does not result in dogmatic atheism, but only in reusing to affirm the existence of God' (219). Reviewing the debates of Hume's time, 'skepticism versus naturalism, egoism versus benevolence, reason versus feeling, artificial versus natural, optimism versus pessimism', Russell concludes, 'what we find is that Hume, faced with almost every one of these dichotomies, consistently takes a middle or moderate view' (263). Russell's interpretation is not so far removed from those who (without reference to Hume's 'irreligion') aim to solve the riddle of Hume's *Treatise* by presenting Hume as a 'mitigated sceptic'.

Part V offers a summary of the book's main arguments and also sets out some of the implications of those conclusions. Russell finds a 'fundamental *unity* and *coherence*' underlying Hume's *Treatise*: what holds Hume's thought together 'is the mission to discredit religious

philosophy and morals and to replace them with a secular, scientific understanding of moral and social life' (270). It would have been interesting to have Hume's *Essays, moral and political* and his six-volume *History of England* included more fully in that assessment, but those writings are beyond the purview of the book under review. Asking 'Was Hume an "Atheist"?', Russell answers with a degree of ambiguity. The term he uses most often to describe Hume's intentions is 'irreligious'; however he also suggests that Hume in the *Treatise* develops a 'godless worldview' which may be thought of as 'atheism'. Hume's mission was 'to persuade his more enlightened readers of the narrow limits and weaknesses of the human understanding, and, thereby, to turn their attention and energies to matters of "common life", where *real remedies* for improving the human condition can be found'. Interestingly, while Russell claims that mission could 'only be accomplished in social circumstances or conditions where there *already* exists a tolerable degree of liberty (as was more or less the case in mid-eighteenth-century Britain)' (296), many of Hume's own disappointments and troubles in life, as well as the published responses to his thought, might be seen as evidence to the contrary. Russell's book will be requisite reading for all Hume scholars, but it will also be of great interest to many other readers of *Enlightenment and Dissent*.

Mark G Spencer
Brock University

Robert E Schofield, *The enlightened Joseph Priestley: a study of his life and work from 1773 to 1804,* Pennsylvania State University Press University Park, Pennsylvania, 2004, ISBN 0271024593, £40.95; $58.00.

Was there an Enlightenment in eighteenth-century England? The question is far from straightforward. If there was, then the multi-talented Joseph Priestley epitomised it, or one form of it. Yet Priestley came to think that England was, in crucial respects, anti-Enlightenment. One of its most 'enlightened' cities, Birmingham, rejected him violently, in riots that the Prime Minister, Pitt, called 'an effervescence of the popular mind'. Many of his contemporaries reviled him. The Rector of Lincoln College, Oxford, said of him: 'Long have you been the Danger of this country, the Bane of its Polity and Canker-worm of its Happiness'. Priestley doubted

'whether any person in England (the prime minister for the time being excepted) ever had so much of what is commonly called abuse' as he had experienced.

Yet his first forty years, up to 1773, which Robert E Schofield charted in *The enlightenment of Joseph Priestley* (1997), had been largely free of public controversy. The central theme of that period was his gradual conversion from Calvinist orthodoxy to Unitarianism - a form of liberal Christianity, based on the historical reality of the Resurrection, that for the most part he had had to fashion for himself. His life had been a story of successes on various fronts. By 1773, he had become an author of college textbooks, a teacher at Warrington Academy, a member of the Royal Society, an admired historian of science, a recipient of an honorary doctorate, a leading political thinker, and a friend of many in both London and provincial scientific and liberal circles.

Schofield has now completed the story of his next three decades, aptly entitled *The enlightened Joseph Priestley: a study of his life and work from 1773 to 1804.* It is a story of perpetual controversy, set in a time of political and intellectual upheaval. The 'Enlightened' Joseph Priestley suffered very mixed fortunes. The younger Priestley had forged a philosophy of steady reform and progress. The older man had to battle with forces unforeseen by his Enlightenment self-education. His way of enlightenment antagonised the Anglican clergy, the conservative part of the aristocracy and monarchy, some of his fellow scientists, and some of his fellow intellectuals.

In 1773 Priestley moved from Leeds to work with and for Lord Shelburne in Calne and in London, thereby strengthening his national prominence. Disputation surrounded him not just on the religious and political fronts. His name is today best-known for his discovery of oxygen in 1774-75, yet even this achievement stands at the centre of what was a very turbulent 'chemical revolution'. In fact what Priestley discovered was dephlogisticated air. He himself never referred to it as oxygen, the term invented by Lavoisier that signified 'acid-maker'. The two had met in Paris in 1774, when he demonstrated his new discovery. Priestley never accepted the theoretical basis for Lavoisier's redescription, and continued to present his side of the argument up to his death. The question of how to conceptualise this and the other newly-found gases was gradually won by Lavoisier and his followers. Priestley's remarkable further work on

gases, photosynthesis, respiration and the composition of water was not enough to entirely rescue his ultimate reputation. Schofield's final word on the problem is startling: 'Priestley was never a chemist; in a modern, and even a Lavoisian, sense, he was never a scientist. He was a natural philosopher, concerned with the economy of nature and obsessed with an idea of unity, in theology and in nature' (193–94). This seems to say that science within a theological framework is not science.

The second controversial front was metaphysical. Priestley abandoned Calvinist predestination early in life, but he at all times defended determinism on the grounds that belief in free-will contradicted the doctrine of universal causation. In the 1770s he abandoned 'the hypothesis of the soul', including its modern version, Cartesian dualism. This story also had French connections. In Paris he had met Baron d'Holbach, the principal exponent of atheistic materialism. Priestley thought materialism the appropriate metaphysic not for atheists but for rational Christian theists. In the subsequent controversies, his antagonists were his friend Richard Price and, more distantly, Thomas Reid. His debate with Price was a model of good-tempered Enlightenment dialectics. Price and Reid demonstrate how deeply entrenched dualism had become in their version of Enlightenment philosophy. Priestley's challenge to dualism found very few followers. Schofield's account gives his philosophical enterprise a fair hearing; it is perhaps the aspect of his thought least well-explored in the secondary literature. His account fails to note Reid's unpublished preoccupation with Priestley's materialism, but he does point out the curious connection with the voluminous works of Lord Monboddo, who aspired to be Priestley's metaphysical antithesis.

The third set of controversies broke out in the 1780s, about the definition and formation of orthodox Christian doctrine. Priestley set himself the task of rewriting the history of his religion, to demonstrate that Unitarianism was the norm in the earliest church and that subsequent doctrinal development was driven by Platonic and Gnostic influences. On this front his antagonists were, on the orthodox side, Bishop Samuel Horsley, and, following a very different agenda, Edward Gibbon. Priestley took the Trinitarian position to be internally incoherent; he used his materialism to support his denial of Christ's pre-existence; and he argued his case historically, from the text of the New Testament and the evidence of early Jewish Christianity.

Schofield's research in the literature of theological history fails to find any recognition of Priestley's extensive (though repetitive) contribution to this field, and he expresses his surprise at this anomaly. The standard narrative passes straight from the English deists to the German scholars Semler and Michaelis, with no mention of their English contemporary's output of a dozen books and 15,000 pages. In Schofield's view, a century after Priestley's death his arguments had become 'part of generally accepted ideas among liberal philosopher-theologians' (238).

There is a fourth theme pervading Priestley's works. He set himself to defend theism and the basics of Christianity as he understood it against the 'infidels' or 'philosophical unbelievers' - d'Holbach, David Hume, Gibbon, Voltaire, d'Alembert, Thomas Paine, Volney and Dupuis. These apologetic writings run through the whole of his later career. He saw no good reason why Enlightenment should entail atheism. He supposed the opposite, that advances in science and liberty suggest all the more grounds for belief in a good Providence. Curiously, few of his Christian contemporaries (before William Paley, at least) joined him in fighting this good fight in defence of 'the rational doctrines of revelation'.

Priestley's career of controversies culminated in the great debate over the French Revolution with Edmund Burke, and continued on a much lower plane later in America with the young William Cobbett. His *Essay on the first principles of government* of 1768 had articulated with notable clarity the distinction between civil and political rights, in a very moderate statement of Enlightenment political philosophy. He was no democrat, being mainly concerned to separate religion and government. But by the 1790s the political world had changed, and he and his friend Price were at the centre of the storm.

His *Letters to the Right Honourable Edmund Burke* of 1791 were admired by one contemporary as 'by many degrees the ablest and most masterly' of the many replies to Burke (278n). Schofield wastes no sympathy on Burke; his political inclinations are with Priestley, even when he is only paraphrasing his position. He dubs the trial of the Birmingham rioters 'a travesty' (288), and observes that a proposal for a government inquiry into the riot was finally defeated in the House of Commons 189 to 46, a mark of the ill-will felt towards 'the great heresiarch'.

Despite all this, Priestley's virtues did not go unrewarded. For all his intellectual intensity, he made and kept many friendships, including Richard Price, Benjamin Franklin, Theophilus Lindsey, Josiah Wedgwood, Thomas Bentley, Joseph Johnson, Matthew Boulton, James Keir, James Watt, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Rush, and Thomas Cooper - an impressive assortment. He epitomised the Enlightenment ideal of intellectual sociability. Burke's was one of the few friendships he lost. He had correspondents from all over Europe, and was a member of every major scientific society. His idea of human progress and perfectibility was widely shared. For a time, the younger generation looked up to him as a guide and sage.

Schofield's two volumes are the only full-scale biography of their subject ever attempted, and they now form the only such biography that will ever be needed. Little about Priestley cries out for psychological analysis. A less eccentric personality would be hard to imagine; equanimity was his trade mark, even in the stresses of the 1790s. Yet he is not an easy subject to portray. Schofield's great achievement is to have not been daunted by Priestley's polymathic complexity. He has not been unnerved by the task, though it has taken up a large part of his career. The work exhibits the meticulous scholarship and indefatigable archival research characteristic of all his writings. It is a 'Life and Letters' biography - the man and his works, as seen especially through a blow-by-blow account of his controversies.

Such an exact narrative is invaluable in itself. On almost every page I found interesting new details, even in areas familiar to me. His footnotes often link to older scientific and theological scholarship well worthy of mention. But the question inevitably arises of the wood and the trees. His account is of course well organised. Even so, do the details overwhelm the overall story? Does he have a general view of what makes Priestley count as "Enlightened"? Why was Priestley so detested by at least some of his social superiors? What does this up-and-down career tell us about his times? I would have liked Schofield to have left us a biographer's 'general scholium', but that is not his style, and perhaps it can't be done well for a subject so multifaceted.

At the centre of all Priestley's controversies - as Schofield observes - is his faith that controversy generates more light than heat. Schofield calls it a dialectical faith. One well-known statement puts it this way: 'No

maxim may be more depended upon than that, whatever is *true* and *right* will finally prevail, and the more violent the opposition, the more firmly will it be established, in the end; because opposition excites attention, and this is all that is necessary to the perception of any truth, in minds free from prejudice; and in time one prejudice will so balance another, that true candour will prevail in the world'. However, this particular version, though it sounds so Priestleyan, may not be authentic; it comes from *A political dialogue* of 1791, and Schofield questions its authorship.

We can see the heat that nearly caused Priestley's destruction (and that actually caused Lavoisier's), but how much of his light endured? Writing of his scientific career he commented that 'like a meteor, it may be my destiny to move very swiftly, burn away with great heat and violence, and become as suddenly extinct'. The metaphor has little application to his scientific reputation, but it seems fairly apt for his other intellectual enterprises. His theistic materialism came to nothing. His Unitarianism remained at most a minority denomination, not a new kind of mainstream Christianity. Schofield suggests that the legalisation of Unitarianism in 1813 was 'quite as much a belated apology for a political wrong as an acknowledgment of Priestley's achievement in theological opinion' (263). Priestley's political liberalism came to fruition, he thought, in America, which had a constitution in which 'every evil incident to society is, to appearance, as well guarded against as human wisdom could devise'. Yet French attempts to create a counterpart constitution had ended very differently.

Priestley's life, though filled with disputation, is not itself very controversial from a biographical standpoint, but we have never before been able to see all its dimensions. With Schofield's guidance, we can now do what Augustus Toplady proposed: 'Give me the person whom I can hold up as a piece of crystal, and see through him. For this, among many other excellencies, I regard and admire Dr Priestley'. The questions that remain mysterious about him are of a different sort; they are questions not so much about his life as about his 'enlightened' times, in which he was both able to flourish so remarkably and made to suffer hostility and injury also so remarkably.

Alan Tapper
Edith Cowan University
Western Australia

Giovanni Tarantino*, Lo scrittoio di Anthony Collins (1676-1729). I libri e i tempi di un libero pensatore*, Milan: Franco Angeli, 2007, pp. 532, ISBN: 8846486919, €32.

Giovanni Tarantino is the latest in a line of distinguished Italian scholars of early modern English free-thinking and unbelief. He has already published a full-length study of Martin Clifford (*Martin Clifford 1624-1677. Deismo e tolleranza nell'Inghilterra della restaurazione* [Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2000]), examining the English and European debate provoked by Clifford's radical plea for toleration, *A Treatise of humane reason* (1674). Tarantino's new book on Anthony Collins is a re-organised and extended version of the dissertation for which he obtained his doctorate at the Università di Firenze, an edition of the catalogue of Anthony Collins' library, with three substantial introductory chapters. The book's title, which roughly translates as 'the writing-desk of Anthony Collins', suggests an ambition to explore how Collins drew on his remarkable library when at his desk. Opportunities to show how ownership of books, reading and writing interacted are indeed rare, and the prospect of such a study is an exciting one.

The first of the three chapters is an overview of the life and successive writings of Collins, accompanied by a thorough commentary on the scholarship already devoted to them. Distinguishing broadly between earlier philosophical works and later writings more directly addressed to religious questions, Tarantino picks out Collins' differences from as well as his debt to Locke, before making it clear that he understands Collins to have been a committed, disbelieving freethinker, whose occasional professions of Christian faith were not to be taken seriously. Here as in the following two chapters, Tarantino develops his own argument in dialogue with other scholars, quoting liberally from their works in the main body of the text as well as in footnotes. The volume of such secondary quotation may disconcert readers accustomed to Anglo-American scholarly practice; but it is not unusual in Italian dissertations. By this means Tarantino affirms his identification with the line of interpretation developed by David Berman, Pascal Taranto, and Silvia Berti, all of whom have emphasised Collins' irreligion, and his opposition to the older interpretation of Father James O'Higgins, for whom Collins was still sufficiently a believer to be regarded as a 'Deist'.

The second chapter then challenges one of O'Higgins' specific claims, that Collins was influenced by the Latitudinarians. Against this Tarantino offers an analysis of Collins' debt to two quite distinct traditions which, when drawn together, undermined the interpretation of the New Testament on which the Latitudinarians relied. The first debt was to ancient scepticism, as elaborated by Pyrrho and Sextus Empiricus, and mischievously adapted by Catholic controversialists to discredit Protestant confidence in the principle of *sola scriptura*. The other was to Jewish anti-Christian polemic, which demonstrated that Christ had not fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies regarding the advent of the Messiah. Like Bayle, Collins concluded that scepticism left Christians with no rational basis for their beliefs; a simple fideism, based on acceptance of the revelation of Scripture, was their only resort. But by following the Jewish critics, Collins was also able to discredit that revelation, by exposing the discrepancies between the Old and New Testaments.

Chapter three is specifically devoted to Collins' library, which contained over 10,000 titles. There is an opening overview of the scale of the collection, the balance of its contents, the extent to which Collins followed the prescriptions of Gabriel Naudé in constructing his library, and how it compared with other contemporary private libraries. Tarantino finds that works of philosophy, theology and religion predominate; but that the collection was also rich in Greek and Latin classics, in travel literature, in history, political writings, and biography. By contrast, it was relatively light in natural philosophy. These comments, however, are not followed by a systematic analysis of the library's contents. Instead, Tarantino devotes subsequent sections of the chapter to categories of books which he takes to reflect, or to have informed, Collins' free-thinking interests. These include various contributions to the English and continental debate over toleration and liberty of conscience which followed the Revolution of 1688; older, heterodox works deriving from the period of the Renaissance and Reformation; the works produced during the 'Socinian controversy' of 1687-97; and the debate over the mortality of the soul which had broken out during the Civil War, and was resumed in the first decades of the eighteenth century. Tarantino ends by observing that Collins also possessed a good number of books relevant to his official occupation as a J.P. and magistrate. If there is a puzzle here -

one might wonder how Collins could continue to serve a civil government whose religious establishment his writings held up to criticism and ridicule - it is not pursued.

The catalogue itself is a printing of the manuscript catalogue held in King's College, Cambridge. In order to reproduce it, Tarantino has divided the catalogue into three parts. The first part reproduces the list of books completed in 1720. The second part is a list of subsequent acquisitions from 1720 until 1729, when Collins died; these titles were entered on the even pages of the manuscript catalogue, which had presumably been left blank for the purpose. Finally there is an appendix made up of two separate lists from the odd and even pages at the end of the manuscript catalogue; many of the titles are anonymous, and it is not clear whether these were titles to be incorporated into the main catalogue, or lists of books lent or borrowed. In each part the listing is in the order of the manuscript, and thus reproduces mistakes in the alphabetical ordering of the original. Editorial intervention has concentrated identifying authors and titles, expanding entries between square brackets to make the identification. While facilitated by the availability of electronic catalogues, EEBO and ESTC, the labour involved in this work should not be undervalued. Each entry also includes the title's shelf mark in the library. In this form, Tarantino observes, the printed catalogue can readily be used alongside the manuscript original. Readers who do not have the manuscript original to hand, however, will need to understand the relation between the two versions, and visualise the pre- and post-1720 manuscript lists on facing pages. (Although there are illustrations of the manuscript in the introductory chapters, it is a pity that there is no illustration of facing pages of the manuscript, to help readers grasp how Collins compiled it.) Moreover the absence of indexes to the catalogue means that readers of the printed as of the manuscript catalogue are left to do the work of cross-referencing and correlating authors and titles for themselves. As they stand, the printed lists are unquestionably useful: scholars interested in Collins and his circle, and in religious heterodoxy and free-thinking, will be able to explore the rich contents of his library without travelling to read the manuscript. This is a book, therefore, which should be acquired by research libraries. But it is not a bibliographer's edition of the catalogue, and those who use this version should do so aware of its limitations.

When the catalogue and the introductory chapters of this book are put together, how far has their author succeeded in fulfilling the promise of his title? The model which Tarantino appears to have had in mind is Justin Champion's recent study of John Toland (*Republican learning. John Toland and the crisis of Christian culture 1696-1722* [Manchester and New York, 2003]), in which Toland's reading practices are analysed alongside his own writings. As Tarantino acknowledges, however, the listing of a book in the library catalogue is not a guarantee that Collins had read it himself: the point is nicely illustrated in a letter from Collins to Locke, which Tarantino quotes from Champion. Collins offered to lend Locke Limborch's *Vita Episcopii*, observing 'I have the book and I will read it upon your recommendation'. But Tarantino has been unable to undertake a sustained study of Collins' correspondence with Locke (or anyone else) for evidence of his reading habits, and there do not appear to be copies of Collins' books with his own or other readers' annotations, another form of evidence which Champion was able to use to illuminating effect. As a result, we cannot really be said to see Collins at work at his writing desk, taking books down from his shelves, reading them, discussing them with friends, and then writing his responses to them in his own works. What Tarantino can offer, as in the extended analysis of Collins' debts to scepticism and to Jewish critiques of the New Testament, is a perfectly plausible version of intellectual history, based on what Collins wrote and on his explicit and implicit engagement with arguments found in books which his library catalogue shows him to have possessed. This is certainly worthwhile; but it is not all that the title of Tarantino's book seems to promise.

John Robertson
St Hugh's College, Oxford