



Enlightenment and Dissent

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Editorial

As we promised in our last editorial the 1990 issue will be devoted to 'The Enlightenment'. Recent developments in several fields—the attempt to revitalise and extend the scope of the blasphemy laws, the threat to toleration in religious matters, the growth of interest in astrology and other forms of superstition, the celebration of mystery and 'the retreat into darkness'—all suggest that the time is ripe for reconsidering and evaluating the aims and principles of 'The Enlightenment'.

Looking further afield to 1991 we note that there will be an opportunity to celebrate the bi-centenary of the death of Richard Price. The habit of celebrating centenaries, doubtless, seems bizarre; it is as though a hundredth year has a charm or merit denied to the ninety-ninth. The tale is told of one highly distinguished professor at this College who, on the verge of retirement after having served for thirty-nine years, suggested to the Principal of the time that the period of his service should be extended by another year 'just to round things off', only to be met with the reply that 'thirty nine is round enough'. Likewise, any year should be 'round enough' for celebrating the contributions made by Richard Price in so many different fields, but since there is such a well developed tradition for celebrating centenaries, we should allow ourselves to fall into line by allowing 1991 to concentrate our attention. Before that date there should appear some new books devoted to Price. The National Library of Wales is shortly to produce a facsimile of Price's celebrated *A discourse on the love of our country* together with a translation into Welsh by P.A.L. Jones, formerly Keeper of Printed Books at the Library. A comprehensive bibliography of Price's work is due to appear in the *St. Paul's Bibliographies*; a facsimile edition of *Four dissertations* with an introduction by John Stephens will be published by Thoemmes at Bristol; and a selection of Price's pamphlets on political matters is being prepared by D.O. Thomas. All of which, we hope, will stimulate our readers to contribute articles on related themes to this journal. We regret that we have had to make a modest increase in the price of the journal. This is to cover the cost of this extra large number and the increasing cost of printing and postage.

M.H.F.

D.O.T.



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BERKELEY, PRICE, AND THE LIMITATIONS OF THE DESIGN ARGUMENT

Colin Crowder

There is evidence of some kind of connection between Berkeley and Price in a footnote in the *Review*.¹ The first chapter closes with a *reductio ad absurdum* of the philosophy of the moral sense theorists, bringing out the extreme sceptical results of maintaining *esse est percipi*, with the footnote naming the sceptics in order to justify Price's attack:

It would have been abusing the reader to mention these extravagancies, had not some of them been started by Bishop Berkeley; and his principles adopted and pursued to a system of scepticism, that plainly includes them all, by another writer of the greatest talents, to whom I have often had occasion to refer. See *Treatise of Human Nature*, and *Philosophical Essays*, by Mr. Hume.

I am not at all convinced this proves that Price read Berkeley, or was even much interested in him. The view of Berkeley as a more thorough sceptic than the sceptics he opposed was a commonplace of the time,² and Price may have taken it from Hume himself;³ moreover, if Price had read Berkeley his implicit assignment of some of the most extreme sceptical views to the latter would be at least misleading, and his silence on those aspects of Berkeley's thought which suggest a role for the intuitive—particularly his 'notions', rather than 'ideas', of God—would perhaps be puzzling. There is insufficient evidence in the *Review* to settle the question decisively, but I tend to think Price knew all he wanted to know about Berkeley from others.⁴

Whatever historical connection there may have been between the two philosophers, there are a number of thematic links which would repay further study. In the following, I will suggest that the philosopher of religion ought to consider the relations obtaining between two important areas of the thought of Berkeley and Price: first, their rational and non-fideistic insistence upon the immediacy of God's presence (in opposition to a variety of deistic and similar currents); and second, their support for the design argument.⁵ Both men had good reason for thinking that the design argument, properly employed, served to reinforce their conviction of God's immediacy. But there are grounds for suspecting that it was an uncertain ally in their cause—not so much because of specific weak links in the chain of argument, but rather because the design argument *as* argument inevitably involves limitations which suggest that it cannot operate successfully as the vehicle of the religious conviction it is intended to enshrine. And it is such structural

features of the argument (its pre-Hume glories, its post-Hume liabilities) which appear to vitiate Berkeley's apologetics, insofar as he distorts the nature of the disagreement that the theist and atheist have about the natural world, or at least unwarrantably restricts the possibilities of its meaning. It must be stressed that the following can be no more than a preliminary orientation, both with regard to the historical fieldwork and to the conceptual geography of the design argument.

I

It is a commonplace of the history of ideas that the eighteenth century was the heyday of natural theology and specifically of the design argument: the world might be seen as a complex mechanism, its regularity and intricate purposive adjustments evidence of a wise and benevolent designer. As the then cardinal *a posteriori* proof, the design argument was prized for its distinction from the other proofs—although such a rigid demarcation was unrealistic: the cosmological argument, involving both a highly generalised body of evidence (the universe as sheer existent, abstracted from its character) and some sort of claim about the necessary existence of God, tended towards a mixed *a posteriori/a priori* character; and, moreover, in one grand architectonic sweep Kant was to collapse the design argument into the cosmological argument and thence into the ontological argument.⁶ Hence the theistic proofs could not be rigidly compartmentalised by means of the *a priori/a posteriori* distinction, nor could the design argument enjoy for long the privileged isolation from scholastic metaphysics claimed for it even by proponents of other proofs like Clarke.⁷

Nonetheless, the design argument had and still has strong claims to be considered of unique status. It is simple, accessible, beginning with the character of things constantly observed by all men; it capitalizes on both scientific interest and religious awe in the face of natural phenomena; it eschews abstract reasoning in favour of various analogies vividly rooted in our experience of designed artefacts in the world. So much, no doubt, is the acceptable face of the design argument. But this account conceals an argumentative framework which, once laid bare, reveals the kinship of the design argument and the cosmological argument: the order or purposiveness of the world is taken as a body of empirical evidence, an effect, necessitating a chain of inference through secondary causes (as became especially prominent when the argument was recast to embrace Darwinian theory) to a first cause in no need of causal explanation, that is, necessary. As corollaries of this causal scheme, the divine designer

need not possess his attributes absolutely but only in proportion to the effects to be explained, thus suggesting (more economically) a non-omnipotent God or even an artificer of pre-existent and not entirely malleable material;⁸ moreover, God appears to be temporally distanced, initiating a universal mechanism the phenomena of which are self-sufficient and not in need of divine maintenance⁹—a position associated with many deists; and furthermore, as a purportedly empirical argument to the most likely explanation of phenomena, its conclusion is at best *probable*, a point not lost on Hume (nor, although its implications were not seen in full, on champions of demonstrative proofs such as Clarke and Price).¹⁰

Hence the argumentative structure of the design argument, which has seemed to many necessary to give a rigorous undergirding to a sense of the divine in nature, entails a series of limitations, both of the character of its inferred God and the conclusiveness of that inference itself. Some eighteenth century apologists, particularly of a deistic persuasion, were content to accept at least some of these limitations—but others, and Berkeley and Price are notable here, objected to them on philosophical and religious grounds. Their writings highlight a recurrent and strikingly modern question: to what extent is the appeal to an impression of design in nature reliant upon the philosophical scaffolding of the design argument itself? That is, must the believer operate with talk of evidence, inference, cause and effect, probability and so forth, if she is to articulate the Psalmist's sense of the firmament proclaiming God's handiwork (Ps. 19v1)? It is towards the clarification of this question that my discussion of Berkeley and Price is directed.

That both Berkeley and Price were hostile to a philosophy in which God might be distanced, tethered to a long causal chain, is evident. What is rather more controversial is the extent to which such a philosophy arose directly from Newton; and there are many who have held Newton guilty of effectively excluding God from the operations of the universe, thus charting a course for the deists. One such influential but rather severe judgement is that of Richard S. Westfall, who interprets the Newtonian 'dominion' of God entirely in terms of God's creation, and not sustenance, of the world: 'If the mechanical universe is a reality, as Newton firmly believed, providence can only mean God's concurrence in the operation of its laws.'¹¹ Not surprisingly, with Newton pictured as the arch-distancer of the deity, his attempts to invoke God's providence to correct certain celestial imbalances will only call forth a truly Leibnizian scorn for such 'interplanetary plumbery.'¹² Furthermore, the positive religious reading offered by many of

Newton's eighteenth-century popularizers (and, for that matter, Price) will, by the same principle, appear highly strained. But it is far from clear that a proto-deist interpretation of Newton is the most satisfactory one.¹³

What matters for present purposes is how he was read by Berkeley and Price. This is a large subject in itself, and here it is only possible to mention some of the elements relevant to the question of the design argument. Berkeley usually has an eye on both philosophical clarity and theological adequacy: typically, his objection to absolute space is on the grounds of its inconceivability and its posing of a religious dilemma—either real space is God, or there is something eternal and infinite beside God. In *De Motu*, he rigidly demarcates the areas of competence for physics, mechanics and metaphysics, as part of a clarification of the status of Newtonian mechanics; but he is also keen to add Newton's name to the authorities supporting his insistence that Mind is the principle of motion:

And Newton everywhere frankly intimates that not only did motion originate from God, but that still the mundane system is moved by the same actus.¹⁴

Of course, Berkeley's anti-deistic reading of Newton is just a part of his general case, focussing on the unnecessary hypothesis of a material world, and rejecting the regress through secondary causes to a distant first cause which in the wake of Newton and Locke was likely to yield little more than a cosmic mechanic. In this, his immaterialist metaphysics serves a religious aim as much as an ideal of sufficient explanation: it could provide, instead of a long causal regress to a distant God, a God immediately behind things, creator and sustainer, to whose mind everything exists as object and as a result of his volition—so that all we perceive is to an extent a 'theophany'.¹⁵ Berkeley's recasting of apologetics thus centred on the rejection of the hypothesis of matter, which he held to be both philosophically unjustified and religiously enfeebling.

Price, however, sought to serve the same philosophical and religious aims *within* the parameters of a broadly Newtonian metaphysics, as is shown especially in the second section of 'On Providence'¹⁶—albeit stressing the Newton of the somewhat tendentious correspondence with Bentley and Maclaurin's 1748 *Account*.¹⁷ To Price it is axiomatic that matter is inactive (as activity entails an intention of which matter, being unthinking, is incapable): the laws of motion are self-evident truths only in relation to matter as inert extension; 'active matter' is nonsense, and would require us to posit in matter thought and design, so that the very

idea 'is indeed but little better than direct atheism'¹⁸—and the 'plastic nature' of Cudworth is hardly to be preferred. Random effects, as he argued elsewhere, might be expected if Priestley's powers theory were true, but the stability of the world guarantees Mind as the source of motion and thus the intentional character of Newtonian mechanics. For Price, God is everywhere active, immediately sustaining the world through natural laws.¹⁹

Even this briefest of glimpses at the reaction of Berkeley and Price to Newton should indicate their determination to save providence by demonstrating that the principle of motion cannot be located in matter (or, in Berkeley's case, bodies). Does a gulf separate them from the proto-deistic Newton of some commentators? Perhaps it is fairer to say that the Newtonian legacy with regard to matter and activity was ambiguous: Newton might disown any suggestion of gravity being inherent in matter to Bentley, but the effect of positing the *vis insita* of inertia was to suggest some kind of modification of a strict passivity of matter doctrine; furthermore, Newton seems to have struggled with numerous theories in his search for an explanatory agency for gravitational attraction, one which would not inhere in matter as such. The story is a fascinating one, although too long even to summarize here;²⁰ it is sufficient that the complexity of the case shows that those thinkers who insisted on a strongly providential interpretation may have been closer to Newton than is allowed in the view which sees them as misled by the pious intentions of the General Scholium to the *Principia* and the Bentley correspondence.

Returning to the themes which (quite generally) characterize much of the work of Berkeley and Price, this assessment may be ventured: Berkeley and, in a later generation, Price represent widely diverging criticisms of the material causal nexus which allowed God to be designer but hardly sustainer of the world. In both mind is magnified and matter is restricted or even negated, but more significant is their unanimity in arguing for the *immediacy* of God against strong contemporary intellectual currents; and, while their main *a posteriori* arguments for an immediate and continual providence were constructed in perception and physics respectively, they had a common religious motivation, to prove the absolute involvement of the creator in his creation.

Berkeley and Price stand out from among contemporary apologists since they argue for God's immediacy not from the exceptional event but from the general and universal course of nature—the distanced first cause of rational apologetics was not to be lured back into communion

with men via the prodigious, however much this entailed going against the psychological grain.²¹ Instead of depending on miraculous interventions, or revelation, or the individual certainties of 'enthusiasm', both men sought rationally to ground their conviction of God's nearness in the metaphysical implications of our normal experience of the world. As with their negative readings of the long causal chain to God, so it is with their constructive accounts of God's immediacy: the methods and arguments are worlds apart, but there is a common core of religious conviction.

Berkeley's central proof of God's existence is the so-called passivity argument: ideas are inert, and while I can cause some ideas (as in imagining and remembering) I cannot cause my ideas of sense, which must therefore be caused by some active spirit, who is God.²² (The last move, needed to get beyond polydaemonism of some kind, is effected by reference to the design argument, which I will consider in the next section.) The root idea of God causing our ideas of sense is repeated, in a more sophisticated form, in the divine visual language theory: vision is the receptor of a divine language of signs, arbitrarily related to things (like human language) and yet governed in an orderly way for our well-being through natural laws.²³ This means that God declares himself more immediately and forcibly than any human speaker. In Berkeley's system, stripped of the veil of matter and causal intermediaries, man can miss God only because he is so obvious, creating, sustaining, speaking directly in our ideas of sense, always and everywhere; hence Berkeley never tires of quoting Acts 17:28, 'In him we live and move and have our being.'

Part of Price's reasoning for God's immediacy has already been mentioned: there can be no motion but from God, no life in creation but that of God. Price is adamant that he is not replacing exclusion of God from the world by constant divine intervention, but by a recognition that creation is necessarily sustained by God acting on every atom; it is not that the cosmic machine requires a repairer from time to time, but that as a machine it necessarily works by the constant action of some power. The second section of 'On Providence' therefore argues for God's immediate involvement in the world from the self-evident truths of Newtonian physics, just as the first section argues that the same thesis is a logical corollary of the premiss of God's perfection: deism is incoherent—'A God without a Providence is undoubtedly a contradiction.'²⁴ Price returns to the idea in the second 'use of providence', in the fourth section, echoing a thoroughly Berkeleyian complaint:

There is nothing so near us, and therefore, there is nothing that we are so apt to disregard. He is in every breath we draw and in every thought we think, and for this very reason he engages not our attention; and, because every thing, he becomes *nothing* to us.²⁵

The passage even concludes with Berkeley's favourite biblical quotation, Acts 17:28.

The *Review* sheds a different light on the same issue, with its detailed analysis of necessary existence, which in Price's hands becomes charged with religious significance:

There is nothing so intimate with us, and one with our natures, as *God*. He is included, as appears, in all our conceptions, and necessary to all the operations of our minds: Nor could he be *necessarily existent*, were not this true of him.²⁶

Likewise in the third inference from God's necessary existence in *A Dissertation on the Being and Attributes of the Deity*, God's constant presence is not merely by virtue of his notice or influence but by his essence:

There is nothing so intimately united to us; nothing of which we have so constant and irresistible a consciousness.²⁷

—and Price, typically, continues in this vein; as Stephens notes, 'The continuous presence of God is the key to understanding Price's philosophy as a whole.'²⁸

Despite enormous philosophical differences, Berkeley and Price are united in this point and in their determination that their metaphysics should guarantee it. The question is now whether this conviction is served by the design argument, or whether some kind of tension exists between the two.

II

In the writings of both Berkeley and Price the design argument is very much alive, and may seem marginalized only because each has a wealth of independent and idiosyncratic apologetic material. In fact, the absence of repeated, lengthy discussions is probably symptomatic of a generally relaxed treatment which tended to take for granted the argument's success.

Both men stress the design argument as a wholly satisfactory and independent proof of God's existence. Berkeley boasts, in the *Three Dialogues*, that his passivity argument (from the existence of the

sensible world) is self-contained and distinct from the equally self-contained design argument (from the world's order): "Divines and philosophers had proved beyond all controversy, from the beauty and usefulness of the several parts of the creation, that it was the workmanship of God."²⁹ Price dilates on this theme, prefacing to the critical discussion of necessary existence, in *A Dissertation*, a remarkably uncritical summary of the design argument—admittedly not presented as an argument, since it is thought so compelling as to be intuitively self-evident³⁰—which is sufficient proof regardless of the *a priori* reasoning to follow:

It is impossible to survey the world without being assured, that the contrivance in it has proceeded from some contriver, the design in it from some *designing* cause, and the art it displays from some artist.³¹

Price further insists that our natural apprehensions lead us to believe not only in a designer but in one being of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, and these conclusions 'are sufficient for all practical purposes.'³² No one *needs* recourse to a *priori* reasoning:

The belief of one supreme superintending cause and governor of all things, infinitely powerful wise and good, may be safely trusted to such arguments *a posteriori*, as those to which I have now referred; and which have been often and excellently stated by many of the best writers.³³

Price clearly thinks the design argument is independent and sufficient—in the manner of Clarke, whom he may well be following here—but he seems to confuse the issue by speaking of self-evidence: it may well be evident that contrivance implies a contriver, but it is not evident that the universe *is* contrived.³⁴ Arguments are required, and Price still refers to "arguments" despite his intuitive talk, suggesting he is not consciously maintaining an alternative, non-inductive epistemological scheme for apprehending the divine in nature. The resultant vagueness of this preface seems to indicate that Price wishes to isolate something intuitively self-evident in the fabric of the design argument, but that this has nothing to do with demonstrative deduction; I will attempt to articulate this towards the end of this paper.

Both men, equally, stress the design argument as an integral part of their own apologetics. Berkeley's passivity argument is completed by an identification of the source of our ideas with God, and this is only possible using the design argument to establish the unity and other attributes of God from the order, regularity and coherence of the perceived; hence the design argument and the passivity argument are frequently conjoined.³⁵ After isolating them in the *Three Dialogues*, he reunites them so that the design argument may prove the divine attributes of wisdom and benevolence and thus complete the achieve-

ment of the passivity argument.³⁶ Moreover, the divine visual language theory can be read as a sophisticated combination of Berkeleian immaterialism and elements of the design argument, as some critics have noted: according to Ritchie, 'Here is the teleological argument stripped of the encumbrances of substance, artificer and artifact.'³⁷

Similarly, Price works the design argument into his larger themes, where it is either completed by *a priori* reasoning or itself completes such reasoning. A case of the former is chapter X of the *Review*: good natural effects do not *prove* a good cause, 'for it seems not impossible to account for them on other suppositions.'³⁸ Here Price underlines the probability motif in the design argument, whereby the possibility of an alternative explanation of the evidence cannot be ruled out—although he does in fact think natural effects furnish us with sufficient arguments for God's goodness, since these effects tend to suggest benevolence 'on the whole';³⁹ the completion, and exclusion of all doubt, is naturally to be sought in accordance with Price's *a priori* reasoning, by which 'nothing can be more easy to be ascertained than the moral perfections of the Deity.'⁴⁰ A case of the opposite, the completion of a *priori* reasoning by the design argument, occurs in the conclusion to the first section of 'On Providence':⁴¹ having established that God necessarily acts in perfect wisdom with regard to all inanimate matter, Price argues that God could not employ less wisdom in his providential care for rational beings; and this *a minoris ad maius* argument is illustrated with attention to the marvellous design of created things. In the best tradition of the clerical naturalist, Price invites his readers to see the world in terms of the design argument: 'How beautiful is the form of every vegetable, and how curiously arranged its parts?'⁴²

Therefore Berkeley and Price both maintain the design argument, in its independent, classical form, and in close conjunction with the more distinctive elements of their metaphysics. What is at stake is its intrinsic compatibility with their sense of the immediacy of God, and the possibility that the apologetic character of the design argument may be an ambivalent one.

This turns, as I suggested in the first section, on the relation between the believer's claim that the designing God is manifest in his creation and the means of transforming that claim into an argument—that is, the appeal to accessible evidence from which inferences can be drawn to a first cause. Without this undergirding, the impression of design might seem to be a hopelessly private fancy; and Berkeley and Price are committed to public reasoning, as in their treatment of the immediacy of

God. It would seem that their only alternative to subjective psychologism would be reliance on a traditional argument of an empirical, inductive form—that is, a more or less scientific explanation of certain features of the world. The design argument, in its systematised entirety, is rightly seen in these terms, as by Mill, who thought it an argument ‘of a really scientific character, which does not shrink from scientific tests’⁴³, although the result of these tests was to leave a somewhat emaciated conclusion. *Probability* is inevitably the shadow of the design argument, the cost of occupying scientific territory: and while for Price it seemed simple to close the charmed circle of proof by *a priori* means, this rationalist strategy was no longer open to design argument sympathisers of a century or two later, and thus the conclusions of Mill⁴⁴ have proved slighter, and those of Swinburne⁴⁵ slighter still. Such conclusions, however, were prefigured—ironically or otherwise—by Hume, in the ultimate statement of the merely probable and in any case severely limited conclusion available to natural theology, Philo’s notorious ‘confession’ in the *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*. In all these cases the power of the design argument is assessed in a manner more or less consistent with its own argumentative structure, but somehow it is not the same argument as appears with approval in Berkeley and Price. Are we to say that they *miscalculated*? Or that they were *misled* by adjoining, non-probabilistic arguments? Or could it be that they were in a sense torn between the two poles of the design argument, the sense of the divine in nature which was continuous with their conviction of God’s immediate presence, and the philosophical requirement for an empirical framework of *a posteriori* evidence and inference? I suggest this last possibility is the case, and that what can be illustrated by the Berkeley and Price texts is the persistent ambivalence of the design argument. It is now necessary to ask if there are signs in Berkeley and Price of the framework of the design argument having distorted elements of religious belief.

III

The probabilistic and evidential model, outlined above, co-exists in Price’s work with an emphasis on the guaranteeing of religious truths by either rational demonstration or revelation; occasionally it jars. It was noted above that he is content to accept the probabilistic limitations of the design argument, since natural effects tend to suggest benevolence ‘on the whole’ and proof can be secured by *a priori* means. Price is able to embrace the language of evidential degrees to good purpose in his remarkable variation on the Pascal’s Wager theme given in the

conclusion of the *Review*; the *ad hominem* argument is designed to outmanoeuvre the sceptical gambit of eluding moral duty on the grounds of the unlikelihood of the truth of religion. Having weighed up the appropriate risks and stakes,

it follows that *any apprehension* that religion *may* be true, or the *bare possibility* of such consequences to follow virtue and vice as Christianity has taught us to expect, lays us under the same obligation, with respect to practice, as if we were *assured* of its truth.⁴⁶

Price believes that even if a man thought there were no evidence for Christianity’s truth, it would be best to be virtuous just in case he were to be proved wrong; but surely no one can deny there is some degree of real evidence, which is enough to justify Price’s reasoning and lay the sceptic under obligation; and furthermore, ‘There is not only an *equal chance*, but a *great probability* for the truth of religion.’⁴⁷ This can be related to Price’s discussion of the historical evidence for Christianity:

The proof of Christianity does not consist of a clear sum of arguments, without anything to be opposed to them. But it is the *overbalance* of evidence that remains after every reasonable deduction is made on account of difficulties.⁴⁸

But that which constitutes sound historical method is not necessarily appropriate for dealing with the believer’s contemplation of God and nature. Price’s use of Bayesian probability arguments in this connection cannot be discussed here—although there are indications that he tried to make them do too much work by making them bear the burden of the design argument;⁴⁹ so instead I would suggest a little devil’s advocacy with regard to his employment of the probabilistic model in general:

Is every kind of belief such that it can be proportioned to the strength of the relevant evidence? The danger of an approach like Price’s is that it may make religious belief dependent on an ‘overbalance’ which newly considered evidence might erode or even reverse. Is commitment a thing perpetually under review, pending the results of dispassionate recalculations? In some modern champions of the probabilistic-evidential model it seems to be just that, but such an orientation appears foreign to Price. Yet consider the following:

As long as the sum of the happiness of any Being exceeds that of his miseries, God is kind to him ...⁵⁰

Price’s ‘overbalance’ appears here in its starkest form. But what if the miseries exceed the happiness? Is God not kind? Price would reject this inference, but he has left himself open to it by suggesting a wholly inappropriate calculus, alien to the rest of his reflections on evil and God’s goodness. If the real claim is that happiness just happens to

outweigh misery, how is it to be verified? We cannot perform such a calculation as to be sure of this state of affairs now, let alone for all time. Hume's Philo caught Cleanthes on this very point: the optimistic claim is contrary to feeling and reason, but above all unverifiable—

And thus by resting the whole system of religion on a point, which, from its very nature, must for ever be uncertain, you tacitly confess, that that system is equally uncertain.⁵¹

Thus there is a danger that Price's use of the probabilistic model, which extends beyond mere *ad hominem* usage, may lead to the implicit misrepresentation of the nature of religious commitment; and it is not clear that methods appropriate for the analysis of (say) historical and scientific beliefs are equally valid for religious ones. But discerning the extent and the effect of probabilistic religious argument in Price would be a major project in itself.

Berkeley, a generation earlier, was far more gripped by the probabilistic model. He too put on one side the supposed certainties of his characteristic arguments in order to woo the sceptic in more accessible terms—in *Alciphron*—but proceeded to construct a picture of apologetic progress, through these seven dialogues, which was based on the assumption of evidence common to all parties from which the most probable inferences could be drawn by agreed procedures. My claim is that not only does this distort the nature of the dispute between theists and atheists concerning the character of the world, but also that hints of the difficulty can be drawn from the text: Berkeley, in part, unwittingly provides the clues as to the apologetic inappropriateness of his own adopted scheme.

The core of the work is the fourth dialogue. Alciphron demands that the theists should prove God's existence solely from what is perceived, which Euphranor is able to achieve, firstly by inferring Mind from phenomena analogously to the way in which human minds are inferred from sense-data,⁵² and secondly by way of the divine visual language theory; Lysicles is unimpressed, saying no attributes can be meaningfully predicated of this First Cause, but Crito responds by arguing for the appropriate use of analogy, by virtue of which knowledge and goodness may be predicated of God in their essential meaning (albeit 'proportionably'). This proof of theism in general is followed by discussions of the utility and rationality of Christianity in the succeeding dialogues; for present purposes, the point is that the truth of theism has been established, according to Berkeley, in a context where theism and atheism, unalloyed by other Christian or free-thinking concerns, meet as directly opposed combatants.

But how convincing is this apparent progress in the fourth dialogue? It is possible that the seeds of its destruction lie in the text, whatever Berkeley's intentions, at the key moment when the Euphranor-Alciphron debate passes into the Crito-Lysicles debate, when proofs of God's existence yield to defences of the meaningfulness of theistic attributes. In IV:16 there is the following vital exchange:

EUPHRANOR. Will you admit the premises and deny the conclusion?

LYSICLES. What if I admit the conclusion?

EUPHRANOR. How? Will you grant there is a God?

LYSICLES. Perhaps I may.

EUPHRANOR. Then we are agreed.

LYSICLES. Perhaps not.

The shallow Lysicles is for once given a good point to make: '...the being of God is a point in itself of small consequence, and a man may make this concession without yielding much.' Berkeley realized, as not all apologists have done, that gaining such an admission alone will not do, as if the rest would follow almost deductively thereafter; and yet even Berkeley seems to have underestimated the gulf separating the obtaining of the admission of God's existence from the securing of apologetic victory, thinking that the great divide has been crossed when God ceases to be regarded as just 'Principle' and is recognised also as 'Mind.' Thus Lysicles makes the issue turn on the sense in which 'God' is taken, quite rightly; he notes that the word can be comfortably used in the obviously atheistic systems of the Epicureans, Hobbes, and Spinoza, albeit confusing matters by bearing a certain superstitious aura. Nonetheless, as long as 'God' is not taken as Mind, Lysicles claims, admitting the existence of God can have no practical consequences—belief in an *omniscient* God tending to temper freedom of action. In view of the Principle-Mind distinction, Lysicles challenges the theist to justify speaking of knowledge in God, that is, the issue now concerns the intelligibility of predicating positive theistic attributes; hence, all that needs to be done is to delineate the ways in which the theist speaks of God—the literal, the properly analogous, the metaphorically analogous—which Crito promptly does. Berkeley has given his atheist just enough rope with which to hang himself: a realization that having secured the admission of God's existence the apologist has achieved nothing, but a concession that the balance tips in the theist's favour at a certain point (where God is conceived as Mind) which is not obviously necessary. Berkeley's fulcrum is relatively arbitrary, and he is not justified in saying (through Lysicles) that this is '...the point in dispute between theists and atheists' (IV:18). It is, at least, not the only vital point. For why should the atheist be compelled to serve and worship the absolute Mind, when he would not so serve the absolute Principle?

Even if one may intelligibly predicate of God all the natural theistic attributes, is the Christian reaction the only one that makes sense? And should the turning point be pushed still deeper into the territory of revealed religion, so that the moral attributes are the real bone of contention—could not defiance, rebellion, be a genuine reaction? It is not just that Berkeley has misplaced the fulcrum of the theist-atheist conflict (manifestly in his own apologetic favour), but that there is no such key fulcrum, no such balance: whether God is or is not Mind is only one possible locus of the conflict, admittedly a major one in Berkeley's day, but no shifting of terms will rectify the basic confusion that the conflict must centre on a metaphysical proposition to be affirmed or negated. Unfortunately Berkeley's *Lysicles* goes astray at the very outset—he says: ‘The great point is what sense the word God is to be taken in’ (IV:16); and immediately he takes this ‘sense’ to be a matter of the metaphysical entity conceived to correspond, by definition, to God, rather than governed by the contexts in which God-language appears, and the roles which it might play, in the life of the theist or atheist. With this wider context lost, or rather never found, Berkeley's apologetic victory may be radically beside the point.

In *Alciphron* the free-thinkers are repeatedly forced to accept conclusions tending ever nearer to full Christian belief, and yet they never move from their original atheistic position. Berkeley offers a psychological account, explaining this by the irrationality and intransigence of the free-thinkers, but while this may account for the immobility of *Alciphron* and *Lysicles* it does not suffice as an explanation of the limited coercive force of apologetics in general. Again Berkeley, although his intention is clear, seems to provide indications of an alternative construal of the situation. In each of the remaining dialogues *Alciphron* is reminded of what he has hitherto accepted, thus underlining the model of cumulative apologetic progress while drawing attention to the wilful stubbornness of the free-thinker: such summaries are found at V:2, VI:1, VII:24. In the fifth dialogue Berkeley's belief in this inexorable progress is supported by the claim that deism is not a coherent mediating position between Christianity and atheism (V:27-29)—although, perhaps, what is still less conceivable is how the transition from nonbelief to belief can be related to the making of inferences where no (or other) inferences were drawn before. Among other problems with the underlying notion of unambiguous evidence, from which inferences may be drawn, is this: surely the perspectives of the theist and the atheist will in part determine what is to *count* as evidence.

Berkeley's characters certainly have different views of the world and of evil, but in both V:6 and V:15 these are different views of the same things—which is not radical enough: in a sense the natural world (and especially evil, but this is beyond the scope of this piece) is not the ‘same’ for the theist and atheist, but partly constituted by governing perspectives, traditions and communities of reaction; the treatment of regularity in nature as ‘evidence’ is not a universal and natural procedure, but the fruit of a long and involved development of a perspective, which became so common in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that it appeared to constitute agreeably neutral territory on which believer and nonbeliever might meet without their dispute having been prejudged. The remarkable thing about *Alciphron* is that it hints at such a construal in the failure of cumulative apologetics to shift the atheist even though he may assent to various arguments and thus give ground—this on the assumption that there is common ground to yield. Berkeley diagnoses prejudice; yet there may be a more subtle prejudice in thinking the model of inference from common evidence must be appropriate to the dispute between theists and atheists, which could be described instead as a clash of complex perspectives and reactions. In suggesting that the believer's claim is not simply an empirical one about what is there in the world to be seen, I am not saying that it only reports a state of mind or records a community resolution: each of these poles would betray the complexity of a reaction to the book of nature in which exegesis and eisegesis both play their part.

What, then are we to make of Berkeley's “inexorable logic”?⁵³ His theists choose the ground, and their victory is steadily and inevitably gained since his atheists unwisely accept the imposed terms of the confrontation; as a result their immobility can only indicate a refusal to play (and lose) the game once started. An alternative explanation is, however, possible, and it can take its cue from the conclusion of *Lysicles*:

Every one hath his own way of thinking; and it is as impossible for me to adopt another man's as to make his complexion and features mine. (VII:25)

This need not be wilfully irrational or pessimistic; it could serve to highlight the failure of the evidential model, insofar as it excludes consideration of the perspectives which (in part at least) organize the way in which believers see the world, thus making room for a better construal of the theist-atheist problem.

IV

If this thesis is correct, the design argument is fundamentally flawed at the very outset—and so could never do what Berkeley and Price required of it, quite apart from Humean and Kantian criticisms—because it claims to start at the level of common, undisputed evidence, when there is nothing of the sort: the apologist's description of this 'bottom line' already carries the weight and implications of his religious context, and, furthermore, his theistic perspective will to some extent govern what is to count as evidence—there can be no guarantee that someone with an atheistic perspective will be describing, or even indicating, the 'same' things (except in a trivial sense). A shift of emphasis is required: instead of seeing the clash between theist and atheist as centring on the implications of common and religiously neutral pockets of fact, we should pay more attention to differing *perspectives* on the world, indeed *reactions* to the world which are maintained in the social and historical relations of various communities and traditions.

It is possible that the ambivalent nature of the design argument, mentioned earlier, arises from its attempt *both* to capture the believer's sense of living in God's world *and* to arbitrate between the expression of such belief and the expression of nonbelief. The difficulty for the philosopher is in seeing what such arbitration could amount to, if the common evidence view is problematic; but matters can only be confused by the attempted process of resolution incorporating in some way the claims of one of the parties involved.

That the design argument has as its kernel a non-schematic articulation of the religious reaction to the natural world is not a matter of controversy; the question is whether the design argument is an appropriate means of developing it. This question did not arise for supporters of the argument like Berkeley and Price, but something like it did arise for some of the argument's eighteenth century critics: Hume and Kant seem to take the argument very seriously even when their criticisms have crushed its pretensions. Norman Kemp Smith notes that they still accept the fact of an *impression* of design in nature, and therefore accuses them of 'flagrant inconsistency':⁵⁴ nature produces an overwhelming impression, but 'the impression is being misinterpreted when described as being the impression of design.'⁵⁵ Hume and Kant, once the tension of their critique relaxed, fell under the spell of deistic thinking once more. Again we see the temptation of the common evidence theory at work, but Kemp Smith is surely wrong to still insist

on a subsisting, discrete impression—for what would this impression be? Is it just the truism that we all observe the same physical world? And if so, what sense can be given to the idea of neutrally contemplating an impression produced by the world as a whole? Surely the 'interpretation' is neither separable from nor secondary to the 'impression' registered. The attempt to isolate a neutral, universal, and atomic datum for reflection at best yields a trivial result (that is, we all see the same physical world) and is more likely to obscure the actual and complex relations of perspectives which govern and organize what is seen by us in the world.

Kant, for instance, is not inconsistent, since criticizing the quasi-scientific claims of the design argument is compatible with trying to understand the role of the argument in religious life—although it might be better to speak of the role of its non-schematic kernel. One strand of his sympathetic reading is the concept of the design impression deepening knowledge of nature and then in turn reacting on the idea of a designer, so that our ideas of cause and effect are mutually bolstering.⁵⁶ Surely what is involved here is not a self-confirming hypothesis, but an attitude which generates new insights and sustains a rich contemplation of nature within a religious context; and this is very far from being the design argument conceived as the ultimate apologetic weapon aimed at nonbelievers. Perhaps it is even more significant that Paley, the paradigmatic design argument apologist, appears to champion this very view, saying,

if one train of thinking be more desirable than another, it is that which regards the phenomena of nature with a constant reference to a supreme intelligent Author. To have made this the ruling, the habitual sentiment of our minds, is to have laid the foundation of every thing which is religious. The world thenceforth becomes a temple, and life itself one continued act of adoration. The change is no less than this; that, whereas formerly God was seldom in our thoughts, we can now scarcely look upon anything without perceiving its relation to him.⁵⁷

The spirit of this evocation of God's presence is that of Berkeley and Price, and the core of the design argument, understood in its religious function as here, may help to explain why they were so attracted to the argument in spite of its inherent limitations.

However, the believer's perspective on the world might not overlap significantly with the design argument. When the Psalmist declares, The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork. (Ps.19:1)

it is vacuous to isolate cause and effect, evidence and inference; there is no *argument* here. And it is at the very least anachronistic to claim, as Swinburne does, that Jeremiah 'argues' from the creation's extent and 'regular behaviour' to God's trustworthiness.⁵⁸

Interestingly, there are indications that the design argument sometimes *intentionally* bypassed the dispute between believers and nonbelievers: at least one critic has claimed that Paley, however unexpectedly, did not believe his 'proofs' would convince an atheist.⁵⁹ Moreover, there is evidence that the context Paley imagined for his reflections on nature was far from being a directly apologetic one.⁶⁰ It is only one more indication that the inherited notion of the design argument—as a flawed theistic proof flourishing naively prior to Hume and ignorantly thereafter—is in need of a major revision.⁶¹

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NOTES

- 1 Richard Price, *A review of the principal questions in morals*, ed. D.D. Raphael (Oxford, 1948), 56fn.
- 2 Harry M. Bracken, in *The early reception of Berkeley's immaterialism* (The Hague, 1965), shows that this view—with a number of other distortions—was firmly established even by 1733.
- 3 David Hume, *An enquiry concerning human understanding*, ed. L.A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford, 1902 [second edition]), Section XII, Part I, 155.
- 4 Cf. the conclusions of John Stephens, 'The epistemological strategy of Price's *Review of Morals*', *Enlightenment and Dissent*, No. 5 (1986), 49fn.37; and 'Price, providence and the *Principia*', *Enlightenment and Dissent*, No. 6 (1987), 92fn.30.
- 5 I use the expression 'design argument' as a generic term to cover a range of *a posteriori* arguments taking as their evidence for the theistic hypothesis the character, rather than the sheer existence, of the world. This character may be described as order, design, or purposiveness, and the argument may be *from* such things to a designer—which would appear to be a weak and possibly question-begging form—or *to* them, and thence to a designer. The actual and possible permutations are numerous—many are discussed in Thomas McPherson, *The argument from design* (London, 1972), Ch. 1—but I use 'design argument', as a relatively neutral expression, since my concern is with the underlying structure and assumptions of the various design arguments taken as a whole.
- Among the best-known statements of the argument in the eighteenth century are those of its critics Hume and Kant, and I shall take these as more or less typical. See Cleanthes' argument in Part II of Hume's *Dialogues concerning natural religion*, ed. Norman Kemp Smith (Indianapolis, n.d., from second edition, Edinburgh, 1947), 143; and Kant, *Critique of pure reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London, 1929), 521.
- 6 Kant, *Critique*, Second Division, Book II, Ch. III, 'The ideal of pure reason.'
- 7 Clarke himself is a good case of an apologist for whom the barriers between the *a*

priori and the *a posteriori* are to be quite intentionally transgressed: only the former mode can demonstrate God's unity, only the latter mode can adequately convince concerning God's intelligence. Cf. A.P.F. Sell, 'Samuel Clarke and the existence of God', *Enlightenment and Dissent*, No. 3 (1984).

- 8 This position, articulated by J.S. Mill (in 'Nature' and 'Theism' from his *Three Essays on Religion*) to yield a morally satisfactory theodicy, has an impressive pedigree reaching back at least as far as Plato's *Timaeus*.
- 9 This is not exclusively a symptom of empiricist thinking: cf. the saying attributed to Pascal: 'I cannot forgive Descartes: in his whole philosophy he would like to do without God; but he could not help allowing him a flick of the fingers to set the world in motion; after that he had no more use for God.' Pascal, *Pensées*, trans. A.J. Krailsheimer (Harmondsworth, 1966), 357.
- 10 Barbara J. Shapiro, in *Probability and certainty in seventeenth-century England* (Princeton, 1983), has rightly isolated this kind of 'probabilistic empiricism' (12) as the most distinctive feature of English intellectual life towards the end of the seventeenth-century; knowledge in all fact-related fields was generally held to lie along a continuum between mere opinion and the morally certain. Natural theology, like natural science, would henceforth operate with a gradation of probabilities, and the design argument's prominence in the eighteenth century was made possible by earlier empiricist gains of intellectual territory. It might be objected, that no-one has ever been misled into thinking this inductive and probabilistic argument was properly conclusive—to which I would reply that, first, few writers explored the argument's limitations in any depth (which is why Hulme's Dialogues were so devastating), and second, that Berkeley and Price, in rejecting the empiricist confinement of knowledge, are (*a priori*) unlikely to handle the argument in a conventionally empiricist way, I suspect that its probabilistic character has been made more often conceded than contemplated by many of its exponents.
- It is interesting that Price sometimes ignores this inductive character and produces a neat deduction instead; 'An unintelligent agent cannot produce order and regularity, and therefore wherever *these* appear, they *demonstrate* design and wisdom in the cause.' *Review*, 239. There is, of course, no *demonstration* about it; other explanations may simply reject the first premiss.
- 11 Richard S. Westfall, *Science and religion in seventeenth-century England* (New Haven, 1958), 203. Westfall has defended his general interpretation in his 'Newton's theological manuscripts' in Zev Bechler ed. *Contemporary Newtonian research* (Dordrecht, 1982).
- 12 Westfall, *Science and religion*, 203.
- 13 For a recent reappearance of this controversy, see P. Cassini, 'Newton, le lois de la nature et la "Grand Ocean de la Verité"', in *Proceedings of the XVth International Congress of the History of Science* (Edinburgh, 1978), who argues for a basically deistic reading of Newton, and Zev Bechler, 'Introduction: some issues of Newtonian historiography', in Bechler ed. (v. n.11), who comments on the inadequacy and anachronism of claims like Cassini's. The issue is hardly settled yet.
- 14 Berkeley, *De Motu* (translated by A.A. Luce), Section 32. All Berkeley references are to *The works of George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne*, in nine volumes, ed. A.A. Luce and T.E. Jessop (London, 1948-57).
- 15 T.E. Jessop, 'Berkeley as religious apologist', *New studies in Berkeley's philosophy*, ed. W.E. Steinkraus (New York, 1966), 106.
- 16 Richard Price, 'On providence', *Four dissertations* (London, 1767).
- 17 See the excellent essay by John Stephens, 'Price, providence and the *Principia*' (v. n.4 above).

- 18 *Four dissertations*, 46.
- 19 But it is easy to misrepresent Price, who does qualify the immediacy of God: nature would be thought imperfect by 'resolving phaenomena too soon to the Divine agency, or supposing it the *immediate* cause of every particular effect. But every one must see that what I have been pleading for is not this, but only, that however far mechanism may be carried and the chain of causes extend in the material universe, to the Divine power exerted continually in all places, every law and every effect and motion in it must be *at last* resolved.' (*Ibid.* 52) So Price is far from derogating from the importance of causal intermediaries: perhaps the point is that Price's '*at last*' in the above quotation signifies an ontological recourse, whereas the deistic tendency was to make it a temporal recourse to the universal clockwinder.
- On the subject of secondary agents, it is even easier to misrepresent Berkeley. Gabriel Moked has demonstrated, in *Particles and ideas* (Oxford, 1988), that Berkeley's corpuscularian theory in *Siris* allows that aether is a nearly universal secondary 'cause' (in a fairly weak sense) or instrument of God, and that he effected the blend of immaterialism and corpuscularianism which he did not attempt in his earlier work. Hence the main text of this paper perhaps overemphasises the immediacy of God, although the aim is to underline a distinctive feature of the religious thought of Berkeley and Price, rather than to imply that subordinate agency is excluded from their physics.
- 20 Ernan McMullin, *Newton on matter and activity* (Notre Dame, 1978), offers a thorough discussion of Newton's thinking concerning a variety of possible explanatory agencies, prompted by Newton's rejection of the idea of action at a distance. It is one of those issues of Newtonian interpretation which begins to be clouded as early as Roger Cotes' preface to the second edition of the *Principia*. (McMullin's survey of eighteenth-century reactions to Newton does not, unfortunately, include Price.)
- 21 Both Berkeley and Price repeatedly comment upon man's obsession with the extraordinary event, at the expense of contemplating the (more extraordinary) universal course of nature; in this they maintain a tradition exemplified in Pascal's quotation of Montaigne (*Pensées*, no. 506), who in turn is citing Cicero (*De Div.* II.27).
- 22 Berkeley, *The principles of human knowledge*, Sections 25-33, recapitulated in 36, 72, 146-50; *Three dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*, 212. The so-called continuity argument—framed to solve the intermittency problem, so that God guarantees the continuity of otherwise unperceived objects—makes a brief appearance in *Three dialogues*, 230-1, but is not relevant to the current concern.
- 23 *Principles*, Sections 44 (there referring back to *Essay towards a new theory of vision*), 60-6, 146-50; also, it is the only proof of God's existence given in the apologetic work *Alciphron*, IV:8-12. The religious and philosophical precariousness of the theory is exposed by W.E. Creery, 'Berkeley's argument for a divine visual language', *International Journal of the Philosophy of Religion*, 3, No. 4 (1972).
- 24 *Four dissertations*, 6.
- 25 *Ibid.*, 172.
- 26 *Review*, 88.
- 27 *Ibid.*, 293.
- 28 Stephens (1987), 87.
- 29 *Three dialogues*, 212.
- 30 D.O. Thomas notes that it 'is presented as an intuition rather than as an argument': *The honest mind* (Oxford, 1977), 21.
- 31 *Review*, 285. It will be noted that Price, in linking contrivance to contriver and so forth, is only arguing *from* design, not—as is more difficult—to it; contrivance, design

- and art are bound up with the idea of a rational agent, so on the universal scale Price's move to God is simple and obvious, given that contrivance does exist. This may be why Price thinks the design argument self-evidently true—but then the task is to discover why he thought his *premisses* self-evident.
- 32 *Ibid.*, 286.
- 33 *Ibid.*
- 34 Cf. John Anderson, 'Design', *Studies in empirical philosophy* (Sydney, 1962), in which the logic of the design argument is remorselessly criticized. After exposing the confusion in the argument's use of 'contrivance', Anderson concludes, 'The fact is that there is no designed or contrived character, that contrivance is a relation between different things and not a character of either by itself.' (93)
- 35 *Principles*, Sections 25-33, 36, 72, 146-50. The reply to the eleventh objection, 60-6, also makes much of the design argument.
- 36 *Three dialogues*, 215.
- 37 A.D. Ritchie, *George Berkeley: a reappraisal* (Manchester, 1967), 133. Cf. R.H. Hurlbutt, 'Berkeley's theology', *George Berkeley*, ed. S.C. Pepper, K. Aschenbrenner, B. Mates (Berkeley, 1957), 133.
- 38 *Review*, 239.
- 39 *Ibid.*, 241.
- 40 *Ibid.*, 243.
- 41 *Four dissertations*, 55-9.
- 42 *Ibid.*, 56.
- 43 'Theism', *Three essays on religion*, in J.M. Robson ed., *Collected works of John Stuart Mill*, X, (Toronto, 1969), 446.
- 44 *Ibid.*, 450: '...the adaptations in nature afford a large balance of probability in favour of creation by intelligence.'
- 45 Richard Swinburne, *The existence of God* (Oxford, 1979), 150: 'The existence of order in the universe increases significantly the probability that there is a God, even if it does not by itself render it probable.'
- 46 *Review*, 271.
- 47 *Ibid.*, 274.
- 48 *Four dissertations*, 367.
- 49 The relevant material (from *Four Dissertations*) is discussed, and Price's crucial assumptions brought out, by D.O. Thomas, *op. cit.*, 134.
- 50 *Four dissertations*, 212.
- 51 Hume, *Dialogues*, 201.
- 52 The contention that our knowledge of other minds is inferential is described by J.M. Cameron as '...a piece of vicious abstraction curious in one with so much feeling for the concrete as Berkeley...': 'Alciphron and apologetics', in *The night battle* (London, 1962), 199.
- 53 John Redwood, *Reason, ridicule and religion* (London, 1976), 68; for Redwood, it is this logic which restricts the theoretical right of reply for the free-thinkers which the dialogue form provided.
- 54 Norman Kemp Smith, 'Is divine existence credible?', *Religion and understanding*, ed. D.Z. Phillips (Oxford, 1967), 114.
- 55 *Ibid.*, 117.
- 56 Kant, *Critique*, 520. This arguing from effect to cause and then back to effect is, of course, anathema to Hume in his treatment of the design argument. Interestingly, Price defends this very procedure in a similar context, by analogy with reasoning in physics (with regard to applying the idea of gravity to bodies beyond the moon): *Four dissertations*, 26-7.

- 57 William Paley, *Natural theology*, in *The miscellaneous works of William Paley, D.D.*, IV (London, 1821), 441; more conveniently, in F. Ferré ed., *Natural theology: selections* (Indianapolis, 1963), 84.
- 58 Swinburne, *op. cit.*, on Jeremiah 33—directly after Swinburne has said that the teleological argument is 'a codification by philosophers of a reaction to the world deeply embedded in the human consciousness. Men see the comprehensibility of the world as evidence of a comprehending creator.' (142) The second claim indicates how persistent is the tendency to intellectualise, prematurely, the 'reaction' to which he correctly draws attention.
- 59 D.L. LeMahieu, *The mind of William Paley* (Lincoln, 1976), 31.
- 60 In a charge to his clergy, Paley envisaged the minister of a country parish 'assisting' his flock in their contemplation of the wisdom of God in the work of creation. The homeliness of the image should not distract us from Paley's talk of 'delight', 'gratitude', 'meditation', 'devotion'—which suggest a setting somewhat removed from that of the Boyle Lectures or Bridgewater Treatises, and the probabilistic and empiricist design argument in general. Paley, *Sermons and tracts* (London, 1808), 89-91.
- 61 The impressionistic and suggestive nature of the thesis is regrettable but inevitable, since its exploration would require a discussion of the grammar of religious discourse (and hence of elements of Wittgenstein's work) for which space is lacking. It is hoped that the hints and guesses offered here might indicate some of the shape that this exploration would take.

BENTHAM ON INVENTION IN LEGISLATION

J.R. Dinwiddy

There are several different ways of considering Bentham's interest in invention. One level at which this interest operated was that of mechanical invention. His brother Samuel, the naval architect and administrator, was a mechanical inventor of some note, and Jeremy was much involved in his brother's projects. Their most famous joint invention was the Panopticon or 'inspection-house', an architectural model that was intended to be equally suitable for prisons, poor-houses, factories, schools, lunatic asylums, and giant hen-coops. Though the first Panopticon was constructed on the outskirts of St. Petersburg as a training establishment for the Russian naval department (it burnt down within a few years of its completion), the design has of course been principally associated with prisons. Previously, an architectural historian has written, there had been little relation between architectural forms and the social purposes they were intended to serve; it was the Benthams—especially Jeremy, deviser of the Panopticon as an integrated and rationalized whole—who 'gave this quintessential purposiveness to the design of prisons and similar institutions of control'.¹

There were various other projects of a practical kind to which Jeremy Bentham devoted considerable time and energy: for example, his scheme for a network of 'conversation tubes' linking the government departments, and his attempt to construct an ice-house or 'Frigidarium' in which perishable foods could be kept for substantial periods without decay.² These schemes were abortive, but it is not surprising that in works of his on economic policy Bentham should have shown a strong sympathy for inventors and 'projectors' and a firm belief in their importance. This is particularly apparent in the first of his economic tracts, *A defence of usury*. Adam Smith, in supporting a legal restriction on the rate of interest, had written that the legal rate should not be much above the 'lowest market rate', for if it were fixed at a level as high as 8 or 10 %, 'the greater part of the money which was to be lent would be lent to prodigals and projectors, who alone would be willing to give this high interest. Sober people . . . would not venture into the competition.'³ Bentham protested against this disparagement of projectors, maintaining that they were a class of men who contributed in a crucial way to progress and improvement; and he remarked in a later work in which his argument against Smith was restated: 'Everything which is routine to-day was originally a project.'⁴

Projectors and inventors, he maintained, should be encouraged rather than depreciated. In his unpublished *Manual of political economy* (1793-1795) he strongly supported the practice of granting patents to inventors, on the grounds that the prospect of exclusive exploitation for a limited time was a necessary incentive.⁵ Also, he argued that invention and innovation could be fostered in other ways: for instance, through the allocation of public funds to scientific research.

Though discoveries in science may be the result of genius or accident, and though the most important discoveries may have been made by individuals without public assistance, the progress of such discoveries may at all times be materially accelerated by a proper application of public encouragement. The most simple and efficacious method of encouraging investigations of *pure theory*—the first step in the career of invention, consists in the appropriation of specific funds to the researches requisite in each particular science.⁶

The need for such funding arrangements had hitherto been neglected, Bentham thought, because the 'intimate connexion' between theory and practice had only been properly understood by scientists themselves; 'the greater number of men recognize the utility of the sciences only at a moment when they are applied to immediate use'. He also perceived a need for assistance at a less refined level, suggesting for example that the compilation of a general treatise on the subject of inventions would be of great practical value. 'Nothing would more contribute to the preliminary separation of useless from useful projects, and to secure the labourers in the hazardous routes of invention from failure, than a good treatise upon projects in general.'⁷

While Bentham set a very high value on invention in the mechanical and scientific fields, it was chiefly in the field of social thought and legislation that his own contribution was made. During his own lifetime, there was some disagreement about how far he was an original thinker. William Hazlitt, in a famous essay published in 1824, said that Bentham could 'not be looked upon in the light of a discoverer in legislation or morals'. Bentham's forte, he said, was arrangement:

He has methodised, collated, and condensed all the materials prepared to his hand on the subject of which he treats, in a masterly and scientific manner; but we should find a difficulty in adducing from his different works (however elaborate or closely reasoned) any new element of thought, or even a new fact or illustration.⁸

Twenty years earlier, however, in a quite critical article on Dumont's edition of Bentham's *Traité de législation*, Francis Jeffrey had conceded in the *Edinburgh Review* that 'so large a quantity of original reasoning has seldom, we believe, been produced by one man'; and although the

Whiggish *Edinburgh Review* was at odds in many respects with Benthamite radicalism in the 1820s, it protested strongly against Hazlitt's comment on Bentham's lack of originality: the comment, it said, was an 'astounding' one, and absurdly false.⁹ A similar protest came from Bentham's American follower John Neal: most of Bentham's works, he wrote, 'if not altogether original, are as much so as any works of man ever were.'¹⁰

There can be no doubt that Bentham regarded himself as a 'discoverer' in the field of morals and legislation. His ambitions in this respect were manifested in the opening paragraphs of his first published work, *A fragment on government* (1776). In the natural world, he wrote, 'every thing teems with discovery and improvement.' So far as the moral world was concerned, it was commonly held that no scope for discovery remained; but he questioned the truth of this assumption, suggesting that some perceptions bearing on the means of moral and social 'reformation' might be sufficiently novel and important to deserve being described as 'discoveries'.¹¹ It is well known that his ambitions as a reformer of the theory and practice of legislation were notably inspired and influenced by the French Enlightenment thinker Claude-Adrien Helvétius. In his autobiographical reminiscences he recalled how, at the age of twenty, he had learned from Helvétius' book *De l'esprit* that the word 'genius' was derived from the Latin verb *gignere*, meaning to produce or invent. 'Have I a *genius* for anything?' he asked himself. 'What can I produce?' He had also learned from Helvétius that the most important of all earthly pursuits was legislation; and this led him on to pose the question, 'Have I a genius for legislation?' After much thought and self-examination, he decided that he did.¹²

In the chapter on 'Genius' in *De l'esprit*, Helvétius wrote that it was in the time of youth, or 'passion', that men of genius were capable of genuinely innovative thought. Later, they might develop and clarify their ideas, and acquire greater skill in applying them; but only the relatively young possessed the mental strenuousness and agility that were required to overcome obstacles and break through onto new ground.¹³ It is interesting in the light of this passage to find Bentham writing in a letter to a friend in 1784, when he was thirty-six, that his own 'task of invention' had for some time been accomplished, and that all that remained was 'to put in order ideas ready formed'.¹⁴ In fact, much of his most original work was still to be done, in fields such as politics, administration, and the law of evidence. But it is certainly arguable that by the early 1780s—in his so-called 'Preparatory Manuscripts' and in his major works *An introduction to the principles of morals and legislation*

and *Of laws in general*—he had developed the essentials of the methodology that he was to use for the rest of his life. He continued, however, to be interested in invention during his later years. When he was about eighty he said to John Bowring, who was to be his biographer: 'I have endeavoured to bring two elements into my writings—invention and correctness'; and two of the three main passages in which he addressed himself directly to the analysis of inventiveness were written in the early nineteenth century.¹⁵

The first of the three passages was written considerably earlier, probably in the mid-1780s, though it was not published until 1829 (and then only in part). In that year an article entitled 'De l'invention' appeared in a journal called *L'Utilitaire* which had been recently launched in Geneva; it was published over the initials of Étienne Dumont, the Genevan editor and translator of Bentham's works, who was largely responsible for giving Bentham an international reputation.¹⁶ Most of the article, of which substantial drafts survive in Dumont's papers in Geneva,¹⁷ consists of his own reflections on the subject of invention, but the third and last section is entitled 'De l'invention en matière législative. (Extrait d'un manuscrit de M. Bentham.)' The manuscript referred to is in Bentham's collection of papers at University College London.¹⁸ It is written in French, under the heading 'Manière d'inventer en fait de législation'; and it clearly belongs to the large body of material which Bentham wrote in that language in the 1780s, in the belief that on the Continent there might be a more receptive audience than in England for the rather abstruse work on legislation that he was composing. Most of this material of the 1780s was subsequently taken over by Dumont and formed the basis of his edition of Bentham's *Traité de législation civile et pénale* which was published in three volumes in Paris in 1802. The essay on invention was not incorporated in the *Traité*, though a few sentences from it were quoted in the 'Discours préliminaire' which was Dumont's introduction to the work.¹⁹

The other main passages on invention mentioned above as having been produced in the early nineteenth century were both written (mainly if not exclusively) in 1814, which was the year in which Bentham devoted himself most intensively to the study of logic. The first, indeed, is a chapter in his 'Essay on Logic', which was published posthumously in 1843 in volume eight of Bowring's edition of Bentham's *Works*. The chapter is called 'Of the Art of Invention', and the original manuscript of about 20 sheets is in Bentham's papers at University College and is dated August 1814.²⁰ The chapter consists largely of a series of

'mementos' or general hints which those working in the field of invention would do well to keep in mind; each memento was encapsulated by Bentham in a Latin maxim, and the import of each was explained. The second passage is a longer one, and was published by Bowring in volume three of the *Works*, under the title 'Logical Arrangements, or Instruments of Invention and Discovery employed by Jeremy Bentham'. Again, the manuscript survives: it runs to forty six folios, and is located in the collection of Bentham papers held in the Manuscripts Department of the British Library. Apart from a couple of sheets which are dated 1808, the piece was written in the autumn of 1814.²¹ Here Bentham was discussing not so much the art or process of invention in general, as the most fruitful innovations which he believed that he himself had made in respect of what would now be called methodology.

In the three passages taken together, the most immediately striking section is the account, which appears in the first passage, of a dream which Bentham had had. As J.H. Burns has noted, the 'dream conceit' appears in several places in Bentham's writings.²² On one occasion, before University College London was founded, he dreamt that he was 'in the Lecture Room of the London University';²³ on another, much earlier, occasion, when he was still little known, he dreamt that he was 'a founder of a sect: of course a personage of great sanctity and importance. It was called the sect of *utilitarians*.'²⁴ The dream about invention was recounted in a poetic sort of language which, as Dumont commented in the article of 1829, was uncharacteristic.²⁵ Bentham said that just as Socrates had had his familiar spirit or tutelary genius, and the Roman lawgiver Numa had been instructed by his nymph Egeria, so he himself had his own divine protectress. The goddess appeared to him when he had gone to sleep after an exhausting and discouraging day, and told him that she had been observing his strenuous efforts and had taken pity on him. Her name, she announced, was 'Analogy'. She was not to be found in any calendar or pantheon, for calendars and pantheons were not produced by philosophers, and it was only to philosophers that she had hitherto appeared. She it was, for example, who had made the apple fall before the eyes of Newton. To Bentham, she was bringing not an apple but a seed: the seed of a tree which had been known to the ancients and had been cultivated by Porphyrius, but which in recent times had been allowed to languish. An unusual thing about the tree was that it was upside down: its trunk rose high into the sky, while its branches spread out along the ground. Bentham, the goddess said, should learn to climb it and to descend it. From the top of it, a trained and discerning eye could view all the riches of the

intellectual world. In climbing up it one acquired ideas, and in climbing down it one put them to the test.

What did all this signify? Let us consider first the emphasis placed on analogy. In another part of the same manuscript, Bentham said that analogy was 'the great instrument of invention'; and he was to use almost the same expression many years later in the first volume of the *Constitutional Code*, where he called analogy 'one of the great instruments in the hand of inventive genius'.²⁶ In the French manuscript of the 1780s, he said that what had led Newton to his great discoveries was his perception of certain analogies: of the analogy which existed between light and other substances, and of the analogy between the force which held the planets in their orbits and the force which pulled terrestrial objects towards the centre of the earth. Newton had made his discoveries 'en rapprochant des phénomènes jadis éloignés et disparates: . . . en unissant les principes à faire voir l'analogie entr'eux'. As an example of the usefulness of analogy in his own work, Bentham mentioned the illumination he had derived from juxtaposing and comparing his theories of punishment and of reward. They shed on one another, he said, 'une lumière réciproque, tantôt par leurs points de convenance, tantôt par leurs points de contraste'.²⁷ In a much later passage, written in the early 1820s, he stressed the value of this particular analogy in drawing attention to the need for economy, or 'frugality', in dispensing both punishments and rewards: in dispensing punishments, because the pain suffered by the punished was *pro tanto* a subtraction from the happiness of the community; in dispensing rewards, because rewards distributed by government almost always involved some expense to the public.²⁸

Related to analogy was a Latin phrase which crops up more frequently than any other expression in his writings on invention: *quodlibet cum quolibet*, or 'what you will with what you will'.²⁹ In the manuscript of the 1780s he described this phrase as 'une devise à laquelle il faut revenir sans cesse', and he told Bowring towards the end of his life that he had kept it 'constantly in view'.³⁰ In enlarging on the maxim in the chapter on the art of invention written in 1814, he said that its usefulness was most obvious in chemistry: it was to the experimental combination of each of a great variety of individual substances with one another, that that science was indebted for the 'prodigious progress' it had recently made.³¹ In legislation, he maintained, as well as in chemistry, the maxim was a fruitful source of discovery.³²

But where do trees come into all this? The answer (or part of the answer) is that trees of knowledge or encyclopaedic trees were regarded by Bentham as important *aids* to invention. Porphyrius, a third-century commentator on Aristotle, had constructed such a tree, but the one which Bentham preferred, because the design on which it was framed was more exhaustive, was the one sketched by the sixteenth-century French humanist Peter Ramus.³³ The correct position of the tree was upside down, in that the most general single class or concept—'substance', for example, in the model derived from Porphyrius and Ramus—was placed at the top, and served as the starting point for a process of classification or analysis by dichotomous ramification, with each subalternating class being divided into two mutually exclusive sub-classes. The trunk of the tree, representing the most generalized abstraction, stretched up into the sky, the rarefied atmosphere of theory; while the most remote branches, representing particulars, were in contact with the earth.

In *Chrestomathia*, the work on education which he published in 1817, Bentham set out his own 'Encyclopaedic Table' or table of the arts and sciences. (It should be mentioned in passing that what Bentham meant by 'art' was the applied branch of a subject, while by a 'science' he meant the theoretical branch; and it may be worth adding that he regarded the term 'invention' as applicable to arts and the term 'discovery' as applicable to sciences.³⁴) His own table or tree was an analysis of the whole field of 'eudaimonics', or the art of producing wellbeing; and it provided a general classification, according to what he called the 'exhaustively-bifurcate mode', of the arts and sciences conducive to that end. In the long appendix to *Chrestomathia* entitled 'Nomenclature and Classification', Bentham waxed enthusiastic about the value of encyclopaedic tables in assisting and stimulating inventive thought:

...with an Encyclopedical tree in his hand, suited to the particular object which he has in view, skipping backwards and forwards, with the rapidity of thought, from twig to twig, hunting out and pursuing whatever analogies it appears to afford, the eye of the artist or of the man of science may, at pleasure, make its profit, of the labour expended on this field.³⁵

Elsewhere, in the chapter on the art of invention, he emphasized that to promote 'facility of confrontation' it was vital that any synoptic table of this kind should be printed on a single sheet, so that the eye could range over it at pleasure.³⁶

In the same chapter, what other hints and mementoes are to be found, besides *quodlibet cum quolibet*, *analogias undique indagato*

(hunt for analogies everywhere), and *in analogiarum indagazione scalis logicis utere* (in the hunt for analogies make use of logical ladders)? Most of them are fairly commonsensical and unsurprising: keep your eyes fixed upon the end in view (*respice finem*)³⁷; take reason not custom for your guide (*sit non mos sed Ratio Dux*); render your ideas as clear as possible (*lux undique fiat*); learn whatever has been done and attempted by those seeking to achieve the end in question (*jam acta et tentata discite*). And a last one worth mentioning is perhaps more distinctively characteristic of Bentham: 'in . . . your survey of existing inventions, look out in preference for the latest of all, not looking backwards but for some special reason' (*postrema exquirito*).

After this survey of what Bentham had to say about invention, let us briefly consider how his ideas related to those of earlier writers whom he cited in the same connection. From the century or so preceding Bentham's time, two men who spring to mind as having addressed themselves directly to the 'art' of invention or discovery are Leibniz and Bacon. So far as Leibniz is concerned, some of his principal writings on the subject—notably his essay 'De arte inveniendi in genere', which was not published until 1903—were not available in Bentham's time, and it is possible that Bentham was unacquainted with his work outside the sphere of mathematics.³⁸ But Francis Bacon is a different matter. Mary Mack, the person who has written most perceptively about Bentham on invention, has stressed the importance of his debt to Bacon: no one else, she says, influenced him more strongly.³⁹

Bacon had remarked that much greater progress could have been made in the arts and sciences if 'the art itself of invention and discovery' had not been neglected.⁴⁰ He had wished to remedy this deficiency, and had been a strong believer in the tabular presentation of what was already known as a vital aid to the further advancement of knowledge. He wrote in his *Novum Organum*:

Since there is so great a number and army of particulars, and that army so scattered and dispersed as to distract and confound the understanding, little is to be hoped for from the skirmishings and slight attacks and desultory movements of the intellect, unless all the particulars which pertain to the subject of inquiry shall, by means of Tables of Discovery, apt, well arranged, and as it were animate, be drawn up and marshalled; and the mind be set to work upon the helps duly prepared and digested which these tables supply.⁴¹

He had also pointed to the way in which the transference or 'translation' of experimental methods from one branch of science to another could stimulate advances; and he had recommended the formulation of

'axioms' derived by induction from a range of past experiments and providing distilled guidance for future ones.⁴² In all this there are strong and obvious parallels with the ideas of Bentham; and the latter did in fact express his admiration for Bacon and acknowledged his debt to him on a number of occasions. He called him 'that resplendent genius', and in his chapter on the art of invention he described him as 'the man whose mind was of all minds the most unlike to others'.⁴³ In particular he praised the map of learning or 'platform of the design' which Bacon included in his *Of the advancement of learning*. For its period, Bentham said, this was 'a precocious and precious fruit of the union of learning with genius'; and he went on to say that the encyclopaedic tree which d'Alembert, in imitation of Bacon, had included in his preliminary discourse to the famous *Encyclopédie* was by comparison a disappointing production.⁴⁴

However, great though Bentham's admiration for Bacon was, he recognized that Newton had carried scientific discovery very much further;⁴⁵ and in a characteristically ambitious way he envisaged his own mission in the field of legislation as similar to the part played by Newton in the field of natural science. He wrote in a famous passage in his early manuscripts that what Bacon had done in laying the foundation of progress in the physical world, Helvétius had done in the 'moral' world. 'The moral world has therefore had its Bacon but its Newton is yet to come.'⁴⁶ We are to understand by this comparison, it would seem, that Bacon had made extremely fertile analyses of the nature of scientific method, and Newton had then applied this method in a systematic and creative way; similarly, Helvétius had sketched out the utilitarian approach to legislation, and Bentham was to apply it consistently and comprehensively to legislation in general. The chief quality that the two pairs of thinkers were seen as having in common was their empiricism. Previously, Bentham suggested, both natural science and jurisprudence had been dominated and held back (and the latter to a considerable extent still was) by a sterile and circular verbalism.

Both turned their backs with equal tranquillity on the only objects from which any true lights are to be obtained: the one to the phenomena of nature; the other to the feelings of mankind. Syllogism and Definition, the instruments which the former employ'd to dig out physical truth, are the instruments and the only instruments employ'd by the latter to come at moral truth and find out what is proper to be done on each occasion in the way of legislation: syllogisms by which the proposition in doubt or in dispute is uniformly assumed, definitions manufactured for the purpose of giving to such syllogisms a ground to stand upon.⁴⁷

The originality of the approach which he had learned from Helvétius lay

in the way in which all moral and legislative problems were referred to the touchstone of human feelings: 'when the question is to which of two opposite modes of action to give the preference, sum up by induction the feelings on both sides in both cases, and let always the ballance as it appears on the side of happiness or unhappiness decide.'⁴⁸

The passage we have just been citing, with its broad analogy between advances in science and advances in legislation, clearly relates to Bentham's views on invention and original thought but does so at a high level of generality. Let us shift now to some more specific aspects of the art or 'method' of invention—aspects in which he claimed to have made inventive contributions to the art, while at the same time facilitating his own work as an inventor.⁴⁹ He wrote in his 'Essay on logic' that just as invention depends to a considerable extent on method (as well as to some extent on chance), so also 'method is itself the product of invention'; and he made the same point in *Chrestomathia*: 'Among the objects of invention or discovery, is *method*: and, when once invented or discovered, it becomes an instrument in the hands of *Invention*.'⁵⁰ It was largely with this area of interaction between method and invention that he was concerned when he wrote his 'Logical Arrangements, or Instruments of Invention and Discovery'.

He began this piece by citing—as he had done in the essay on invention written thirty years before—a remark of Bolingbroke's. Someone who wished to take a commanding view of the field of legislation, Bolingbroke had said, needed to mount two eminences in turn: one was the vantage point of history, the other was that of metaphysics. According to Bentham, the former was a only a hillock, and the path up it was smooth and bordered with flowers; there was no shortage of people who had amused themselves by climbing it. The other, by contrast, was a real mountain, riven with precipices and thickly covered with thorns; and those who managed to scale the heights of metaphysics (or logic) were comparatively few.⁵¹ What he was doing in the essay on his instruments of invention was giving an account of his own travels in this forbidding terrain, and enumerating the various minor peaks or 'monticules' from which he had been able to survey the field, or parts of the field, of legislation. In other words, he was recording the principal insights or directing concepts which had enabled him to organize and elucidate the material he was dealing with. Some of these instruments, he said (embarking on a new metaphor), had been forged by him; some he had found already made, or partially made, by others, but had either developed further or put to novel uses.

The instruments that he went on to itemize and outline will mostly be quite familiar to those involved in 'Bentham studies'. He included, for example, among the fourteen listed, his contributions to the theory of language: his distinction between real entities and fictitious entities, and his device of exposition by paraphrase, whereby the import of fictitious entities of the political or legal class could be explained in terms of the relation they bore to the real entities of pain and pleasure. (In this field, incidentally, it has been said that Bentham was 'almost without predecessors and entirely without collaborators', and that he anticipated work done in the twentieth century by Vaihinger, Wittgenstein and Russell.⁵²) He also included in his list his systematic analysis of human motives in terms of their relationship to pleasures and pains (work which has led a modern specialist in the field to describe him as 'one of the most important early pioneers in motivational psychology'⁵³); and he included his 'division of offences', an exhaustive classification of offences by the method of bipartition. He said of the latter in *An introduction to the principles of morals and legislation*: 'If there be anything new and original in this work, it is to the exhaustive method . . . that I am indebted for it.'⁵⁴ He believed that it provided him with the framework for an unprecedentedly methodical and comprehensive body of codified law.

Systematic classification, of course, was very much in the air in Bentham's time. It had been used not only in relation to plants by Linnaeus, but also in relation to diseases by the Scottish physician, William Cullen, in his *Synopsis nosologiae methodicae* (1769). Bentham said he had learnt more about method from books on medicine and natural history than he had from law-books, and he called his own classification of offences a 'nosology of the body politic'.⁵⁵ It is worth noting that this is only one example—though a striking one—of the analogy that he repeatedly drew between medicine and legislation. He wrote elsewhere: 'What the physician is to the natural body, the legislator is to the political: legislation is the art of medicine exercised upon a great scale.'⁵⁶ Just as misdeeds were the disorders of the body politic, so punishments constituted its *materia medica*: and he claimed that this was not a merely fanciful analogy, but one that was 'applicable to the banishment of a thousand prejudices'.⁵⁷ The analogy helped, in other words, to introduce into penal theory an approach that was clinical and curative, in place of one that was moralistic and retributive.

A further use of the analogy, moreover, was that it highlighted the method of inquiry and investigation which Bentham regarded as appropriate to the science of legislation. (This science, incidentally, was

envisaged by him as covering more or less the whole of what might now be called *social science*. The actual term 'social science' seems to have been used originally in France, by Sieyès, Condorcet and their circle in the early years of the Revolution; but it was introduced to Bentham by a Spanish admirer and interpreter of his work, Toribio Nuñez of the University of Salamanca, who published in 1820 a compendium of his doctrines entitled *Espiritu de Bentham: sistema de la ciencia social*—and Bentham, writing to Nuñez in the following year, congratulated him on the aptness of the term.⁵⁸ Bacon's maxim concerning scientific method had been *fiat experimentum*; and so far as the physical sciences were concerned, Bentham recognized that this represented a huge advance over earlier approaches. But so far as what he called 'moral and political science' was concerned, he considered that the appropriate maxim was *fiat observatio*; for although material phenomena could readily be subjected to experiment, the subject matter of the science of legislation—the feelings, the pains and pleasures, of mankind—'might be taken for subject matter of observation, but not without great reserve and caution for subjects of experiments'.⁵⁹ The parallel in this respect with medicine, which was also concerned with human sensations—though principally those of the body rather than the mind—was explicitly drawn by Bentham on more than one occasion. In both medicine and legislation there was *some* scope for experiment, but in both fields it was on 'observation and experience' that investigators should chiefly rely.⁶⁰

If the analogy between legislation and medicine was important to Bentham, the conceptual link between legislation and mathematics was perhaps even more crucial. He did not claim to have *discovered* his basic principle of utility, or what he called in later life 'the greatest happiness principle': he acknowledged that it was to be found, and that he himself had found it, in the works of Beccaria, Priestley and Helvétius. But he did believe that he was the first writer on legislation by whom the idea of proportion had been 'constantly kept in mind, and held up to view';⁶¹ and in his list of 'instruments of invention and discovery' he included—while again acknowledging that Beccaria had put him on the track—the notion of 'elements or dimensions of value in regard to pleasures and pains'. By this notion, he claimed, 'the precision and clearness and incontestableness of mathematical calculation are introduced for the first time into the field of morals'.⁶²

The claim in this rather sweeping form does need to be qualified. For one thing, earlier writers such as Hutcheson in Scotland and Maupertuis in France (as well as Beccaria) had been experimenting with the

application of mathematical concepts to ethics.⁶³ Also, a study of Bentham's actual treatment of quantification in relation to moral and social problems shows that he was less confident (and perhaps less naive) than the claim we have quoted might suggest. He believed that several of the 'dimensions' in terms of which a 'lot' of pleasure could be assessed—its 'duration', its 'extent' (in the case of a pleasure or pain experienced by more than one person), and its 'propinquity' and 'certainty' (in the case of a future pleasure or pain)—were all capable of being expressed in a quantitative fashion. But he had doubts about the crucial dimension of 'intensity'. In a manuscript of the 1770s he suggested that the basic unit of intensity might be defined as 'the degree of intensity possessed by that pleasure which is the faintest of any that can be distinguished to be pleasure'—thereby anticipating, as Amnon Goldworth has pointed out, the concept of the *minimum sensible* or 'just perceivable increment' which F.Y. Edgeworth proposed a hundred years later as the unit for measuring pleasure and pain.⁶⁴ Eventually, however, in his *Codification Proposal* of 1822, he acknowledged that the dimension of intensity was *not* susceptible of measurement and precise expression; and he admitted more generally in the same work that it was not possible to achieve the same degree of quantitative precision in morals and politics as was attainable in some other fields. None the less, he said, it was important that attention should be paid to questions of quantity and proportion on all occasions. However far this approach might fall short of perfect precision, 'at any rate, in every rational and candid eye, unspeakable will be the advantage it will have over every form of argumentation in which every idea is afloat, no degree of precision being ever attained because none is even so much as aimed at'.⁶⁵ In the end his claims about quantification were quite cautious, but he did raise questions relating to it which have continued to exercise psychologists, economists and others; and a recent commentator has written that his concern with measurement marked 'the crucial transition from hedonistic philosophy to modern social science'.⁶⁶

A further analogy, or set of analogies, worth mentioning is the one with *economic* behaviour that Bentham used to illuminate the field of criminal law. He proposed that punishment should be seen as a form of expenditure or investment, the pain inflicted being 'a capital hazarded in expectation of profit', and the intended profit being the prevention of crime. We have noted above his emphasis on the need for economy or 'frugality' in regard to punishment; he described a punishment as 'economic' when the desired effect was produced at the least possible cost in terms of suffering. The analogy was valuable, he maintained, in that it substituted 'the language of reason and calculation' for terms such

as 'mildness' and 'rigour' which carried connotations of favour and disfavour.⁶⁷ He employed a slightly different economic analogy—here once again he was following Beccaria—in considering the impact of penal sanctions on the motivation of the criminal or potential criminal. The quantum of punishment ordained, he suggested, should be just sufficient to outweigh the advantage or 'profit' that could be expected from the offence. 'The profit of the crime is the force which urges a man to delinquency: the pain of the punishment is the force employed to restrain him from it. If the first of these forces be the greater, the crime will be committed; if the second, the crime will not be committed.'⁶⁸ The implications of this general rule were examined in a chapter entitled 'Of the Proportion between Punishments and Offences' in *An introduction to the principles of morals and legislation*. For example, Bentham wrote that in fixing the quantity or 'value' of a lot of punishment, one should treat the degree of certainty with which the punishment could be expected to be visited on the offender as an important factor in the account; and he laid down as a supplementary rule that 'to enable the value of the punishment to outweigh that of the profit of the offence, it must be increased, in point of magnitude, in proportion as it falls short in point of certainty'.⁶⁹ In this mode of analysis he was foreshadowing the approach of the modern 'law and economics' school, and one of its principal exponents, Richard A. Posner, has written: 'By making explicit what had been only implicit in Beccaria and Blackstone—that punishment is a method of imposing costs on criminal activity and thereby altering the incentive to engage in it—Bentham laid the foundation for the modern economic analysis of crime and punishment.'⁷⁰

A last example of the ways in which modes of investigation and analysis developed in other fields of study were (in Bacon's word) 'translated', with what Bentham regarded as fruitful results, to his own chosen field of morals and legislation, was the linking of legislation with logic. Traditional Aristotelian logic was concerned with the analysis of understanding and argumentation. Bentham set out to supplement this by constructing a new form of logic which was concerned with the various forms of command or 'imperation'—a 'logic of the will'; and its purpose was to provide a systematic substructure for a new 'branch of art and science' of which he claimed to be the inventor—'nomography, or the art of inditing laws'. In developing his new form of logic he was explicitly making use of analogy in relation to the *old* form. 'By the light of analogy, the instructions which have been given on the subject of the logic of understanding, may be found applicable, with more or less fitness, to the logic of the will.'⁷¹ Of the originality of his work in this

field, which foreshadowed the modern development of deontic logic, H.L.A. Hart has written that 'although there are scattered hints of the possibility of a logic of imperatives in the works of earlier logicians from Anselm to Leibniz, Bentham's articulation of it seems to have been quite without a forerunner'.⁷²

This paper has focused on Bentham's belief that invention largely consisted in new 'compounds', and on the importance he attached to what he threatened at one point to call 'analogization or analogoscopy'.⁷³ These notions were not especially original. Helvétius, without actually using the word 'analogy', had written in the chapter on 'genius' in *De l'esprit* that what was usually meant by the term 'discovery' was 'une nouvelle combinaison, un rapport nouveau aperçu entre certains objets ou certaines idées'; and Dugald Stewart devoted a section of his *Elements of the philosophy of the human mind* to a discussion of analogy and of what contemporary philosophers had said about it.⁷⁴ Bentham was exceptional, however, in the degree of emphasis he placed on this device. John Stuart Mill, in the essay on Bentham that he published in 1838, maintained that the most characteristic and original feature of his intellectual method was his 'method of detail; of treating wholes by separating them into parts, abstractions by resolving them into Things, classes and generalities by distinguishing them into the individuals of which they are made up'.⁷⁵ It is true that in Bentham's view all exercises in generalization needed to be balanced and tested by *analysis* (in the literal sense of 'putting asunder' or breaking down into a number of parts); without the latter, he wrote, the former would be a perpetual source of illusion.⁷⁶ But important though analysis was in his scheme of things, from the point of view of creative thinking it was analogy—an instrument of the imagination rather than of logic—that he regarded as the most vital tool.⁷⁷

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1. Robin Evans, 'Bentham's Panopticon', *Controspazio*, no.10 (1970), 4-18. Cf. *idem*, *The fabrication of virtue: English prison architecture 1750-1850* (Cambridge, 1982), ch.5.
2. *Correspondence of Jeremy Bentham*, vol. IV, ed. A.T. Milne, (London, 1981), 485-490; *ibid.*, vol. VI, ed. J.R. Dinwiddy (Oxford, 1984), 346-349, 355-358, 364.
3. Adam Smith, *An inquiry into the nature and causes of the wealth of nations* (London, 1776), bk. II, ch.4.
4. Werner Stark ed., *Jeremy Bentham's economic writings*, 3 vols. (London, 1952-1954), I, 167-187; John Bowring ed., *The works of Jeremy Bentham*, 11 vols. (Edinburgh, 1843), III, 49.

5. Stark, I, 260-265.
6. Bowring, II, 256.
7. Ibid., III, 51. Cf. C.K. Ogden, 'Bentham on Invention', *Psyche*, X, no.2 (1929), 102-109.
8. *New Monthly Magazine*, Jan. 1824: P.P. Howe ed., *Complete works of William Hazlitt*, 21 vols.(London, 1930-1934), XI, 7-8.
9. *Edinburgh Review*, IV (1804), 26; XLII (1825), 256.
10. Bentham, *Principles of legislation*, ed. John Neal (Boston, 1830), 19-21.
11. Bentham, *A comment on the commentaries and a fragment on government*, ed. J.H. Burns and H.L.A. Hart (London, 1977), 393.
12. Bowring, X, 27.
13. Claude-Adrien Helvétius, *De l'esprit*, 2 vols.(Paris, 1758), II, 164.
14. *Correspondence of Jeremy Bentham*, vol.III, ed. I.R. Christie (London, 1971), 293.
15. Bowring, X, 586.
16. *L'Utilitaire, Journal de Philosophie Sociale*, I (1929), 257-280.
17. MS. Dumont 59/5, Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire, Geneva.
18. University College London, Bentham MSS. [hereafter UC.], c, 76-86.
19. UC.c, 81; Bentham, *Traité de législation civile et pénale*, ed. E. Dumont, 3 vols.(Paris, 1802), I, p.xx.
20. Bowring, VIII, 275-279; UC.ci, 385-405.
21. Bowring, III, 285-295; British Library, Add.MSS.33550, fols. 2-47.
22. J.H. Burns, 'Dreams and Destinations: Bentham in 1828', *Bentham Newsletter*, no.1 (1978), 21.
23. UC.xxxi, 200.
24. UC.clxix, 79.
25. *L'Utilitaire*, I, 275.
26. UC.c, 78; Bentham, *Constitutional code*, vol.I, ed. F. Rosen and J.H. Burns (Oxford, 1983), 379 fn.
27. UC.c, 79.
28. Bowring, IX, 48. Cf. *ibid.*, I, 398; II, 200.
29. Bowring, X, 561.
30. UC.c, 79; Bowring, X, 586. Dumont, in a list of 'maximes fondamentales' relating to invention, included: 'Analogie. Quodlibet cum quolibet. Tout avec tout' (MS. Dumont 59/5). See also, Bentham, *Chrestomathia*, ed. M.J. Smith and W.H. Burston (Oxford, 1983), 261.
31. Bowring, VIII, 276, 278.
32. UC.c, 79.
33. *Chrestomathia*, 223, 241.
34. *Ibid.*, 166.
35. *Ibid.*, 216.
36. Bowring, VIII, 278-279.
37. In a manuscript of 1826 (UC.ci, 199) Bentham altered this maxim to *aspice finem*.
38. See 'De arte inveniendi in genere', *Opusculs et fragments inédits de Leibniz*, ed. Louis Couturat (Paris, 1903), 161-166; 'On Universal Synthesis and Analysis, or the Art of Discovery and Judgment', *Leibniz: philosophical papers and letters*, ed. L.E. Loemaker, 2 vols.(London, 1956), I, 229-234.
39. Mary Mack, *Jeremy Bentham: an odyssey of ideas 1748-1792* (London, 1962), 129, 141.
40. 'Of the Advancement of Learning', *The philosophical works of Francis Bacon*, ed. J.M. Robertson (New York, 1905), 112.
41. *Novum organum*, *ibid.*, 290.

42. *De augmentis scientiarum*, *ibid.*, 508; *Novum organum*, *ibid.*, 290-291.
43. *Chrestomathia*, 215; Bowring, VIII, 277. See also Bentham, *Deontology, together with a table of the springs of action and the article on utilitarianism*, ed. Amnon Goldworth (Oxford, 1983), 311.
44. *Chrestomathia*, 160.
45. He wrote in 1817 that the famous apple should have been preserved 'as an object of worship . . . in a hermetically sealed glass case' (*ibid.*, 278)—much the same treatment as he was later to arrange for himself.
46. UC. xxxii, 158.
47. *Ibid.*
48. *Ibid.*
49. Stark, III, 70.
50. Bowring, VIII, 261; *Chrestomathia*, 166.
51. UC.c, 77; Bowring, III, 285.
52. C.K. Ogden, 'Forensic Orthology: Back to Bentham', *Psyche*, VIII, no.4 (1928), 5; Ross Harrison, *Bentham* (London, 1983), 64-68; Enrique Mari, 'Du "souffle pestilentiel de la fiction" dans le droit, à la théorie du droit comme fiction', in *Actualité de la pensée juridique de Jeremy Bentham*, ed. Philippe Gérard, François Ost and Michel van de Kerchove (Brussels, 1987), 372-379.
53. Paul McReynolds, 'The Motivational Psychology of Jeremy Bentham: II', *Journal of the History of the Behavioural Sciences*, IV (1968), 362.
54. Bentham, *An introduction to the principles of morals and legislation*, ed. J.H. Burns and H.L.A. Hart (London, 1970), 196 fn.
55. UC.c, 81; *Correspondence of Jeremy Bentham*, vol. VII, ed. J.R. Dinwiddy (Oxford, 1988), 27.
56. UC.xxxii, 158.
57. Bowring, IX, 23; Mack, *op.cit.*, 264.
58. Robert Wokler, 'Saint-Simon and the passage from political to social science', in A. Pagden ed., *The languages of political theory in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1987), 327-330; K.M. Baker, *Condorcet: from natural philosophy to social mathematics* (Chicago, 1975), 391-395; J.H. Burns, *Jeremy Bentham and University College* (London, 1962), 8. For valuable discussions of Bentham as social scientist, see Ian Budge, 'Jeremy Bentham: A Re-evaluation in the Context of Empirical Social Science', *Political Studies*, XIX (1971), 18-36; Lea Campos Boralevi, 'Jeremy Bentham e l'utilitarismo come scienza sociale', *Il Pensiero Politico*, XII (1979), 361-371; Douglas Long, 'Bentham as Revolutionary Social Scientist', *Man and Nature / L'Homme et la Nature*, VI (1987), 115-145.
59. 'Article on Utilitarianism' (1829), in *Deontology*, 295.
60. *Correspondence*, vii, 26; Bowring, iii, 224; UC.xxxii, 158; Mack, *op.cit.*, 134, 266-267.
61. Bowring, X, 561.
62. *Ibid.*, III, 286.
63. Robert Shackleton, 'The Greatest Happiness of the Greatest Number: the History of Bentham's Phrase', *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, XC (1972), 1466-1469.
64. UC. xxvii, 38; Amnon Goldworth, 'Bentham on the Measurement of Subjective States', *Bentham Newsletter*, no.2 (1979), 4, 15; F.Y. Edgeworth, *Mathematical psychics: an essay on the application of mathematics to the moral sciences* (London, 1881), 7.
65. Bowring, IV, 542.
66. Ian Budge, book review in *American Political Science Review*, LXIX (1975), 1434.

- Bentham's views on quantification are discussed at somewhat greater length in my *Bentham* (Oxford, 1989), ch.3.
67. Bowring, I, 398.
 68. *Ibid.*, I, 399.
 69. *An introduction to the principles of morals and legislation*, 170.
 70. Richard A. Posner, *The economics of justice* (Cambridge, Mass., 1981), 41. (I owe this reference to Dr. Paul Kelly.) See also the references to Bentham in Gary S. Becker's pioneering article, 'Crime and Punishment: an Economic Approach', *Journal of Political Economy*, LXVI (1968), 185 fn., 191 fn., 193 fn., 194 fn., 195 fn.
 71. Bowring, III, 234; Mack, *op.cit.*, 160. Cf. David Lyons, *In the interest of the governed: a study in Bentham's philosophy of utility and law* (Oxford, 1973), 117: 'Among the four basic types of imperation [identified by Bentham], the possible relations respecting a given act are analogous to the relations held to exist among the four elementary types of subject- predicate propositions in traditional Aristotelian logic.'
 72. H.L.A. Hart, *Essays on Bentham: jurisprudence and political theory* (Oxford, 1982), 112.
 73. *Chrestomathia*, 163 fn., 269 fn.
 74. Helvétius, *De l'esprit*, II, 158; Dugald Stewart, *Elements of the philosophy of the human mind*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh, 1792-1817), II, 382-393.
 75. J.S. Mill, *Essays on ethics, religion and society*, ed. J.M. Robson (Toronto, 1969), 83.
 76. UC.c, 80. Cf. *Chrestomathia*, 164; Bowring, VIII, 265.
 77. Bentham's inventiveness in regard to legislation also operated at a more detailed level, which this paper does not attempt to cover. For a discussion of his fertility and ingenuity in devising new political machinery, see Graham Wallas's essay, 'Bentham as Political Inventor', in his *Men and ideas* (London, 1940), 33-48. See also A.V. Dicey, *Lectures on the relationship between law and public opinion in England during the nineteenth century*, 2nd. edn. (London, 1914), 131: 'He was in truth created to be the inventor and patentee of legal reforms. It is in this inventiveness that he differs from and excels his best known disciples . . . Neither Austin, nor James Mill, nor John Mill, possessed any touch of Bentham's inventive genius.'

REVOLUTIONARY PHILOSOPHER: THE POLITICAL IDEAS OF JOSEPH PRIESTLEY (1733-1804): PART ONE*

Jenny Graham

The revolution which took place in the summer of 1789 in France had, as is generally acknowledged, an extraordinary impact upon the political atmosphere of England. 'I have seen the reception of the news of the victory of Waterloo', wrote the daughter of Samuel Galton (one of Birmingham's most prominent manufacturers, and a member of its celebrated Lunar Society) 'and of the carrying of the Reform Bill, but I never saw joy comparable in its vivid intensity and universality to that occasioned by the early promise of the French Revolution.' The overthrow of the despotism of the Bourbons, or their subjugation, as it was hoped, to popular control, brought immediate and widespread jubilation. The very intensity of the interest in the French experiment in government, however, and the significance it undoubtedly had in a more general sense, brought with it, and at a very early stage, a corresponding reaction. 'We begin to judge you with too much severity', wrote Romilly, one of the many Englishmen who in the next few years were to visit Paris to observe for themselves the workings of this remarkable revolution, 'but the truth is, that you taught us to expect too much, and that we are disappointed and chagrined at not seeing those expectations fulfilled.' For many English sympathizers, there was from the outset much confusion and uncertainty involved in their allegiance to France. And even for those who did wholeheartedly espouse the cause, and were instrumental in instigating a similar movement of opinion in England, there was early and bitter disappointment from the very quarter in which they had expected support: 'We have, all of us, perhaps, expected the effects of the French Revolution too soon', wrote James Currie, in the aftermath of the rioting in Birmingham which destroyed the house and laboratory of Joseph Priestley, and the homes, too, of many of Birmingham's most prominent Dissenters.¹

In the spring of 1791, the reforming community had received the first part of the *Rights of Man*, in which Paine had defended the Revolution from the onslaughts of Burke, with an outpouring of enthusiasm. 'From what we now see', Paine had written, 'nothing of reform in the political world ought to be held improbable. It is an age of Revolutions, in which everything may be looked for.'² And Mackintosh, too, in his *Vindiciae Gallicae* had spelt out for an English audience the innovatory philosophy of Condorcet: men should ask, in constructing governments, Condorcet had written, 'ce qu'on pouvait, ce qu'on devait'.³ 'The

French', wrote Mackintosh, were 'marking the commencement of a new era in history, by giving birth to the art of improving government, and increasing the civil happiness of man.'⁴ Already in 1792, however, Mackintosh, whilst still prominent amongst those advocating reform in England, was writing that he was conscious of having 'stated principles too widely and expressed sentiments too warmly'. And the inroads made upon the optimism of 1791, as France went to war with the allied powers, to the accompaniment of civil strife, mob violence and massacre, were to take their toll on many a former political idealist, watching the drama unfold, as James Currie's son wrote of his father 'with an interest too great for his own peace of mind'. In April 1793 Thomas Beddoes, close friend of Mackintosh, an ardent admirer of the Revolution—prevented indeed for this very reason from occupying the proposed Regius Chair of Chemistry at Oxford—yet was writing of his retreat from his former certainty of political belief: 'Henceforward I shall perforce hold it vain to reflect upon the civil and political relations among men; and not an old woman of either sex whom I shall not readily allow to be a greater proficient in the science.'⁵

There were many, including Thomas Cooper of Manchester, and the young Cambridge classicist Tweddell, who blamed the French for the disastrous reverses of the 1790s: they had, wrote Tweddell, 'done an eternal injury to the cause of freedom'.⁶ Others, in particular the poets, as Hazlitt recorded, could not sustain their democratic faith.⁷ Others again, most notably the young orator Yorke, publicly denounced their former beliefs.⁸ And in 1799, in the most celebrated recantation of all, to 'an audience such as never before was seen on a similar occasion', Mackintosh himself publicly refuted his former adherence to the doctrine of innovation, and denounced the murderous actions by the French to which, as he now argued, it had inevitably led. 'The Modern Philosophy, counter-scarp, outworks, citadel, and all, fell without a blow', wrote Hazlitt,

... as if it had been a pack of cards. The volcano of the French Revolution was seen expiring in its own flames, like a bonfire made of straw; the principles of Reform were scattered in all directions, like chaff before the keen northern blast.⁹

The cumulative effect of this prolonged period of intellectual doubt, upheaval, and recantation, upon the historical record of the 1790s, was, I would argue, very great. In memoirs, biographies, and also autobiographies of this period, there was concern to excise from the record evidence of the extent to which the undoubted extremes of political opinion had led men to expressions of opinion and to actions which were later to appear, in the light of subsequent experience, so misguided.

This has led, in its turn, to a general interpretation of the period which has seriously underplayed the extent of the extremism which was abroad; and underestimates, too, the force of the reaction which it provoked. And it is in this context that it is proposed to consider the political career of Joseph Priestley, who, in 1794 was concerned, for different, although related reasons, to deny his radical past. Priestley, it is important to point out, was not amongst those who, at least in private, underwent any profound disillusion with the ideas of progressive improvement in human affairs—in particular in the science of government—and in popular participation in the political process which, as I shall hope to argue, he with others in England, had been propounding for some twenty years before revolution broke out in France. Both on his arrival in America, and in the succeeding years, he was anxious to stress the full extent of his democratic commitment.¹⁰ In England, however, in the Preface to the Fast Day Sermon which he delivered shortly before his departure, Priestley published what can only be described as a disclaimer of political participation amounting to public recantation. In this he was not alone amongst the English reformers of that troubled year.

Priestley by the time he wrote the Preface to his Fast Day Sermon had endured nearly three years of public vilification and abuse: his house burnt to the ground and ransacked, his laboratory and irreplaceable manuscripts destroyed, his private correspondence read by the government, and his losses but grudgingly acknowledged. Unable to live any longer in Birmingham, the place where he had, as he said, most happily settled, 'unhinged', as he expressed it, and unable even to take a house under his own name in London, he was effectively shunned by some of his friends: 'the chaced deer', he wrote, in one of his few expressions of emotion at this time, 'is avoided by all the herd'; by others he was urged to flee the country. In Hackney indeed he had found a place of retreat, but his appointment to succeed Richard Price as minister of the Dissenting congregation had not been without considerable controversy; and although he was able to teach at the Academy in Hackney, and had painstakingly reassembled his laboratory, yet he was shunned by fellow members of the Royal Society, and he was acutely conscious too of the impossibility for his sons of making a career in England. In Manchester his eldest son, Joseph, had been expressly requested to leave his firm by his partner who, although 'a man of liberality himself' was alarmed by 'the general prevalence of the spirit which produced the riots in Birmingham.' 'No son of mine can ever settle in this country, unless things should take a turn that we have no reason to expect', wrote Priestley, early in 1793.¹¹

It is difficult, I think, to exaggerate—although recently it has been claimed that it is entirely possible—the widespread spirit of intolerance and persecution, given tacit support by much abuse of the legal system, and the assistance too, of sporadic but alarmingly frequent mob violence, prevailing in England in 1793 and 1794.¹² In the West Country Revd. Winterbotham was sentenced to Newgate for four years and fined large sums on the evidence of dubious witnesses, in a trial which aroused widespread protest; and in Manchester, in one of many prosecutions there, Priestley's close friend, Thomas Walker, was accused of seditious practices and given notice to stand trial at Lancaster Assizes. Of the actual charges against him, he knew nothing: 'so much for British Justice,' he commented bitterly. 'I cannot express how much I feel for him', Priestley had written.¹³ And it was with another political activist, Thomas Cooper—glad that he for one was leaving 'this rascally nation'¹⁴—that Priestley's sons sailed for America in the summer of 1793. Priestley himself was still 'determined not to remove at present', but his mounting concern is clear from his correspondence.¹⁵ The trend of the prosecutions was, he wrote, 'alarming': 'there was nothing worse than this in the reigns of the Stuarts', he wrote to Theophilus Lindsey. 'Little of the liberty of the press, on political subjects is now left', he wrote again in September. 'The times grow darker and darker', he wrote to Wilkinson three months later, and in January 1794, with the prosecutions of Thomas Muir and Thomas Fyshe Palmer, he had finally, as he said, 'come to a full determination to leave this country.'¹⁶ 'I . . . own', he wrote in the Preface to the Fast Day Sermon,

that I am not unaffected by such unexampled punishments as those of Mr. Muir and my friend Mr. Palmer, for offences, which, if, in the eye of reason, they be any at all, are slight, and very insufficiently proved; a measure so subversive of that freedom of speaking and acting, which has hitherto been the great pride of Britons. But the sentence of Mr. Winterbotham, for delivering from the pulpit what I am persuaded, he never did deliver, and which, similar evidence might have drawn upon myself, or any other dissenting minister, who was an object of general dislike, has something in it still more alarming.¹⁷

Priestley was indeed sufficiently apprehensive of prosecution for his own utterances in April 1794 that he took care, as Benjamin Flower in the *Cambridge Intelligencer* reported, to read his Sermon from a printed copy beforehand, 'to secure himself,' wrote Flower, 'from the consequences of such gross misrepresentation as sent Mr. Winterbotham to Newgate.'¹⁸ His concern was to be echoed by many reformers in even greater degree, for within a month of Priestley's departure, Habeas Corpus had been suspended in England, many of her leading reformers were imprisoned in the Tower, and throughout the country men were

afraid, as is clear from a multitude of testimony, to commit their political views even in private to paper. The suspension of Habeas Corpus and the arrests of reformers, wrote Samuel Kenrick, had,

actually struck a terror in some minds greater than I thought possible, where integrity and innocence certainly & I thought magnanimity resided. But family connections and property, which may easily be destroyed . . . are enough if not to make cowards, to recall caution & prudence, & to make a sort of hypocrites of most men in easy and opulent circumstances.¹⁹

It was in May 1794 in Norwich, whose reformers were 'in a state of fearful anticipation' after the arrest of one of their number, that William Taylor altered the records of the Minute book of the Revolution Society to avoid incriminating his father in their proceedings;²⁰ that in London Felix Vaughan, in possession of the Minute book of the London Corresponding Society (which with some difficulty had been left unmolested by the government's officers), tore out a great number of its pages;²¹ and that in Birmingham James Watt junior was kept in hiding by his father until an indemnity had been secured from the government. It was in that month also that Benjamin Vaughan, one of Priestley's closest confidants, who had been prominent amongst those urging him to leave the country, was interrogated before the Privy Council, and judged it wiser in the circumstances to flee to Switzerland.²² 'We cannot help rejoicing now almost for the first time', wrote Lindsey, 'that Dr. Priestley has left the country as the prejudices were so great against him, that right or wrong he might have been implicated in the recent accusations.'²³ And it is in the context of the extreme alarm of many for their personal safety at this time—the 'terror', which, Vaughan had recently declared, pervaded the friends of liberty²⁴—that Priestley's emphatic denials of political involvement, which have so coloured subsequent accounts, but which have apparently accorded so well with the general depiction of the period, must be considered.

'As to the great odium that I have incurred,' wrote Priestley, 'the charge of *sedition*, or my being an enemy to the constitution or peace of my country, is a mere pretence', which, however, had been so often repeated that it was impossible to refute. But, he declared, 'the whole course of my studies from early life, shows how little *politics* of any kind have been my object.' His published writings, he said, must give the lie to those who supposed otherwise: 'Let any person only cast his eye over my publications, and he will see that they relate almost wholly to theology, philosophy, or general literature.' He had, he admitted, as a young man, written upon the subject of politics; he had enjoyed the friendship and support of Sir George Savile and Franklin. Thereafter, however, he claimed, he had remained entirely silent upon political

topics. Although he 'by no means' disapproved of 'societies for political information, such as are everywhere now discountenanced, and generally suppressed', he 'never was a member of any of them; nor indeed', he added, did he ever attend a public meeting 'if I could decently avoid it.' It was 'from a mistake' of his 'talents and disposition' that he had been invited to participate as a member of the National Convention of France in 1792; and Burke's allegations that the invitation from France came from his known hostility to the English Constitution, he had already publicly refuted. His unreservedly political tract—his *Letters to Burke* of 1791—he mentioned in 1794 only in passing: his contribution to the debate on the Revolution, his involvement in the political movement in England arising from it, was, by implication, non-existent.²⁵

This total rejection of political involvement was repeated, although in less specific detail, by Priestley in the *Memoirs* which he completed on his arrival in Northumberland, Pennsylvania, early in 1795. In these, too, he was concerned to emphasize his distance from active politics in the period preceding his emigration. The *Memoirs* scarcely touch the topic of the French Revolution—although Priestley makes in them his much quoted disclaimer of participation in the Birmingham Bastille Day Dinner of July 1791. He admitted, however, his satisfaction in the addresses he received on that occasion, 'as it appeared that the friends of liberty, civil and religious, were of opinion that I was a sufferer in that cause.'²⁶ Of his contributions to that cause, however, which had elicited such an outpouring of sympathy, he makes no mention.

Both Priestley's Preface to the Fast Day Sermon of 1794, and his *Memoirs*, are, I would suggest unsatisfactory—indeed, totally misleading—evidence on which to base any account of his political activities. They have, however, although to some extent questioned, been the basis for the later assumptions by historians of Priestley's role: and to this extent can be held responsible for the marked lack of emphasis on him as a political figure during these years. And at this point it should also be indicated that not only is Priestley's own testimony misleading, but that his correspondence is deficient.²⁷ It is from such correspondence as does remain (as well as his pamphlets, two of which appear to have passed almost entirely unnoticed by historians) that some reconstruction of Priestley's role and beliefs in the 1790s, must be attempted. It is important, however, to note that this, too, constitutes an imperfect record.

Priestley has not been well served by biographers. The very multiplicity of his interests, the vast nature and extent of his output,

have apparently acted as a deterrent upon any attempt to reconstruct his life. In 1831 Rutt completed his monumental tribute to Priestley, in his publication of his collected works. But, while publishing many of Priestley's letters, and with much valuable annotation, Rutt does on occasion make some telling omissions, and uses Priestley's own *Memoirs* to depict his life—rarely commenting upon any discrepancy.²⁸ Since then, it has been Priestley's scientific activities which have inspired literary endeavour.²⁹ In *The eighteenth century commonwealthman*, Caroline Robbins did give Priestley considerable prominence, emphasizing the widespread nature of his contacts, and discussing the ideas of his *Essay on government*. In her subsequent article on Priestley's career in America she also commented that Priestley 'exaggerated his indifference to politics and his lack of involvement in it both in England and America.' Colin Bonwick, however, who has most recently written on Priestley, both as a radical activist during the period of colonial conflict, and also of his years in America, and who is similarly sceptical of Priestley's total disclaimers of political involvement, yet has effectively echoed Priestley's own disingenuous arguments and has also allowed the lack of relevant extant material to sway his views. 'The surviving record confirms the indications of his writings', writes Bonwick: 'his interests lay first in theology, secondly in the natural sciences, and only thirdly in public affairs.' In *English radicals and the American Revolution*, Bonwick does discuss Priestley's position amongst the opponents of the war with America; but in tracing his views to the 1790s he finds it incongruous—in spite of quoting some extreme remarks of Priestley—that his name should be coupled with that of Paine at this period. And he concludes elsewhere that Priestley's contribution to the reform movement of the 1790s was 'trivial'.³⁰

More to the point, perhaps, although certainly not comprehensive in their treatment of Priestley's political activities, are the assessments of two who knew him well, and were intimately acquainted with the extent of his political commitment. 'The political exertions of Dr. Priestley', wrote John Aikin, '... indeed, form no conspicuous part of his literary life. He had displayed his attachment to freedom by his *Essay on the first principles of government*, and by an anonymous pamphlet on the state of public liberty in this country.' He was warmly interested in the cause of America, and from the Revolution in France saw hope for the liberty of Europe: he particularly expected from it', wrote Aikin, 'the eventual downfall of all establishments inimical to the spread of truth. Such expectations he was at no pains to conceal.'³¹ If Aikin recognized Priestley's outspokenness at the time of the French Revolution, Thomas Cooper, in his account of Priestley's political writings, was concerned to

emphasize the immense influence of the earliest of them, the *Essay on government*, published in 1768. It was in this *Essay*, wrote Cooper, that Priestley made a lasting impact as a political theorist. His literary character, he wrote, could be viewed in many lights, but in none of more importance than as a writer on the theory of politics:

a subject in which the development of a simple truth in such a manner as to impress it on the mind of the public, may influence to a boundless extent the happiness of millions.³²

By both Aikin and Cooper, Priestley's contribution to political debate was not to be measured merely in terms of his literary output: and it was seen as outspoken, influential, and of long duration. If they are sparing of detail—perhaps, indeed, in view of the certain knowledge they must have had of the extent of Priestley's political involvement, they could be called as evidence of the degree of the suppression which I would argue was widespread—in neither of them can be found the extraordinary disclaimers of the Fast Day Sermon, nor the wilfully misleading statements of the *Memoirs*. The exact nature of Priestley's political influence is perhaps difficult to assess. His purely political output was undoubtedly, in comparison to his works on theology, science and metaphysics, small; he was not a continuously committed political activist—although, ironically, it was in the period after 1789 that two at least of his most important literary contributions were made, and that, in spite of his assertions to the contrary, he came closest to active political proselytising. Priestley's influence was rather that of an able political theorist and occasional propagandist; a member of informal debating societies—albeit of pronounced radical views; and an instructor of the young. It was not I think without reason, although some might find it extreme, that John Adams, writing to condole with Priestley on his losses in the Birmingham Riots, in the spring of 1792, compared his position with that of Socrates.³³ From Condorcet, too, and the Jacobins in France, came tributes to Priestley for his contributions towards accelerating 'the glorious day of universal liberty:' and of their appreciation of his defence of the Revolution in France. And in the National Assembly, in June 1792, Priestley's friend, the erstwhile aristocrat Français, introducing Priestley's son, William, to the Assembly to receive his French citizenship, spoke of his father in exclusively political terms: 'Men never have devoted themselves with impunity to the *deliverance* of nations, and the happiness of mankind', he declared.³⁴ So too in England, it was Priestley as a political writer whose influence was denounced at the Warwick Assizes in 1792, when extracts from his *Essay on government*, his *Familiar letters* of 1790, and his *Letters to Burke* were read out to the court.³⁵ Priestley's political stature and influence in the period of French revolutionary influence in England

was, I believe, very great. It was based upon principles that could justifiably be described as extreme; and it was exerted, as it had been throughout his career, to a great extent in the encouragement of the young. 'As good citizens, study the welfare of your country', he wrote to the young Dissenters at Hackney in 1791: 'but look beyond *that* to those great *principles* which will ensure the happiness of all Europe and of all mankind. Such principles as these now excite general attention.'³⁶

'Patriot, and saint, and sage', Coleridge apostrophized Priestley on his enforced departure for America in 1794. Scientist of distinction and theologian of unhappy controversy, it was nevertheless as a political exile—a 'veteran son of liberty' who 'as a political writer' had been employed in 'disseminating the most just and rational sentiments of Government' that Priestley sailed to America in 1794.³⁷ It was a role which he did himself implicitly acknowledge, in spite of his excessive disclaimers to the contrary. And as such, his departure commanded an extraordinary attention, and a widespread recognition of its implications for the rapidly declining state of English liberty. 'Several hundreds stood without the doors', wrote Lindsey, to hear Priestley's last two Sermons.³⁸ 'That such a man as he should meet with treatment which forces him to leave the Island and all his endearing Connections in it, at his time of life, is truly a reproach to our country', wrote James Wodrow, 'a stain that will not easily be wiped off.'³⁹

It is the purpose of this paper to examine Priestley's political writings, and such of his correspondence relating to politics which has survived, to demonstrate the true role which he played in the reform movement in England in 1789-1794; and to try to explain the extremes of loyalty and hostility which his political views evoked. In doing so it will be necessary to examine, if only briefly, his earlier political activity. This in turn can perhaps incidentally help to throw light upon the much debated question of the extent to which the radicalism of the preceding decades foreshadowed the movement of the 1790s. And in assessing Priestley's true political position and influence some further understanding can perhaps be gained of the nature of the latter.

Priestley's first notable field of intellectual endeavour was at the Dissenting Academy at Warrington, where he was appointed, in 1761, having been recommended to the trustees for 'his steady attachment to the Principles of Civil and Religious Liberty.'⁴⁰ The Academy at Warrington was at this time in a flourishing state, the relations between teachers and pupils cordial, and it was in his six years there that Priestley

established his reputation as a dedicated and talented instructor of the young. It was at Warrington that he delivered his innovatory series of lectures on history in which, as he later wrote, he particularly considered 'all the forms of government', and weighed 'their advantages and defects'. The influence of Priestley's years at Warrington, the connections derived from such a meeting of sympathetic minds, cannot be overestimated in considering the nature of his influence, and also the character of the Dissenting connection in general. The tutors at Warrington in Priestley's time, and those whom he met on the visits which he subsequently made, constitute, with many of the students, a roll-call of names of many who were to be the most active and influential voices in radical activity in England in the ensuing two decades.⁴¹ Prominent amongst the latter were the Vaughans, Benjamin and William, sons of the wealthy West India merchant Samuel Vaughan, a supporter of Wilkes, of the liberties of Corsica and America, and, in the 1790s, of France. Samuel Vaughan's sons were boarders in Priestley's own house. In 1788, Priestley was to dedicate his *Lectures on history and general policy* to Benjamin Vaughan. At the time of the crisis with the American colonies, they were both intimate friends of Franklin. And in 1792 Priestley was to write approvingly of Vaughan as one who was as well versed as any in England in the affairs of France. It was in William Vaughan's house that Priestley found shelter after his flight from Birmingham in 1791. And it was almost certainly Benjamin Vaughan, shortly before his own precipitate flight from England, who was one of Priestley's few companions on the night before he sailed to America.⁴²

If it was at Warrington that Priestley made, as he wrote, 'some valuable friendships', and established his reputation as a teacher, it was in London, which he first visited in the winter of 1765-1766, that he made his mark as a radical propagandist.⁴³ It was a role which he himself was not concerned to emphasize, and to which little attention has been paid. But it was almost certainly arising from his visit to London, in December 1765, and his introduction to Price, Canton and Franklin,⁴⁴ that Priestley became embroiled in the radical politics of the metropolis, and a member, almost certainly at this early date, of the club of 'honest whigs', the 'friends of science and liberty', whose fortnightly meetings at the London Coffee House formed a meeting place of radical opinion.⁴⁵

The members of the 'fortnightly club' included Price, Franklin, James Burgh, and Andrew Kippis, and, in their collective approach to the politics of the day they represented that tradition described by Caroline Robbins: those who remained critical of the degree of civil and religious liberty established in England in 1688, who were acutely conscious of

the corruption of the representative system, and who were inexorably drawn into the turbulent politics of the 1760s and 1770s. Their political philosophy, with its over-riding concern for the proper expression of the political will of a sovereign people over their elected representatives, and the means whereby this could be achieved, was to be enshrined in Burgh's *Political disquisitions* of 1774-1775; and in Price's *Observations on the nature of civil liberty*, published in 1776, as the British Parliament prepared to go to war to assert its authority over the colonies.⁴⁶ 'Much was said this night against the parliament', wrote Boswell, in one of the few actual records of conversation within the club.⁴⁷

It was amongst this group of metropolitan radicals that Priestley established himself. And that he had on his visit of 1765-1766 impressed one of the most zealous of their number, the republican propagandist Thomas Hollis,⁴⁸ is suggested by the fact that in the spring of 1766 Hollis recorded sending a pamphlet to Priestley, and that, as a later letter of Priestley's makes clear, this was followed by other benefactions: 'Comparing a valuable set of prints', wrote Priestley,

which I received from an unknown hand, some years ago, with another set, which I was assured came from you, has convinced me that you are the person to whom I am indebted for them, and to whom my grateful acknowledgements are due. I am a lover of the arts, and admire the execution of these performances; but I think them much more valuable on account of their subjects. They make the principal ornament of the room in which I commonly sit; they serve to remind me and my friends of those great worthies, and the cause to which they were engaged; and to them you are probably indebted for whatever you may think of value in my late Essay on Government, and the Principles of Liberty.⁴⁹

There is unfortunately no record of the prints which Hollis sent to Priestley, but those which he was at this time distributing almost certainly included Milton, Marvell, and Sidney.⁵⁰ And Priestley's *Essay* did, as Andrew Kippis wrote, place him at once in the ranks of the many 'valuable writers . . . upon liberty' that England had produced. Priestley himself was not afraid in 1790 to describe the *Essay* as comparable to Price's *Observations on civil liberty*, and 'generally considered as the boldest, and the most exceptionable, of any thing on the subject in the English language'. It has, however, been strangely neglected in studies of English radical thought at this period, and its certain influence on subsequent writers, and its implications for Priestley's reputation, overlooked. It was Josiah Tucker who described Priestley as 'the fairest, the most open, and ingenuous of Mr. Locke's disciples, excepting honest, undissembling Rousseau'. But it was for Priestley's departure in one significant respect from the purely Lockean tradition that Bentham

was to declare himself indebted to the *Essay*: and it was for this that his radical friends had urged him to publish his views. They thought, wrote Priestley, that he 'had placed the foundation of some of the most valuable interests of mankind on a broader and firmer basis than Mr. Locke and others who had formerly written on this subject.'⁵¹

Priestley's *Essay on government* is characterized by an unqualified optimism in the perfectibility of human nature, and of the organization of men in society. The progress and capacity for good of the human intellect was, Priestley believed, infinite, and government being the great instrument whereby the progress of the human species towards a state of perfectibility—'paradisaical, beyond what our imaginations can now conceive', wrote Priestley—'that form of government will have a just claim to our approbation which favours this progress, and that must be condemned in which it is retarded'.⁵² If the role of government was all-important, the 'great standard' by which everything relating to political liberty 'must finally be determined' was, he wrote, 'the good and happiness of the members, that is the majority of the members of any state'. He was surprised, he said, that this principle, although tacitly accepted, had not been made more use of.⁵³ And he proceeded to use it as the yardstick by which all existing political institutions must be judged. 'All governments whatever have been, in some measure', he wrote,

compulsory, tyrannical, and oppressive in their origin And since every man retains, and can never be deprived of his natural right (founded on a regard to the general good) of relieving himself from all oppression, that is, from every thing that has been imposed upon him without his own consent; this must be the only true and proper foundation of all the governments subsisting in the world, and that to which the people who compose them have an unalienable right to bring them back.⁵⁴

Hereditary titles, hereditary honours and privileges, accumulated wealth, had no justification other than in fulfilling this function; kings in this sense were no more than servants of a sovereign people, who were bound together in society not by contract, but by a bond of its utility in serving their interests. This in turn rested on a recognition of their essential equality. 'The sum of what hath been advanced upon this head', wrote Priestley,

is a maxim, than which nothing is more true, that *every government, in its original principles, and antecedent to its present form, is an equal republic*; and, consequently, that every man, when he comes to be sensible of his natural rights, and to feel his own importance, will consider himself as fully equal to any other person whatever.⁵⁵

In the *Essay on government*, written when he was thirty-five, Priestley had, as he admitted in the Preface, espoused with 'warmth' the cause of liberty.⁵⁶ It exercised an undoubted influence as a work of political theory—it was to Priestley, wrote Thomas Cooper, that his generation were indebted for 'the first plain, popular, brief and unanswerable book on the principles of civil government'; he had, wrote Tucker, 'laid a foundation for such Disturbances and Dissensions . . . as ages to come will not be able to settle or compose'.⁵⁷ But the *Essay on government* should also be seen as a product of the particular circumstances in which it was written. For Priestley published his *Essay* in the year of mounting concern and civil unrest in England at what were perceived to be the repressive policies of the ministry in coming to terms with the challenges posed to parliamentary authority both at home and abroad, and in this context its undeniable extremism in reiterating the Lockean doctrine of resistance becomes the more significant. 'Whenever the House of Commons shall be so abandonedly corrupt', wrote Priestley in one of several passages which J.C.D. Clark has rightly described as 'little short of calls for rebellion',⁵⁸

as to join with the court in abolishing any of the *essential forms of the Constitution*, or effectually defeating the great purposes of it, let every *Englishman*, before it be too late, re-peruse the history of his country, and do what *Englishmen* are renowned for having formerly done in the same circumstances.⁵⁹

With the appearance of the *Essay on government*, with its impassioned defence of the right of an oppressed people to rebel; and its justification, too, of mob violence as a lesser evil than rebellion, Priestley was fully established, as he described himself to Wilkes, on presenting him with a copy of the *Essay*, as a 'member of a same community and a lover of liberty', in the radical circles of London.⁶⁰ 'Do not imagine', Priestley wrote to Franklin, sending him copies of the *Essay* for Price and Kippis, '. . . that I am deserting philosophy'.⁶¹ But, early in 1769, in a letter which reveals his indebtedness already in matters political as well as scientific to the older man, he wished Franklin success in his 'laudable endeavours in the cause of *science, truth, justice, peace*, and, which comprehends them all, and everything valuable in human life, *LIBERTY*'.⁶² And from a little quoted letter to Lucy Aikin, which he wrote in the summer of 1769, the extent of his involvement with those who were so prominent in that year in organizing further and widespread campaigns of protest against the ministry, as the Commons finally moved towards its declaration that Wilkes' repeated election by the electors of Middlesex was invalid, can be further seen. It was on behalf of Pascal Paoli and 'the brave *Corsicans*', that Priestley wrote to Lucy Aikin, asking her to send a copy

of her poem, *Corsica*, to Mr. Boswell, 'with permission to publish it for the benefit of those noble islanders'. And, he added, if she sent a copy to him, he would 'take care to introduce it to the notice of Mr. Boswell by means of Mr. Vaughan or Mrs. Macauley, or some other of the friends of liberty and Corsica in London'. He himself, he continued, was 'about to make a bolder push than ever for the pillory, the *King's Bench Prison*, or something worse. Tell Mr. Aikin', he concluded, 'he may hug himself that I have no connection with the Academy.'⁶³

The 'push for the King's Bench prison', to which all fashionable London radicals were flocking in 1769 to visit Wilkes in his celebrated and convivial confinement,⁶⁴ was Priestley's *Present state of liberty in Great Britain and her Colonies*, one of those 'anonymous pieces in favour of civil liberty', to which Priestley referred in his *Memoirs*, and which he appears originally to have intended to dedicate to Franklin. It was an honour which the latter apparently declined.⁶⁵ Priestley's *Present state of liberty* did indeed give rein once more to the 'free Sentiments' which Franklin too had detected in the *Essay on government*.⁶⁶ In it Priestley reiterated the philosophy of the *Essay*, and pointed its conclusion towards the alarming crisis produced by the continuing arbitrary proceedings of the ministry. As a campaign of petitions, remonstrances and instructions to Members of Parliament was orchestrated by the supporters of Wilkes—the Bill of Rights Society, founded in February 1769—Priestley added his voice to their more extreme demands. 'The great natural rights and liberties of mankind', he wrote,

are best secured when the supreme magistracy is in the hands of persons chosen by the people, and when they are entrusted with that power for a limited time.⁶⁷

A people oppressed, he said, must issue 'strong remonstrances to those governors who have betrayed their trust'. If these were ignored, then they 'should strip them of their power, and confer it where they have reason to hope it will be less abused.'⁶⁸ He listed, in the language of the Society of the Bill of Rights, the gross infringements upon the liberty of the subject under the 'illegal and arbitrary proceedings' of the present administration; and he urged, as did the Society, liberal support for 'all that suffer in the common cause of liberty'. The alarm, he wrote, should be spread 'through the whole kingdom'. A programme of parliamentary reform, including shorter parliaments and the abolition of small boroughs, should be included in instructions to members of parliament.⁶⁹ Of the even more arbitrary proceedings of the ministry in America, the constitutional position, he admitted, was complex: but 'oppression, beyond a certain degree, will make even a wise man mad'.⁷⁰

The *Present state of liberty in Great Britain* was, as Priestley later recorded, the means of establishing his friendship with Sir George Savile and the good opinion of the Marquis of Rockingham, and many other persons then in opposition. 'Cheap editions were soon printed off . . . and they were distributed in great number through the kingdom.' With its publication, however, Priestley ceased from open political comment for five years. Writing to Lindsey, to whom he had also been introduced in that year, he commented that he would 'not be at all surprised if some restrictions were laid on the liberty of the press.' He was not, he said, 'sorry that I have spoken my mind so freely before that time'. And he added, 'I think I shall turn to *philosophy* and *scripture-criticism*'.⁷¹ It was in his years in Leeds that Priestley did turn increasingly towards his scientific pursuits. His friendship with Franklin flourished at this time, however; his mutual interest with Lindsey in promoting measures of religious liberty was furthered also by the visits he now regularly made to London. And it was in writing to the latter in 1771, as the constitutional issues raised by Wilkes continued to lead to much dissension in England, that he revealed that his extremism of 1768-1769 had far from abated. 'To me', he wrote,

everything looks like the approach of that dismal catastrophe described, I may say predicted, by Dr. Hartley . . . and I shall be looking for the downfall of Church and State together. I am really expecting some very calamitous, but finally glorious, events. Happy they who will be found watching in the way of their duty!⁷²

It is this letter of Priestley's which Dr. Clark cites in his interesting discussion of his position. 'The radical chiliarism normally associated only with the French Revolution', he writes, 'and its impact in England had a quite different chronological origin: it can be traced to certain developments in English radical theology in the mid and late 1760s.'⁷³ Rather, I would suggest, Priestley's quasi-revolutionary outlook, while undeniably applicable to his attitude towards the church establishment, was nevertheless grounded in what must be described as his political beliefs: and in this, almost certainly, he was not unrepresentative of the circle in which he was so influential a figure. In his treatment too of the 'quasi-republican' tradition in England, and of its role as an instrument of revolution in America, but its more problematic contribution to English political development thereafter, J.G.A. Pocock has written that there are some who would argue that it died out or disappeared altogether.⁷⁴ But again I would suggest, the views of what Burke in 1770 was describing as 'the republican faction'—'a rotten subdivision of a Faction amongst ourselves . . . I mean the Bill of rights people', he added—contained already the germs of the debate which was to divide the political world at the time of the French Revolution:

and that in this Priestley was a crucial figure. It was to Mrs. Macaulay's strictures on his *Thoughts on the causes of the present discontents* that Burke was referring when he wrote, in the summer of 1770, that,

Nothing can be done by any alterations in forms. Indeed all that wise men ever aim at is to keep things from coming to the worst. Those who expect perfect reformations, either deceive or are deceived miserably.⁷⁵

But Priestley's contribution to these ideas has already been noticed. He too had strongly disapproved of Burke's pamphlet. And he was certainly amongst those whom James Wodrow also had in mind when he, too, commenting upon Mrs. Macaulay's *History*, wrote, in 1778:

I see she and you & Dr. Price & all the rest of you are fierce Republicans & have ideal notions of the perfection of Government which never can nor will be realised, at least till the millennium.⁷⁶

Priestley's third political pamphlet of this early part of his career, his *Address to Protestant Dissenters*, appeared in 1774, as open conflict with the colonies appeared increasingly inevitable. It was at the 'earnest and joint request' of Franklin and Fothergill that Priestley wrote this pamphlet—Franklin even, as Priestley later recorded, correcting the proofs for the press. Priestley by 1774 was on intimate terms with Franklin, a close political and scientific confidant: 'I was seldom many days without seeing him', he later wrote: 'and being members of the same club, we constantly returned together.' In 1774, at the celebrated hearing in the Cockpit, it was to Priestley—standing in the Privy Council Chamber in a prominent position with Burke—that Franklin turned after his humiliation by Wedderburn, taking me 'by the hand in a manner that indicated some feeling', as Priestley later wrote; and it was to Priestley that Franklin subsequently confided his feelings. In 1775, on Franklin's last day in England, it was with Priestley that he spent his time in secret, 'looking over a number of American newspapers . . . directing me', wrote Priestley, 'what to extract from them for the English ones'. It was as a respected and active representative of all those 'staunch friends to America, many of them the most learned and respectable characters in the kingdom', that Priestley was consulted too by the young American patriot Josiah Quincy junior, on his visit to England in the winter of 1774-1775. And it was as such that he wrote his *Address*, timed, as was the first volume of Burgh's *Political disquisitions*, to coincide with the general election of that year.⁷⁷

Priestley wrote his *Address*, convinced, with many others of his circle, that 'in the very critical state of things in this country', an alarming crisis was approaching for the liberties of England. The threat to the liberties of America he believed, as did Burgh and Mrs. Macaulay, constituted a

threat also to the liberties of England. He was not, he wrote, urging 'a declaration of war, or that I wish you to take arms in defence of your liberties, as your brethren in America will probably be compelled to do'. He urged rather the use of such constitutional influence as they could exert in the forthcoming elections. But he was concerned to emphasize the dangers inherent in the corrupt state of the English constitution; and, he said, there was 'the more reason why we, in *England*, should watch with care and jealousy over the remains of our civil liberty, because the state of the rest of *Europe* is so extremely critical and alarming in this respect'. And it was in the course of this argument that Priestley was led into a declaration of his political beliefs which can only be described as one of unqualified republicanism. The hope of mankind, he wrote, was for a gradual cure for 'the horrible evil' of 'forms of unequal government':

Kings being always worse educated than other men, the race of them may be expected to degenerate, till they be little better than idiots, as is the case already with several of them, needless to be named, and it is said will be the case with others, when the present reigning princes shall be no more: while those that are not the objects of *contempt*, will be the objects of *hatred* and *execration*.

'In this situation', he continued, 'the temptation of men to assert their natural rights, and seize the invaluable blessings of freedom, will be very great.' Enlightened as the world now was 'with respect to the theory of government',

[men] will no more suffer themselves to be transferred, like the live stock of a farm, from one worn-out royal line to another, but establish every where forms of free and equal government; by which, at infinitely less expense than they are now at to be *oppressed* and *abused*, every man may be secured in the enjoyment of as much of his natural rights as is consistent with the good of the whole community.

'The present disgraceful subjection of the *many* to the *few*' would indeed then, he wrote, appear extraordinary.⁷⁸

It is hard indeed on reading this passage to believe the complete veracity of Priestley's assertion that in politics he was a trinitarian, and that in this he differed from Dr. Franklin, 'who was a favourer of a *republican* government.'⁷⁹ Priestley's republicanism he might perhaps rightly protest was not for domestic consumption: but it formed the essential base of his political thinking. It rested upon a fundamental optimism in the capacity of man for progress and improvement. The force of his convictions on this head, and the extremes of enthusiasm into which they were to lead him, should never be underestimated. His

influence in the developing debate on the proper expression of political sovereignty, and the allowable extent of individual political rights, which was from 1774 onwards to develop on both sides of the Atlantic, should also not be overlooked. 'Whoever reads parts of Priestley's *Essay on Government with Common Sense* at his side', one historian has written, 'will be inclined to assume that Paine wrote *Common Sense* with Priestley's pamphlet on his desk.' The same could certainly be said of Priestley's *Address* of 1774.⁸⁰

Priestley's *Address* was indeed, as he later recorded, 'circulated with more assiduity, and was thought to have had more effect than any thing that was addressed to the public at the time'.⁸¹ With its publication, however, Priestley ceased from active political debate for many years. In 1775, he bade his farewell to Franklin. In 1776, he sent him a copy of Price's 'most excellent pamphlet . . . which, if anything can, will, I hope, make some impression upon this infatuated nation.' He spoke of his despondency, however: 'every thing breathes *rancour* and *desperation*'; and he urged Franklin, since 'it is most probable that you will be driven to the necessity of governing yourselves . . . to guard against the rocks that we have fatally split upon, and make some better provision for securing your natural rights against the incroachment of power, in whomsoever placed.' The club of 'Honest Whigs', he assured Franklin, in reply to the latter's remembrance of them, had abated none of their 'zeal in the good cause.'⁸² In 1777 Priestley was indeed remembered by another American, Arthur Lee, as one of those who remained 'unterrified and uneduc'd from the cause of truth and Liberty'.⁸³ In his post as librarian to Shelburne, however (which he had accepted, not without considerable hesitation, in 1773) Priestley was in an ambiguous if potentially very influential position. It was because of his connection with Shelburne, he later said, that he remained silent upon political issues.⁸⁴ That they were a matter of frequent discussion is clear.⁸⁵ In the autumn of 1775 Priestley attempted to act as an intermediary between Savile and Shelburne.⁸⁶ In 1778, however, he wrote, on behalf of his friends—'several persons, friends of liberty and of their country'—a letter which seems to indicate a distancing of his position from that of his patron: 'A vigorous inquiry into the conduct of the present ministry, and the exemplary punishment of the most guilty of them', were, they hoped, objects which Shelburne would not relinquish. But, he added, 'I promise your Lordship that I shall not often trouble you with my political opinions.'⁸⁷ Priestley's determination to retain his independence in matters of politics was, Lindsey was to testify, one of the causes for the dissatisfaction which led to his departure from Bowood in 1780.⁸⁸

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To Franklin Priestley had written in 1777: 'you are never long out of my thoughts'. He had, he wrote, felt 'deeply for what your poor country has suffered, and now suffers', and had 'passed many an anxious and melancholy hour since this unnatural war began'.⁸⁹ In 1779 he co-operated with Benjamin Vaughan in the publication of Franklin's works.⁹⁰ Although, unlike many of his friends—Price, Savile, and Jebb—Priestley played no part in the plethora of radical activity which took place as the fortunes of war reached a state of great crisis, his interest in politics did not diminish. When, in 1788, he published his

Lectures on history and general policy, dedicated to Vaughan, he suggested that they contained the political principles which he had taught at Warrington and that these were the same as those now taught in the newly founded academy at Hackney and 'as I am informed, in the colleges in North America'. They were, he maintained, favourable to liberty but unfavourable to republicanism.⁹¹ It is hard, however, as so often with Priestley, to take this statement at its face value. In his chapter 'on the advantages of democracy', his praise of republican government is unqualified: 'Virtue and public spirit are the necessary supports of all republican governments', he wrote. And, while cautioning against precipitate change, the principles of the *Essay* of 1768 were nevertheless re-stated:

There can be no doubt . . . that every nation has a right to make whatever changes they please in the constitution of their government, and therefore to displace, and even to punish any governors, who are only their *servants*, for their abuses of power, in whatever manner they may have been appointed. There cannot be a greater absurdity than to suppose that the happiness of a whole nation should be sacrificed to that of any individuals.

And his accord with the more extreme reformers of 1779-1780, with the radical principles of the Society for Constitutional Information and the writings of Cartwright and Jebb, is certainly suggested by his statement that,

It may appear at first sight, to be of little consequence whether persons in the common rank of life enjoy any share of political liberty or not. But without this there cannot be that persuasion of security and independence, which alone can encourage a man to make great exertions.⁹²

'In politics', wrote Price of Priestley in 1786, 'he and I are perfectly at one.'⁹³ And from Franklin in 1782 came a continuing expression of respect for Priestley, and 'all the honest Souls that meet at the London Coffee—House. I only wonder how it happened', he wrote, 'that they and my other Friends in England came to be such good Creatures in the midst of so perverse a Generation.'⁹⁴

From 1768, with the publication of his *Essay on government*, to the magisterial *Lectures on history and general policy* some twenty years later, Priestley had established himself as a seminal influence in the political thinking of his time. Intermittently active, he was nevertheless a skilled propagandist, and his close association and sympathy with others more continuously committed than he is not in doubt. With the outbreak of revolution in France, Priestley was to become more prominent even than in the years preceding the war with America, as a spokesman for all those who had been pressing for reforms they

believed urgently necessary in England. It was the extremes into which he was led at this later period, that he was subsequently, in England at least, most concerned to deny.

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11. J. Priestley, *The present state of Europe compared with ancient prophecies; a sermon preached at the Gravel-Pit Meeting, Hackney, February 28, 1794...with a preface*, Works, XV, 519-532; J. Lindsay ed., *Autobiography of Joseph Priestley* (Bath, 1970), 129-133; Warrington Public Libraries (W.P.L.), MS2 (Priestley MSS.), Priestley to Wilkinson, 8 Sept., 4 Oct., 1790, 19 March, 1793; Birmingham Reference Library (B.R.L.), J. Priestley Jr. to James Watt Jr., 18 Feb., 16 March 1793; H.C. Bolton, *Scientific correspondence of Joseph Priestley* (New York, 1892, repr. 1969), 116-117, Priestley to Thomas Wedgwood, 18 Oct. 1791; B.L. Add. MSS., 44,992, Priestley to William Russell, 14 Sept. 1791.
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14. B.R.L., T. Cooper to J. Watt Jr., 2 Aug. 1793; cf., *ibid.*, J. Priestley Jr. to Watt Jr., 14 April, 24 Aug. 1793.
15. W.P.L., MS2, Priestley to Wilkinson, 20 June 1793: 'Emigration is very well for young persons but does not so well suit persons in years whose habits are more confirmed'; cf. however, Priestley, Works, I, pt.2, 202, Priestley to Russell, 17 June 1793; *Proc. Mass. Hist. Soc.*, 2nd. ser., XLIII (Boston, 1910), 639-640, Priestley to Joseph Willard, 10 April 1793; and R.E. Schofield ed., *A scientific autobiography of Joseph Priestley, 1733-1804* (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1966), 265, Priestley to W. Withering, 15 April 1793.
16. Priestley, Works, I, pt.2, 206, Priestley to Lindsey, 5 Aug. 1793; *ibid.*, 208, Priestley to J. Gough, 25 Aug. 1793; W.P.L., MS2, Priestley to Wilkinson, 2 Dec. 1793, 25 Jan. 1794. For Priestley's visit to Thomas Muir and Thomas Fyshe Palmer, with Lindsey and William Russell, in Newgate, only to find 'that those two gentlemen had been conveyed away, without any previous notice, at 3 of the clock the previous morning', cf. Dr. Williams's Library (D.W.L.), MS. 24,157, Wodrow—Kenrick Correspondence, S. Kenrick to J. Wodrow, 22 March 1794.
17. Priestley, Works, XV, 530-531.
18. *Cambridge Intelligencer*, 15 March 1794.
19. D.W.L, MS. 24,157, S. Kenrick to J. Wodrow, 28 June 1794; C.R.O., Beddoes-Giddy Correspondence, D.G. 42/30, T. Beddoes to D. Giddy, 14 March 1795: 'I do not see the great danger of writing now, if it be compared with the danger that subsisted 18 months ago.' There are no extant letters in this correspondence for 1794.
20. J.W. Robberds, *A memoir of the life and writings of William Taylor* (London, 1843), I, 75-76; cf. C.L. Brightwell ed., *Memorials of the life of Amelia Opie*, 2nd. ed. (Norwich, 1854) 40, for her father's destruction of her letters describing the treason trials of November 1794.
21. Add. MSS., 27,812; 27,814. The Minute Book was, wrote Place, subsequently copied out to form 'a connected narrative from which it could never be supposed that it was the copy of a mutilated book.' Cf. M. Thale ed., *Selections from the papers of the London Corresponding Society 1792-1799* (Cambridge, 1983), 11, fn.19.
22. E. Robinson, 'An English Jacobin, James Watt Junior, 1769-1848', *Cambridge Historical Journal*, XI (1953-1955), 355; M. Elliott, *Partners in Revolution. The United Irishmen and France* (New Haven and London, 1982), 63-64, 67-68; A. Goodwin, *The friends of liberty: the English democratic movement in the age of the French Revolution* (London, 1979), 322-324. For Vaughan cf. fn. 42 below; Schofield

- ed., *Scientific autobiography*, 255-266, Priestley to de la Rochefoucauld, 28 April 1791; and W.P.L., MS2, Priestley to B. Vaughan, 30 July 1794.
23. John Rylands Library (J.R.L.), The autograph letters of Theophilus Lindsey, Lindsey to W. Tayleur, 17 May 1794.
24. *State Trials*, XXV, 1237.
25. Priestley, Works, XV 524 ff.
26. Lindsay ed., *Autobiography of Priestley*, 128-133; Priestley completed the earlier part of his memoirs in 1787 (*ibid.* 127); for their comparative candour, cf. his letters to Price, 27 Jan., 16 Feb. 1791, Works, I, 99, 100, 102.
27. Almost all of the correspondence to Priestley was destroyed or seized in July 1791, and Priestley's son, Joseph, disposed of the remainder on his father's death in 1804, Schofield ed., *Scientific autobiography*, ix. Cf. Priestley, *An appeal to the public on the subject of the late riots in Birmingham* (1792), Works, XIX, 380 fn., for the 'manuscript papers' which Priestley lost in the riots (although he erroneously listed his 'Memoirs of my Own Life'). He did, however, lose his 'Diaries from the year 1752, containing the particulars of almost every day'; and 'a great number of Letters from my friends and learned foreigners'. To this must be added the omissions in his own correspondence to his friends: in the Priestley-Lindsey Correspondence (D.W.L.) there are no letters extant for 1773-1774; nor for 1776-1785. The Priestley—Wilkinson Correspondence (W.P.L.) lacks any letters for 1792. For Mrs. Priestley's destruction of her correspondence in 1791, see, Works, I, pt.2, 365-367, Mrs. Priestley to Mrs. Barbauld, 26 August 1791.
28. For two notable omissions, see D.W.L. MSS 12.12, Priestley to Lindsey, 18 and 24 Feb. 1791; and for Rutt's cavalier approach to editing, see Schofield ed., *Scientific autobiography*, viii.
29. F.W. Gibbs, *Joseph Priestley, adventurer in science and champion of truth* (London, 1965); Schofield ed., *Scientific autobiography*; H.C. Bolton, *Scientific correspondence of Joseph Priestley* (New York, 1892, repr. 1969).
30. C. Robbins, *The eighteenth century commonwealthman* (Cambridge, Mass., 1959), 347-353, and, 'Honest heretic: Joseph Priestley in America, 1794-1804', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 106, I (1962), 61; C. Bonwick, *English radicals and the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, 1977), 216-217, 235-236, 245, and, 'Joseph Priestley, emigrant and Jeffersonian', *Enlightenment and Dissent*, 2 (1983), 3.
31. L. Aikin, *Memoir of John Aikin M.D.*, 2 vols. (London, 1823), I, 384.
32. *Memoirs of Dr. Joseph Priestley, to the year 1795, written by himself, by his son, Joseph Priestley: and observations on his writings by Thomas Cooper...and the Rev. William Christie*, 2 vols., (London, 1806-1807), I, 337.
33. Mass. Hist. Soc., Reel 115, Adams Papers, Adams to Priestley, 19 Feb. 1792; cf. Priestley, Works, I, pt.2, 152, the *Address of the Derby Philosophical Society*.
34. Priestley, Works, I, pt.2, 127-129, 130-132; *ibid.*, XXI, 594-595; cf. Schofield, *Scientific autobiography*, 257-259.
35. *Extracts from Dr. Priestley's works, read in Court at the last Warwick Assizes* (Birmingham, 1792). Cf. the depiction of Priestley in the frontispiece of *A small whole-length of Dr. Priestley* (1792): 'The Reverend Philosopher' is holding two firebrands: one, his 'Essay on Government', the other 'Political Sermon'. Under his feet is 'Bible explained Away'.
36. Priestley, Works, I, pt.2, 158-159; cf. *Lectures on history and general policy*, Works, XXIV, pref., *The proper objects of education* (1791), Works, XV, 422, 434, and *Heads of Lectures on a course of experimental philosophy* (1794), Works, XXIV, 385-391.

37. Coleridge, 'Religious musings', in E.H. Coleridge ed., *The complete poetical works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (Oxford, 1912), I, 123; cf. Priestley, *Works*, I, pt. 2, 233, also, 143, 216, 310; and Schofield ed., *Scientific autobiography*, 257-259.
38. J.R.L. Autograph letters of Lindsey, Lindsey to W. Tayleur, n.d. but endorsed £30 March 1794'.
39. D.W.L. MS.24,157, Wodrow to Kenrick, 16-21 June 1794.
40. Schofield ed., *Scientific autobiography*, 7.
41. Lindsay ed. *Autobiography of Priestley*, 87-92; Aikin, *Memoir of Aikin*, 9-10, 368-372; Priestley, *Familiar letters, addressed to the inhabitants of Birmingham* (1790), *Works*, XIX, 151; *Monthly Repository*, IX (1814), 201-205, 263-268, 385-390, 525-530, 594-599; H. Bright, 'A historical sketch of Warrington Academy', *Trans. of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* (1858); H. McLachlan, *Warrington Academy, its history and influence* (Manchester, 1943), 28-31, and *passim*.
42. Lindsay ed., *Autobiography of Priestley*, 91, 130; Bright, 'Historical sketch of Warrington Academy', 23-24; F. Brady and F.A. Pottle, *Boswell in search of a wife, 1766-1769* (New Haven, Connecticut, 1957), 307-308; 'Quincy's London journal', *Proc. Mass Hist. Soc.*, 50 (1917), 443, 445, 450; Priestley, *Lectures on history and general policy* (1788), dedication; W.P.L., MS2, Priestley to Wilkinson, 4, 10 October 1791; T. Belsham, *Memoirs of the late Rev. Theophilus Lindsey* (London, 1812), 376, Priestley to Lindsey, 8 April 1794; Robbins, *The eighteenth century commonwealthman*, 347; W. Chaloner, 'Dr. Joseph Priestley, John Wilkinson and the French Revolution, 1789-1802', *Trans. Royal Historical Society*, (1957), 5th ser., 8 (1958), 27.
43. Lindsay ed., *Autobiography of Priestley*, 91.
44. Schofield ed., *Scientific autobiography*, 12ff.
45. V.W. Crane, 'The Club of Honest Whigs, friends of science and liberty', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., 23 (1966), 210-233; Priestley, *Works*, XXV, 393.
46. C. Robbins, *The eighteenth century commonwealthman*; C. Bonwick, *English radicals and the American Revolution*, 3-26; J. Sainsbury, *Disaffected patriots, London supporters of revolutionary America* (Gloucester, 1987), 7ff.
47. Brady and Pottle, *Boswell in search of wife*, 318.
48. C. Robbins, 'The strenuous Whig, Thomas Hollis of Lincoln's Inn', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 7 (1950), 406-453.
49. Hollis MS. Diary, IV, 488, May 1766; Priestley, *Works*, I, 94-95, Priestley to Hollis, 1 Nov. 1768; and for Hollis' receipt of this, MS. Diary, V, 721. I am indebted to Dr. Stephen Dunn of the Institute of Early American History and Culture for references to Hollis' Diary.
50. F. Blackburne, *Memoirs of Thomas Hollis*, 2 vols. (London, 1780), I, 75ff.
51. *Monthly Review*, Dec. 1768, 468-469; Priestley, *Familiar letters*, *Works*, XIX, 151; J.G.A. Pocock, 'Radical criticism of the Whig order', in M. and J. Jacob, *The origins of Anglo-American radicalism* (London, 1984), 45ff.; J. Tucker, *A treatise concerning civil government* (London, 1781), pt.1, 13-17, 22-23; J. Bowring ed., *The works of Jeremy Bentham*, 11 vols. (Edinburgh, 1843), X, 46; Priestley, *Essay on the first principles of government* (1768), *Works*, XXII, 3; cf. however, Robbins, *Eighteenth century commonwealthman*, 350-353; J.G.A. Pocock, 'Josiah Tucker on Burke, Locke and Price', in *Virtue, commerce and history: essays on political thought and history, chiefly in the eighteenth century* (Cambridge, 1985), 166-168.
52. Priestley, *Essay on government*, *Works*, XXII, 8-10.
53. *Ibid.*, XXII, 13.
54. *Ibid.*, 12.
55. *Ibid.*, 26.

56. *Ibid.*, 6-7.
57. Priestley, *Memoirs*, I, 354-355; Tucker, *Treatise concerning civil government*, 22; cf. Priestley, *Works*, I, pt.1, 256, Priestley to Rev. W. Graham, n.d. (1774), 'A person is translating my Essay on Government; but he must print it in Holland, and get it into France clandestinely'; and cf. fn. 80 below.
58. J.C.D. Clark, *English society, 1688-1832* (Cambridge, 1985), 334.
59. Priestley, *Essay on government*, *Works*, XXII, 37; cf. *ibid.*, 19-21, 28-29.
60. Add. MSS. 30877, fo.66, Priestley to Wilkes, n.d.
61. W.B. Willcox ed., *The papers of Benjamin Franklin* (New Haven, Connecticut, 1972), XV, 84-85, and note, Priestley to Franklin, 20 March 1768: the *Essay* was advertised in the *London Chronicle* on 7-9 April.
62. *Ibid.*, XVI, 41-42, Priestley to Franklin, 14 Feb. 1769; cf. *ibid.*, XV, 273-274, same to same, 28 Nov. 1768; cf. also, Bonwick, *English radicals and the American Revolution*, 30-31.
63. Priestley to Lucy Aikin, 13 June 1769, cit. T.E. Thorpe, *Joseph Priestley* (London, 1906), 70-71. For Paoli, cf. M. McClaren, *Corsica, Boswell, Johnson, Paoli and Freedom* (1966), and Brady and Pottle, *Boswell in search of a wife*.
64. R.H. Lee, *Life of Arthur Lee*, 2 vols. (Boston, Mass., 1829), I, 99; H. Bleackley, *Life of John Wilkes* (London, 1917), 233-248; G. Rudé, *Wilkes and Liberty: a social study of 1763-1774* (London, 1962), 57.
65. Willcox ed., *Papers of Franklin*, XVI, 56, Priestley to Franklin, 24 Feb. 1769: 'I sincerely ask your pardon for the trouble I gave you with my last', Priestley wrote. 'The dedication was written, and sent to you, before I had taken time to reflect upon it. I shall confine myself to the inscription I first proposed, and shall be obliged to you if you will throw the dedication into the fire without showing it to any person whatever.' The editors are mystified by this, but Priestley's *Present state of liberty* was published in 1769; it was connected with Franklin; and it did contain an inscription: 'Heu miseri cives, non Hostem, inimicaque castra—Vestras Spes uritis.'
66. *Ibid.*, XVI, 205, Franklin to Dubourg, 22 Sept. 1769. Franklin was sending a copy of the *Essay*.
67. Priestley, *The present state of liberty in Great Britain and her colonies* (1769), *Works*, XXII, 385.
68. *Ibid.*, 386.
69. *Ibid.*, 389-392. For the Society of Supporters of the Bill of Rights, see I.R. Christie, *Wilkes, Wyvill and reform; the parliamentary reform movement in British politics* (London, 1962), 33ff., and Rudé, *Wilkes and liberty*, 61ff.
70. Priestley, *Present state of liberty*, *Works*, XXII, 393-398.
71. Priestley, *Works*, I, pt.1, 105, Priestley to Lindsey, 18 Dec. 1769; *ibid.*, XV, 524, and XXV, 396.
72. *Ibid.*, I, pt.1, 146, Priestley to Lindsey, 23 Aug. 1771.
73. Clark, *English society*, 335.
74. Pocock, 'Radical criticism of the Whig order', 45, and 45ff., for his discussion; see also, Robbins, *Eighteenth century commonwealthman*, 357; and Bonwick, *English radicals and the American Revolution*, 216-217; 235-236.
75. *The correspondence of Edmund Burke*, vol.II, ed. L.S. Sutherland (Cambridge: Chicago, 1960), 140 and fn., 150; cf. I.R. Christie, *Stress and stability in late eighteenth-century Britain. Reflections on the British avoidance of revolution* (Oxford, 1984), 167-170.
76. D.W.L. MS. 24,157, Wodrow to Kenrick, 21 Sept. 1778; cf. Priestley, *Works*, XXV, 395.
77. Lindsay ed., *Autobiography of Priestley*, 94, 116-117; *Monthly Magazine*, XV, 1, 2

- Feb. 1803; Priestley, *Works*, XXV, 394, 396; 'Quincy's London journal', 451, 456, 465-468; cf. H. McLachlan, *The letters of Theophilus Lindsey* (Manchester, 1920), Lindsey to Turner, 17 Jan. 1775: 'I dined yesterday in company with Drs. Price, Priestley, Franklin and Mr. Quincy. We began and ended with the Americans'; and Bonwick, *English radicals and the American Revolution*, 78.
78. Priestley, *An address to Protestant Dissenters of all denominations, on the approaching election of Members of Parliament* (1774), *Works*, XXII, 487., 489-491.
 79. Priestley, *Familiar letters*, *Works*, XIX, 214; cf. *Lectures on history and general policy* (1788), *ibid*, XXIV, 228, 239, 267.
 80. F. Gilbert, 'The English background of American isolationism in the eighteenth century', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 1 (April 1944), 156-158; cf. E. Foner, *Thomas Paine and Revolutionary America* (New York, 1976), 9, 274 fn.17; and G.H. Guttridge, *English Whiggism and the American Revolution* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1963), 86-89.
 81. Priestley, *Works*, XXV, 396; also, XV, 524.
 82. W.B. Willcox ed., *Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol.22, 347-350, Priestley to Franklin, 13 Feb. 1776; also, Schofield ed., *Scientific autobiography*, 154-155, Priestley to Rotherham, 9 Feb. 1776: 'He sent me a copy last night, and I sat up till after one o'clock to read it.'
 83. Arthur Lee to Price, 20 April 1777, *Proc. Mass. Hist. Soc.*, (1903), 310.
 84. Priestley, *Works*, XV, 524-525.
 85. 'Quincy's London Journal', 465-466.
 86. *H.M.C. Report 15*, App. pt. V, 149; cf. John Norris, *Shelburne and reform* (London, 1963), 100; C.R. Ritcheson, *British politics and the American Revolution* (Norman, Oklahoma, 1954), 224-225.
 87. Bowood MSS., Priestley to Shelburne, 20 March 1778; cf. Bonwick, *English radicals and the American Revolution*, 107-108; Lindsay ed., *Autobiography of Priestley*, 115.
 88. J.R.L., Autograph letters of Lindsey, Lindsey to W. Tayleur, 10 June 1780; cf., Bolton, *Scientific correspondence of Priestley*, 19-21, Priestley to Benjamin Vaughan, 26 March 1780.
 89. Willcox ed., *Papers of Franklin*, XXV, 281, Priestley to Franklin, 13 Dec. 1777; cf. Schofield ed., *Scientific autobiography*, 148-149, Priestley to Andrew Oliver, 12 Feb. 1775.
 90. B. Vaughan ed., *Political, miscellaneous, and philosophical pieces...written by Benjamin Franklin* (London, 1779), 365-366, 550-554; Priestley, *Works*, XXV, 392-393.
 91. Priestley, *Familiar letters* (1790), *Works*, XIX, 214.
 92. Priestley, *Lectures on history and general policy* (1788), *Works*, XXIV, 228, 239, 267.
 93. Price to Joseph Willard, 24 July 1786, *Proc. Mass. Hist. Soc.* (Boston, 1910), XLIII, 624.
 94. A.H. Smyth ed., *The writings of Benjamin Franklin*, 10 vols. (New York, 1905-1907), VIII, 451-453, Franklin to Priestley, 7 June 1782.

JOSEPH PRIESTLEY IN CULTURAL CONTEXT: PHILOSOPHIC SPECTACLE, POPULAR BELIEF AND POPULAR POLITICS IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BIRMINGHAM

John Money

PART TWO

The first part of this account sought to establish a longer and a wider context for the chain reaction which culminated in July 1791 by considering Birmingham's experience of philosophic spectacle and of popular religion, quite apart from Joseph Priestley himself, in the fifty years before the riots. Though there had been no disturbance in the town since the last sporadic outbreaks of anti-Methodist rowdiness in the early 1760s, it is clear that when Priestley came to the New Meeting in 1781, he came to a place already in ferment. Given the general perception of the role of Dissent in the national adversities of the previous decade, this might not seem particularly surprising. Closer examination suggests, however, that the tensions which already existed were a good deal more complex than the simple polarity between the orthodox forces of Church and State on the one hand and the ancient malignancy of deistical and factious Dissent on the other which John Riland, rector of St. Mary's, Birmingham's newest and most proprietary church, had histrionically diagnosed in 1775. On the contrary, the orthodoxy which Riland strove to defend was itself being assailed by uncertainty. For the religious revival, of which he was the town's most prominent representative, was in the midst of a transition, akin to that taking place at the same time in the development of experimental philosophy, in the course of which all the fundamental issues which Priestley's teaching was to raise were already being vigorously debated at all levels.

Joseph Priestley came into this situation with very clear intentions. The foundations of his thought and teaching were, first, a benevolent God, whose works were not yet completed, and who therefore manifested himself constantly in a continuous act of infinite creation; second, an absolute denial of any difference between matter and spirit; and third, an equally absolute epistemological egalitarianism derived from that denial and from the associationist psychology of David Hartley.⁶⁰ From these necessarian principles, it not only followed that all men could know all things equally; it also followed, since the moral perfection of Man was to be achieved through an ever increasing knowledge of nature, that all men should know all things equally. For

Priestley, all knowledge was one; that unity was the ground of all action and the way to it lay, not through theory, but through the candid presentation of experiential facts to the opened minds of all, not in order to exploit their reflex superstitions, but to lead them progressively to a full understanding of the truth. In such a Baconian instauration, public performance was not a mere adjunct of natural philosophy, useful if properly controlled, but its very essence. Whatever their actual consequences may have been, such principles simply did not admit the possibility of the contradiction between precept and effect to which Simon Schaffer draws attention. Marxist apocalyptic looks forward to the withering away of the state. Its Priestleyan avatar expected the distinction between expert and layman to vanish once mankind knew its proper place in creation. In that day, there would no longer be any division between the reasoning few and the labouring many, and so there would no longer be any need to demonstrate active powers because all would know them, actively, in themselves.

By the time he moved to Birmingham, Priestley was well embarked on the propagation of this gospel. As early as his ministry at the Mill Hill Presbyterian Meeting in Leeds between 1767 and 1773, which was marked by his conversion to Socinian beliefs, he had lectured the young men of his congregation on the principles of natural and revealed religion. 'The Methodists being very numerous in Leeds', he had also published a series of short tracts 'in the cheapest manner possible'. Besides scriptural exegesis, these included *An appeal to the serious and candid professors of Christianity*, which 'created a good deal of noise in this neighbourhood' and 'in a short time had a far more extensive influence than I could have imagined.' Among other projected subjects was a popular biography of Socinus intended to rekindle a zeal for truth among quiescent freethinkers, whose consciousness was to be further raised by reprinted account of a Socinian blasphemy acquittal at Stafford Assizes in 1726.⁶¹ At this stage, Priestley's more radical metaphysical speculations were still tentative, and the philosophical foundations avowed in the first part of his *Institutes of natural and revealed religion* of 1772 were still within the bounds of traditional dualism.⁶² Thereafter, however, this residual orthodoxy, already implicitly called in question in his work on electricity in the previous five years, was rapidly abandoned.⁶³

The turning point came in 1777 with the publication of his *Disquisitions relating to matter and spirit*. In these, Priestley reformulated recent discourse on the subject by rejecting absolutely the strict immaterialism which he claimed had confused it since Descartes. His

case was a combination of metaphysical argument, scriptural exegesis and historical discussion of material philosophy and religious belief, pagan as well as Christian, from antiquity onwards. Prior to Descartes, beliefs had reflected immediate experience. Some, like the 'grosser sort of materialism' actually if unwittingly maintained by most of the early Fathers, and 'many pious christians' since, were in accord with true revelation. Some, such as the vernacular notion of 'heaven', were mistaken, but benign so long as they remained consistent with the Creator's knowable attributes. In place of this innocent literalism, strict immaterialism had introduced an alienated notion of God as pure spirit, with '*no extension, no common property with matter and no relation to space*'. What remained was merely a snare for the superstitious all too easily yoked to the enslaving purposes of worldly dominion. To assure the progress of religious truth, the menace of Cartesian dualism had to be exploded once and for all by a properly philosophic materialism, and the pitfalls of immediate experience replaced by the sure path of system.⁶⁴

The *Disquisitions* thus set out, both to free older ways of thinking from corruption, and to offer an improvement on them for the future. They invoked Newton's own Rules of Philosophising to contend that the dualism of matter and spirit as two entirely distinct but intimately connected substances was an indefensible absurdity. What was called spirit had no separate existence but arose from the powers of attraction and repulsion which, with the property of extension, were the sole and sufficient attributes of matter. Though divine in origin, these powers were to be philosophically considered as belonging to matter, not as acts of the Creator Himself. Since it followed that body and soul were as inseparable in death as in birth, the afterlife of the soul, like its pre-existence, was dismissed as mere pagan superstition stemming from the grand error of those ancient philosophers who had made 'the Supreme Mind the author of all good', and matter 'reduced to its present form . . . by another *intelligence*' the source of all evil. This was the 'real source of the greatest corruptions of true religion in all ages, many of which remain to the present day.' In 'the system of *pure Revelation*', which could not be established 'but upon the ruins' of its false and absurd antithesis, the soul, its form extinct at the end of its mortal span but its substance not annihilated, would indeed rise again at the 'general consummation of all things'. This was what the Scriptures truly promised. Until then, when Priestley, following David Hartley, imagined the 'germs of the soul' reviving 'naturally and necessarily . . . according to some fixed, and to us unknown laws of nature', the soul's substance would continue to bear its necessary part in the one great system of creation.⁶⁵

We have lately been instructed to take eighteenth century theology seriously, and the implications of these propositions, especially coming as they did in the middle of the American War, were much more than metaphysical.⁶⁶ By separating the activity of powers in matter from the immediate agency of the deity, the *Disquisitions* broke the link between the performer and the direct manifestation of God which had hitherto tied experimental philosophy to the exposition of traditional forms of authority. Since the materialism of the soul also eliminated the possibility both of its individual afterlife and of its separate pre-existence, the *Disquisitions* also had other effects. They further weakened the conventional political theology of the 'Confessional State' by undermining traditional doctrines of heaven, hell and the rewards and punishments of a future state. They also resolved the difficulties of foreknowledge and particular predestination posed by Calvinism, while allowing the underlying ontological realism of the Calvinist view, which had profoundly influenced Priestley's own upbringing, to be retained in generalized form as the essential condition for the logic of true Facts embodied in the System of Nature.

This was the Ark of the New Covenant, housed not in the cathedrals and palaces of Church and King, but in the 'temple of science'. There were two ways to build this, both of them implicit in Priestley's writings: by the direct popular appeal of philosophic demonstration, now freed from its previous servitude to Caesar and radically realigned with the God of Nature; and, since philosophical understanding was now the reward of the disciplined pursuit of self-illumination, not of untutored revelation, by the patient diligence of the enlightened few. In hindsight, the room for contradiction between these, as well as their potential for new forms of oppression, need little comment—though the unwanted similarity to more conventional religious formulations in the second is maybe worth a moment's ironic reflection. In concept, however, their apparently opposing tendencies were reconciled by the psychological principle of association. It was this principle, working to establish True Facts through the process of open and candid controversy which was the hallmark of Rational Dissent, which guaranteed that self-enlightenment and social would be the same. The result, at once free and necessary, was an infallible mechanism for the progress of truth through the accumulation of real knowledge which epitomized the system of nature as a whole.

If the vision was coherent, both the time and place seemed right for its realization. Priestley had already indicated his own order of priorities in 1774, early in his sojourn at Bowood as the Earl of Shelburne's

librarian, when he wrote that the satisfaction he derived from his philosophical successes arose chiefly from the weight they might give 'to my attempts to defend Christianity and to free it from those corruptions which prevent its reception with the philosophical and thinking persons whose influence with the vulgar and unthinking is very great.'⁶⁷ If this suggests a preference for the second and more exclusive of the two starting points on the road to social enlightenment, the presence in Birmingham of Priestley's protégé and fellow-lecturer, Adam Walker, as early as 1776, and the reception given to Walker on his next visits in 1780 and 1781, when he was sponsored by members of the Lunar Society, indicate that the initiation of the first and more openly radical approach was not far behind.⁶⁸

By 1781, when Walker's Eidouranion was the talk of the town; when a benefit performance at the New Street Theatre honoured Mr. William Allen, 'the contriver and maker of the best electrical machines ever constructed', and when 'Hoeamphelius' called attention to the other critical factor in the progress of science by reminding readers of the *Birmingham Gazette* how much these achievements of the age depended on the practical skills of the town's metalworkers, Priestley had been minister of Birmingham New Meeting for over a year.⁶⁹ Now, he could bring the separate components of his programme together. His experimental work could proceed unhampered, thanks to the material support of his Lunar Society colleagues. Equally important, he could now give full rein to his theological writing, and his involvement in the campaign against the Test and Corporation Acts, as well as his prominent role in Birmingham's support for the antislavery movement, placed him in the forefront of the appeal to the candour of an enlightened people mounted by liberal Dissent in the years before 1789. Besides these more or less familiar appearances on the public stage, however, Priestley was also active in more immediate and practical fields. He quickly assumed the leading role in the development of the Birmingham Library, and he continued to attach essential importance to his lectures to the younger members of his congregation.⁷⁰

Among the Dissenters indeed, the rising generation had been eagerly awaiting his arrival. As William Hutton's daughter, Catherine, told a friend before Priestley finally accepted the New Meeting, 'If he do, you may expect to hear of my becoming a convert to his religion, for I am very weary of Calvinistical monotony and nonsense.'⁷¹ In July 1781, by which time Catherine and her brother, Thomas, had fulfilled that prediction, Priestley's Sunday class had a total membership of nearly a hundred and fifty, of whom eighty were aged between seventeen and

thirty.⁷² In 1787, when Birmingham's original inter-denominational Sunday School Committee broke up, when the Church party deliberately provoked a dispute over the admission of Controversial Theology to the Birmingham Library and canvassed it on the streets, and when each confirmation candidate in the town was issued with a free *Preservative against Socinianism*, Priestley replied with a penny abridgement of his *Appeal to the serious and candid professors of Christianity*. He reckoned by then that some thirty thousand copies of this had been issued since its original appearance in Leeds.⁷³ Two years later, he joined with a group of younger teachers from the Old and New Meeting Sunday Schools to start the Birmingham Sunday Society. In Priestley's missionary strategy, this initiative was surely as crucial as the adoption of itinerancy in that of the Methodists. The Sunday Society was open to any ex-pupil of a basic Sunday School in the town. Besides religion, natural and revealed, it taught a wide range of philosophical subjects. In 1790, the Society's advanced class, which trained potential teachers to go out and start their own schools, was collecting its own experimental apparatus, setting up a library, running a weekly debating club open to the public and giving free lectures on philosophy, morals, history and science to working men.⁷⁴

Here, certainly, was one serious attempt to span the critically important gap identified by Roy Porter between the High Enlightenment culture of the Lunar Society and the world of master-artisan and small workshops within which it subsisted.⁷⁵ Unfortunately, however, such bridge-building also carried other connotations, for this was the substance behind the notorious gunpowder metaphor in Priestley's Revolution Sermon of 5th November 1785 on *The importance and extent of free inquiry in matters of religion*. Priestley's radical theology made no distinction between the *History of the corruptions of Christianity* and that of the *History and present state of electricity*. It promised salvation by Progress, not by Grace. Thereby, it challenged the Evangelical Christianity of the Methodist revival on its own ground, for the allegiance of the same congregation. As one convert put it in 1790,

Yes, as you say, it was deadly kind of Master Priestley to give us tradespeople a bit of advice. We have long been teach'd that God a'mighty don't care for us . . . that he only sent us to burnish buttons and clean stables, and that if we have got a soul, it's hardly worth looking a'ter: and for this reason I spose 'tis our parsuns don't visit us poor folks except at Christnings and Buryings. And then dye see when do our Clergy make books for us? No—no they know a trick worth two of that; but as the saying is, when the belly is full, the bones will be at rest. Now what does Master Priestley? What does he? Why, he says, if we don't all get to heaven it

shan't be thrown in his teeth; and then, what vastly pleases us, we shan't be put upon and be as though our eyes were pulled out and our ears cut off. Nothing like it . . . As the saying is, every man for himself and God for us all. We may ask questions and give answers of our own making.⁷⁶

As a measure of the impact of Priestley's teaching, there was, however, more to this defence of him than just a naive expectation of egalitarian enlightenment, for its continuation suggests much about the ways in which the writer believed the goal was to be reached: not by some miraculous transformation, but by patiently abiding the outward progress of philosophical knowledge from its learned sources in whatever country they might be found, according to the natural working of the Priestleyan system.

We may ask questions and give answers of our *own making*; but then we must *at times* hear and see and say nothing. For my part I shall never forget the man as long as I live, for they say he *en't one of us*, as many parsuns be, for I have heard say that Master Priestley belongs to what they call the King's Club [*sc.* Royal Society], and to a mort of your larned clubs in outlandish countries. Now I should think Master Priestley must have a *fine deal of know*; for they lets in nobody but Kings and Princes and filosophers, and . . . now and then a Bishop, when they can find 'em knowing enough.⁷⁷

There are two ways of construing this mixture of egalitarianism and deference. On one hand its admiration for one who 'en't one of us as many parsuns be' can be read as an unintended admission that Priestley and his message really had little meaning for most ordinary people, who greeted its faith in the benevolence of the learned few with predictable ribaldry.⁷⁸ On the other hand, Priestley's disciples, though never more than a minority, certainly regarded themselves as better fitted to guide their contemporaries to a better future than the hedge priests of the religious revival, and the same passage clearly demarcated them from such blinded leaders of the blind as the one who had caused the wrath of Thomas Hutton in September 1779, shortly before Priestley's arrival:

I am just returned from hearing a *Walsall* parson, which literally bears the name of the place from whence he comes . . . He told us that people who frequented horse races, assemblies and played at cards were condemned to everlasting flames . . . Is this a man inspired by Heaven to teach the World? By no means, he is a common jest and ought to be drummed out of society, it is just such wretches as these that bereft the foolish multitude of what little discernment they have.⁷⁹

At this point, it should perhaps be emphasized once more that the purpose of this enquiry is not to arrive at a "new" explanation of the riots in the direct sense by attempting to prove that the Methodists were the chief culprits. Even if the evidence would support such a charge, which is not the case, it would have only incidental bearing on the main

concern, which is with the whole interaction between popular science and popular religion in the years surrounding the riots, rather than with the disturbances themselves. It should, however, be clear from the previous discussion, both of popular responses in Birmingham to philosophic and religious ideas in general and of Priestley's own activities, that there is no need to prove any such thing in order to assert that *odium theologicum* was not just something whipped up and orchestrated by the parson-magistrate to divert the energy of latent class tension, but something endemic in the common population itself, and that in this, the sharpest differences lay between those who looked for the imminent transformation of the real world and those who still sought 'a government over spirits in regions above the atmosphere'.⁸⁰ Though the evidence here is circumstantial and will not yield absolute proof, there are other indications which point to the involvement of local Methodism in this situation, and suggest that part at least of Wesley's local audience was as violent as any other section of society.

The first is Priestley's immediate concerns in the months preceding the riots. Besides his experimental activities and the lingering aftermath of the campaign against the Test and Corporation Acts, which had already occasioned threats to his person and property in 1790,⁸¹ these concerns are usually summarized as the organization of a projected Warwickshire Society for Parliamentary Reform, and the Bastille Commemoration Dinner which actually sparked off the riots. He was certainly involved in both these activities, but the main initiative came, not from him, but from William Russell, a prominent merchant who was one of the lay leaders of the New Meeting congregation. Unlike Russell, Priestley was never a member of the London Society for Constitutional Information, and his active involvement in the movement for Parliamentary Reform came late.⁸² On the other hand, there are several signs that relations with local religious groups were very much on his mind in the months leading up to July 1791. He had been thinking of undertaking a new, Unitarian translation of the Bible,⁸³ and he was cultivating his contacts with other local congregations professing Unitarian and Universalist beliefs, especially the Swedenborgians.⁸⁴ He was also engaged in local debate with Edward Burn on the infallibility of Apostolic Testimony.⁸⁵ Above all, however, he was very concerned that historical accounts of John and Charles Wesley should not be entrusted to Anglican hagiographers, especially those which dealt with the brothers' original experience of religious conversion. His own last publication before the riots was a collection of 'letters relating to Mr. Wesley', prefaced by an *Address to the Methodists in general*. He did hesitate lest his intended readers take this amiss, but for Priestley,

controversial writing was itself part and parcel of the progress of truth, so he published anyway.⁸⁶ It is therefore not entirely surprising that at least one memoir later recalled Methodist condonement, if not approval, of the riots as a richly deserved visitation of divine wrath upon the ungodly.⁸⁷ Without firmer evidence, it would be going too far to suggest that local Methodism was behind the disturbances in any explicit way. Nevertheless, John Riland's own earlier sentiments should serve as a reminder that the saintliness of the Wesley brothers themselves did not necessarily preclude bigotry in their own adherents. Besides, the fact that known Methodists were given safe conduct by the rioters suggests that Riland's earlier words from St. Mary's pulpit had not been forgotten.⁸⁸

In such circumstances, and in view of the conflicting and often confused messages which were circulating among Birmingham's common people—in 1792 Samuel Garbett heard children crying 'God save the King and Huzza Tom Paine for ever' in the same breath, and feared that the mob might be as easily raised 'by a cry against Parliament and Country Gentlemen' as by Church and King—it is not surprising that the more cautious philosophical performers were looking to their reputations and drawing in their horns long before the Priestley Riots.⁸⁹ As early as 1780, John Warltire was tailoring his lecture course to the utilitarian requirements of Birmingham's manufacturers—though that year he did temporarily offer a more fanciful digression on his solar apparatus in response to the fancy counterattractions advertised by Herman Boaz, one of his more exotic rivals.⁹⁰ Similarly, Mr. Burton introduced his lectures in February 1791, not with promises to reveal the divine secrets of nature, but with the down-to-earth observation that 'The great improvements the arts, manufactures and machines have received from Experimental Philosophy . . . render it of the greatest importance to all ranks of life, more particularly to the inhabitants of this town, whose flourishing state depends upon the superior elegance of their manufacturers.'⁹¹

The clearest indications of the changing climate of philosophical spectacle, came, however, not from such practical men, but from two more esoteric performers, Gustavus Katterfelto and Warltire's quondam rival, 'the Sieur Herman Boaz'. Katterfelto, the Dr. Inflammable Gas of William Blake's *Island in the Moon*, enjoyed a considerable reputation as an astronomer, balloon aviator and lecturer in the 'Philosophical, Mathematical, Optical, Magnetical, Electrical, Physical, Chemical, Pneumatic, Hydrostatic, Proetic, Stenographic, Blaencial and Caprimantic Arts'. As this catalogue indicates, his act contained a

nicely judged mixture of the normal and the exotic, laced with a number of spectacular crowd-pullers like suspending a black cat and five kittens in the air by means of a magnet, and showing the existence of 'insects' in a variety of common materials by means of his 'Most Wonderful Solar Microscope and Royal Patent Delineator'. He was also a self-proclaimed freemason and made a point of addressing his lectures to 'all the different clergy and preachers, doctors, gentlemen, freemasons and all religious persons'.⁹² But this was not all. In June 1792, Katterfelto edified readers of the *Birmingham Gazette* with a long verse homily, much along the lines of J-T Desaguliers' *Newtonian system of the world the best model of government*, which he had composed as a special prologue to the demonstrations which he gave in his New Street lecture room.⁹³

'The Sieur Herman Boaz' was even more exotic. Like Katterfelto, he made much use of masonic paraphernalia, and his pseudonym was probably intended to signify the ritual name given by the craft to one of the two pillars of Solomon's Temple. After two seasons in Bristol, he first visited Birmingham in 1780, bringing with him his 'grand Thaumaturgick Exhibition of Philosophical, Mathematical, Steganographical, Sympathetical, Sciateroconatical and Magical Operations'. He turned up again in 1793 after a successful run in Manchester with his Grand Hurlophysikon, claiming to have spent the intervening twelve years travelling the continent in search of fresh wonders. To judge by their descriptions and by the abuse which they heaped on each other, Boaz and Katterfelto were competing for the same audience and most of what they offered was probably very similar, despite the former's claims to a variety of 'thaumaturgick deceptions never attempted but by Boaz himself'.⁹⁴ There was, however, one item in Boaz's list which had no equivalent in Katterfelto's, and which evoked from the latter a notable response.

This was palingenesis. Whether it was demonstrated by the self-reproduction of Trembley's Polyp, or by the supposed self-regeneration of putrescent animal matter, palingenesis was one of the few ways in which at least the appearance of active powers could be demonstrated in the living world. As such, it was a peculiarly important resource for those who still adhered to the eighteenth century tradition of experimental philosophy. Palingenesis, however, had moral connotations very different from those usually envisaged in the philosophical production of active powers. It had provided Priestley with the crucial model to explain how he believed the material soul would be regenerated from its dormant 'germs' at the Last Judgement, and thus

to save his theology by squaring his *Disquisitions* with Revelation. From here, however, by demonstrating the ability of natural forms to regenerate themselves, and possibly to change in the process, it was but a short step to implying, not the God in nature but a nature itself divine.⁹⁵

Hence without parents, by spontaneous birth
Rise the first specks of animated earth.
.....
Organic life beneath the shoreless waves
Was born, and nurs'd in ocean's pearly caves;
First, forms minute, unseen by spheric glass,
Move on the mud, or pierce the watery mass;
These, as successive generations bloom,
New powers and larger limbs assume;
Whence countless groups of vegetation spring,
And breathing realms of fin and feet and wing.

Ten years before Erasmus Darwin wrote those lines in 1803,⁹⁶ Katterfelto had spotted the tendency and turned it to his advantage. He lost no time in distancing himself from Boaz and clearing himself, and his lectures, of any part in such heresy by assuring his audience that,

As Kings, Princes, Dukes, Lords and Parliament-men are not found in the sea like fishes, nor are they made up in the air like hailstones, Dr. Katterfelto will therefore lecture every night this week on how the above noblemen etcetera came to their present dignity, to make all persons happy that are in despair in this town of our maker, and cannot be well wishers to their good King and Country, and to our present Parliament-men . . . He expects they will have many different Kings at Paris in less than twelve months' time, and as there is a King to guide the whole Universe, the doctor hopes there will be a Deputy King for many centuries to come in this country.⁹⁷

Whether Katterfelto really meant this or was just trying to cover his own tracks will never be known: probably he was just trying to steal a march on his competitor by battenning on to the prejudices of the customers. Either way, however, the episode says a good deal, not only about the two principals themselves, and about the sensibilities of their audience, but also about the rapidity with which public philosophical demonstration had been driven to the fringe in the short interval since the Priestley Riots. In January 1793, Boaz and Katterfelto were fighting for a vanishing market. For as Thomas Malton discovered the following December, when he deplored the lack of support for his Astronomy lectures, support for public philosophical spectacle was now rapidly dwindling.⁹⁸ Though the pursuit of natural knowledge itself did not die in Birmingham, the palingenesis which it underwent left it transformed.

In 1796, the survivors of Joseph Priestley's Sunday Society, several of them also veterans of the Birmingham Society for Constitutional Information, formed the Birmingham Brotherly Society. In doing so, they signed a declaration, undertaking to teach as 'subjects for improvement . . . whatever may be generally useful to a manufacturer, or as furnishing principles for active benevolence and integrity.' They would, they said, 'endeavour to make ourselves as useful as we can.' They would be careful that their 'example for steadiness and general propriety be such as will be proper for imitation to the best of our judgement.' They would behave respectfully to each other and to all with whom they might have dealings. They would avoid frivolity, bad company and gaming, and they would 'consider industry in our callings as an indispensable duty, and obedience to parents or masters as not less necessary and binding.'⁹⁹

What is striking about this prototype mechanics' institute, formed by ex-Jacobins who were Priestley's local heirs, dedicated to scientific self-education, self-help and mutual providence, and destined to play a central part in the history of Birmingham radicalism during the next century, is that its opening manifesto barely mentioned natural philosophy at all, and then only obliquely as 'whatever may be generally useful to a manufacturer'. 1796 is too early to think of the Brotherly Society as an instrument of social control.¹⁰⁰ It governed its own affairs, and the memoirs of its chief leader, James Lucock, suggest that it vigorously resisted any form of external tutelage, even in the shape of parental supervision from senior members of the Old and New Meetings, its denominational guardians.¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, its early minutes, confined to the mundane details of attendance, discipline and the soberest of character references for its members, contain no hint of the excitement of philosophic demonstration and no trace of Priestley's millennial vision. If natural philosophy still promised a higher revelation, it did so, not as an instauration for all men, but as a distant goal for those who accepted its vows.

In the ambiguous accents of Lucock and his brothers, the nineteenth century speaks: for one of the most frequently remarked characteristics of Victorian Birmingham, the great liberal manufacturing city of Smilesian and Briggsian epic, whose civic architecture celebrated its scientific pioneers in public monuments redolent of Renaissance Florence, is the absence of any real continuation of the scientific tradition apparently inaugurated so auspiciously by the Lunar Society. It was the Manchester of John Dalton, and later of James Joule, not the

Birmingham or Bristol of Thomas Beddoes and his Pneumatic Institution,¹⁰² which was to become the standard bearer of civic science in Victorian Britain.¹⁰³ Even at the 'popular' level, as distinct from that of the emergent 'disciplinary' professionalism, it is remarkable that Ian Inkster's and J.B. Morrell's recent survey of science in British culture between 1789 and 1850 has no explicit treatment of Birmingham at all, and only two passing index references, though it examines its subject in a series of specific studies of different places and circumstances.¹⁰⁴

The reason usually given for this is that like Bristol, which Inkster and Morrell do include, nineteenth-century Birmingham was not really an 'industrial' city, but one dependent on highly differentiated artisan skills producing a wide range of 'middle class' consumer goods. Thus it had no need to cultivate an active scientific tradition of its own: in fact rather the reverse, for though some of its trade might benefit from particular applications, the general connotations of 'science and industry' were undesirable in a place which needed to cultivate an image of politeness and good taste in order to stay abreast of fashion and keep the customers coming. This might be elaborated by a leaf from Arnold Thackray: science was less cultivated in nineteenth century Birmingham than in his 'Manchester Model' because Birmingham's assimilationist experience, gained through its political connections and cultural institutions, gave its people less cause to pursue natural knowledge as a compensation for marginality, and other ways to sublimate such feelings if they did have them.¹⁰⁵

While this may account for Birmingham's nineteenth-century attitude, however, it does little to explain how such an attitude came to be derived from an experience in which science had played so large a part; for as Roy Porter reminds us, it is largely misleading to project utilitarian or compensatory concepts backwards to a time when natural knowledge was considered part of polite culture, not a substitute for it, and for reasons rather different from those usually assumed by historians of that preconceived event, the Industrial Revolution.¹⁰⁶ In eighteenth-century Birmingham, as successful in its cultivation of established society as it was eminent in its pursuit of natural knowledge, politeness, utility and science had been anything but incompatible. It was indeed on their very compatibility, reinforcing the social action of psychological association through the medium of 'philosophical and thinking persons whose influence on the vulgar and the unthinking is very great',¹⁰⁷ that Joseph Priestley had rested his hopes for the ultimate achievement of his scientific millennium. It is all the more ironic, therefore, that Birmingham's eighteenth-century experience of assimila-

tion should have fed, not a continuing tradition of progress and discovery, but a self-perception which apparently had so little use for it.

The truth of the matter is that it was not only Birmingham and its attitudes that changed, but also the whole public connotation of 'science' itself. A proper explanation of the puzzle of nineteenth-century Birmingham's lukewarmness therefore requires a reappraisal of the era of the Lunar Society, not as the 'social history of provincial science and industry', as the subtitle of Schofield's book has it, but in the rather different context of provincial aspirations to polite culture, the diffusion of enlightenment ideas and their collision with other views of human nature which were being similarly broadcast at the same time. In the eighteenth-century tradition of public philosophical performance which culminated in Priestley, natural knowledge had been cultivated, and active powers demonstrated, as a religious and moral exercise. This is not to deny the significance of material utility and practical application as motives, but rather to suggest that the 'usefulness' of these 'sublimest parts of knowledge' was still thought to be entailed in their 'higher' purpose, and was not yet conceived in potentially exclusive separation from it, as more recent usage tends to imply.¹⁰⁸ Priestley's *penchant* for controversial theology was therefore not a regrettable aberration from his 'scientific' mission, but central to it. Yet, as Schaffer says, it was Priestley who shattered the eighteenth-century tradition of philosophic demonstration. This was so, however, not simply because his Dissenting politics and support for Parliamentary Reform in the early years of the French Revolution brought down on him the Sacheverellite reprisals of know-nothing Toryism and made him an unwitting lightning conductor for class hatred. Nor it was only because the systematics of Priestley's science contradicted the basis of a medium which depended not on cumulative routine but on spectacle. It was also because the tensions in that contradiction were to be resolved by a universal instauration, a reunion of factual perception, language and reality which would lead rapidly to a millennial denouement; and because in proposing such a scheme, he was offering—had indeed set in vigorous practical train—an alternative version of religious revival, fundamentally opposed to the basic principles more usually associated with that movement. In Priestley's vision, the processes of nature and the course of human history were on the verge of the union promised in scripture. In the event, this convergence was broken once and for all. Within the emerging mythology of industrialism which was left behind, the energies and activities of natural philosophy were either seen as dangerously subversive, or withdrawn from politics and concentrated on a disciplined exploration of the system of nature which was itself ultimately

more conservative than radical. Meanwhile, the progress of society at large, no longer guaranteed by the advancing discovery of True Fact and the psychological mechanisms of association, was left to the less ponderable dynamics of the market.¹⁰⁹

Little of this was immediately apparent of course. Lectures on Astronomy by a Mr. Lloyd at the New Street Theatre in 1805, and notices from 'Ingleby the Conjuror' and a Mr. Cartwright, who in 1816 offered philosophical fireworks and performances on the musical glasses at Mr. Hadock's Mechanical Theatre and Stork Tavern,¹¹⁰ suggest that spectacular, if debatably philosophic, performance still had a long half-life, through which it was linked with the rise of phrenology and the opening of a new and different chapter in the cultural meaning of popular science in the following decade.¹¹¹ Moreover, there were other aspects of the tradition of active powers, which, in conjunction with natural calamity, had still a long future in front of them as a means to impress the common imagination with the immanence of God and the imminence of His wrath. The moral lessons of eighteenth-century philosophic spectacle were indeed applied with renewed urgency after 1790; for though it has been less remarked than such newer developments in the formation of mass attitudes as Hannah More and the Cheap Repository Tracts, one of the most universal responses to the revolutionary decades was the recovery and the extensive republication of very large quantities of material on natural and social order originally produced during the previous hundred and fifty years. One particularly vivid example of this was *England's Monitor*, a set of three fast sermons dating from the Seven Years War by James Hervey, M.A., Rector of Weston Favell, Northamptonshire, which John Riland and Edward Burn republished in Birmingham in the famine year of 1795. A first reading suggests that the mid-century invocation of active powers had lost none of its force, especially when it was combined with a good dose of Old Testament History. After comparing the 'moment of danger' posed by the domestic crisis and the threat of French invasion with the plagues of Egypt and Israel's delivery, *England's Monitor* went on to enforce the need for repentance and return to the 'way of Holiness' as the nation's only refuge from an angry God:

If while I am speaking, the Earth should reel to and fro and be in strong convulsions under your feet; if it should open its horrid Jaws and gape frightfully wide to devour you, not one in the assembly but would be greatly alarmed. How then can you be so careless and unconcerned, when Hell from beneath is opening her Mouth to swallow you up in endless perdition? If this building was rocking over your heads and tottering on every side; if the Beams were bursting and the walls cleaving you would be struck with

astonishment. And how is it, that you are under no apprehension when the indignation of the almighty GOD is ready to fall on you, and worse than ten thousand millstones to grind you to powder? If the French were landed; if you were surrounded by those barbarous Enemies of your Religion and Country; if their swords, reeking with British blood were now at your throats you would tremble for your lives. And will you not feel some concern for your souls when the Sword of Omnipotence is sharpened to cut you in pieces; when for ought you know, it may be already unsheathed, and may have received a command to give the Fatal Blow? If a Plague from the LORD should sweep away thousands and ten thousands to an untimely grave; if you should see multitudes of your neighbours sickening, dropping dying on every side, certainly you would be terrified; how can you remain unimpressed, when the curse of GOD is approaching you. When the curse of GOD is hovering over you? When the curse of GOD is ready to be poured out upon you and turn all your delights into weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth . . . ?

A closer and more reflective consideration, however, suggests that something has changed; for it was not the actuality of active powers which was being invoked here, but only the imagery. The same is true, though in a somewhat different way, of the address given to the Birmingham Philosophical Institution, founded as a private society in 1800, at the inauguration of its new rooms in October 1814, by its president, the Reverend John Corrie.

Corrie adverted to the sciences of moral philosophy and political economy and the necessity of forming a correct taste, and concluded a most able lecture by pointing out in glowing and emphatic language the more important advantages arising from the prosecution of science by raising the mind of the enquirer from the consideration of effects to that of the first Great Cause, of whose omnipotence and wisdom we are led to form most correct and reverential sentiments by the survey of his works in Creation, especially in the elevated walks of Astronomy, and of whose goodness the researches of Natural Philosophy, in the objects more immediately under our notice on the face of the earth inspire us with more grateful and devout feelings.

Superficially, this seems to continue the eighteenth-century tradition of experimental philosophy, but the language is egregiously genteel, and the lessons inculcated are to be learnt by private intellectual contemplation of the sublime system, not by collective, public apprehension, nor by direct experience of its power. In any case, these advantages, though 'more important', were not those which had occupied most of Corrie's address, which had been given over mainly to the utilitarian value of applied science to Birmingham and the acceptance of a relatively modest role for the society in the whole enterprise of science. The difference 'between the Royal Society of England and the other Great

Societies of Europe and the class of institutions under which the Birmingham Philosophical Society falls,' said Corrie, was that the members of the former,

comprised the most learned and illustrious of mankind, (who) devoted themselves to the promotion of fresh discoveries and farther advances in science; while the members of the latter, being generally those whose principal attention was directed to the necessary pursuit of commerce, attempted the dissemination rather than the discoveries of science. He pointed out the principal topics which would probably engage the society: viz. Natural Philosophy, Moral Philosophy, Political Economy and the subject of Taste.¹¹²

Of the eighteenth-century tradition of natural philosophic spectacle as direct exploration and demonstration of divine power in creation, little was left save separated fragments: a modest and socially conservative utilitarianism joined to a faith in the Hidden Hand; an acceptance of a limited place in the scheme of things, and an abstracted approximation of natural philosophy to the moral purposes of religion. Not even the 'secular Methodism' of the phrenologists, the main inheritors of the popular tradition, offered any real alternative.¹¹³ At the end of his study of natural philosophy and public spectacle, Simon Schaffer meditates on the meaning of the Kantian sublime. Ultimately, this resides, not in nature, but in the reasoning mind, which, through its ability to admire intellectually the divine greatness, raises itself to a moral state superior to the physical universe which it contemplates: a Victorian proposition if ever there was one. Perhaps, in view of this, the last word should come, not from James Lucock and his brothers, or from John Riland and Edward Burn, but from a better-known source on an occasion which typifies the differences, and the enigmatic similarities, between Victorian Birmingham and the home of the Lunar Society in its enlightenment years. In 1846, in the presence of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, Felix Mendelssohn conducted his sacred oratorio *Elijah* in Birmingham's new town hall, a neoclassical building modelled on the temple of Castor and Pollux at Rome. At the climax of the oratorio, the chorus sings from the first book of Kings, Chapter XIX:

Behold! God the Lord passed by! And a mighty wind rent the mountains around, brake in pieces the rocks, brake them before the Lord: but yet the Lord was not in the Tempest. Behold! God the Lord passed by! And the Sea was upheaved, and the Earth was shaken: but yet the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake came a fire: but yet the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire there came a still, small voice; and in that still voice, onward came the Lord.

60. J.G. McEvoy, 'Joseph Priestley, 'Aerial Philosopher': Metaphysics and Methodology in Priestley's Chemical Thought, 1762-1781', 4pts., *Ambix*, 25, 26 (1978-1979), esp. pt.1; see also Part One of this article, fn.11.
61. *Theological and miscellaneous works*, ed. J.T. Rutt, 25 vols.(London, 1817-1831), I, *Life and correspondence*, pt.1, 74, 125, 138.
62. Priestley, *Disquisitions relating to matter and spirit* (London, 1777, repr. New York, 1975), pref., and for the present discussion, c.f. Simon Schaffer, 'Priestley and the Politics of Spirit', in Robert Anderson and Christopher Lawrence eds., *Science, medicine and Dissent: Joseph Priestley (1733-1804)* (London, 1987).
63. cf. J. McEvoy, 'Electricity, Knowledge and the Nature of progress', *British Journal for the History of Science*, 12 (79), 1-30.
64. *Disquisitions*, 109-110, 145-146, and cf. Schaffer, 'Politics of Spirit'.
65. *Disquisitions*, passim, esp. xxxix, 9, 52-53, 155-166.
66. Both in his recent study of *Popular politics and the American Revolution in England* (Macon, Ga., 1986), which analyses the petitions and addresses of 1775, and in forthcoming work on nonconformity in English politics and society between 1754 and 1784, James Bradley not only documents fully the major role of Dissent in the articulation of an opposition to the war in the nation at large much more widespread than most historians have hitherto supposed; he also shows conclusively the significantly greater radicalism of provincial than of established metropolitan Dissent. Whether or not these developments had any direct influence on Priestley's ideas or the timing of the *Disquisitions* is not clear, but against this background, his message would have gained added urgency.
67. *Life and correspondence*, pt.I, 200.
68. R.E. Schofield, *The Lunar Society of Birmingham, a social history of provincial science and industry in eighteenth-century England* (Oxford, 1963), 248.
69. *Aris*, 12 Nov. 1781.
70. Charles Parish, *History of the Birmingham Library* (London, 1966).
71. Birmingham Reference Library, Hutton-Beale MSS., Catherine Hutton to Mrs Coltman of Leicester, 25 Dec. 1780. William Hutton, Bookseller, Circulating Library owner, Street Commissioner, Small Claims Commissioner, would-be magistrate, Birmingham's first historian and fellow-victim with Priestley in 1791, is a favourite example of self-help personified. He came originally from a rigidly Calvinist home in Nottingham, of which his sister, latterly a zealous Sandemanian, continued to remind him with great pertinacity long after he had run away and established himself in Birmingham.
72. *Life and correspondence*, pt. 1, 353, Priestley to Rev. Joseph Bretland, 27 July 1781.
73. Parish, *Birmingham Library*; *Aris*, 6 March, 2 Oct. 1786; 30 July, 6, 13 Aug. 1787; *Life and correspondence*, pt.1, 74.
74. V.C.H. *Warwicks*, VII 215-216; Birm. Ref. Lib.: James Lucock, 'Narrative of the Proceedings relative to the erection of the Old Meeting Sunday schools', MS. c.1832.
75. R. Porter, 'Science, provincial culture and public opinion, in Enlightenment England', *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, III (1980), 36.
76. Alexander Armstrong, Whip Maker; Abel Sharp, Spur Maker, *Very familiar letters to John Nott, Button Burnisher, in his reply to his very familiar letters to Dr. Priestley* (Birmingham, 1790), Letter VI, 12-13.
77. *Ibid.* One wonders what the writer subsequently made of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, if he lived to see it. Cf. Jack Morrell and Arnold Thackray, *Gentlemen of science* (Oxford, 1981).

78. I read it this way myself in *Experience and identity, Birmingham and the West Midlands, 1760-1800* (Manchester, Montreal, 1977), 147-148.
79. Cf. Hutton Beale MSS, Thomas Hutton Jr. to his sister, 12 September 1779.
80. *Theological Repository* (1786), 6, p.259 fn. 1, cit. Schaffer, 'Politics of Spirit'.
81. *Aris*, 25 Jan. 1790.
82. Russell had been a member of the S.C.I. since January 1783. P.R.O., TS 11/961, 962, 1133, Minute Books of the S.C.I.
83. *Life and correspondence*, pt.1, 448 ff. Priestley to Theophilus Lindsey, 28 Oct., 27 Nov. 1787, re. printing of a serial edition of the Bible (probably a serialization of Baskerville's) and re. a new translation: 'If you will do the New Testament, I will engage the Old . . .'
84. *Ibid.*, pt.2, 91, Priestley to Lindsey, 17 Oct. 1790. Priestley found the Swedenborgians rather absurd, but since they professed Unitarian beliefs, were increasing in numbers and were anxious for his acquaintance, he encouraged them as potential proselytes by attending their services and writing a short address to them. He was equally enthusiastic about ex-Baptist and ex-Wesleyan Unitarian street-preachers in Manchester, York and other places (to Lindsey, 8 Oct. 1789).
85. *Ibid.*, pt.2, 53, to Lindsey, 11 Feb. 1790. After commenting on the Sacheverellite propensity of the multitude, 'who will not, or cannot read', Priestley announced his intention to answer Burn's letter on the Infallibility of Apostolic Testimony 'as I find it is much read and some may read what I shall say to him who will read nothing else of mine'. The reply was advertised in *Aris*, 1 March 1790. The tone of the local debate is perhaps suggested by the notice in *Aris* 10 Oct. 1791 for T.G. Hancock's *Address to Priestley*, 'with observations chemical and theological proving the word incarnate to be Very God, being a restitution for the loss sustained by the late riot.'
86. *Ibid.*, passim. Priestley's concern with Wesleyan biography was evident as early as 16 June 1785, when he wrote to the editor of the *Gentleman's Magazine* about some letters of Susannah Wesley, the evangelist's mother, on the first principles of religion. These had been given to him during his stay at Bowood, but were missing. When found, Priestley offered them to the *Gentleman's Magazine* together with some authentic material on the religious conversion of the two brothers, the publication of which 'will be of great use at the proper time.' Four years later, while defending his use of the *Gentleman's Magazine* as a vehicle for his views because of its wide provincial readership, he mentioned the same papers again to Theophilus Lindsey, emphasizing the importance of those dealing with the start of Wesley's ministry, which 'it might import him to see' (25 Nov. 1789). The following summer, he told Lindsey that he 'had much rather Mr. Wesley's life had been written by the elder than the younger Mr. Hampson. The latter is in the Church and therefore cannot write some parts as we should wish them to be written.' (16 July 1791). He was still concerned on 7 March 1791, when he told Lindsey he had 'no confidence in any clergyman's writing the life of Mr. Wesley properly, and it is a thing of some consequence.' His own *Address to the Methodists* was sent for Lindsey's approval that June, by which time the 'letters relating to Mr. Wesley' were in the press (to Lindsey, 2 June 1791). The publication of both *Address and Letters*, despite Priestley's demurs 'as they may consider it an insult which I am far from intending', was announced in Birmingham just ten days before the riots (*Aris*, 4 July 1791).
87. J.T. Rutt, Priestley's editor, cites a letter of 1832 from a Mr. Dobie, who had been a Methodist class leader in Stourport in 1791. On 20 July, the Sunday after the riots, Dobie and his class heard an eyewitness account from the preacher, Mr. Rowley, 'But what shocked me most was the hearing so mild and good a man, blinded by prejudice, impute the disgraceful transaction to the Unitarians themselves, and as a

- certain act of God's fiery vengeance for the inculcating *the damnable doctrine of Socinus*. Dr. Priestley and his damnable errors came in for his share of abuse, and great astonishment was expressed at his not clearly seeing the Trinity in Unity and all the glories of Gospel Grace . . . That the mild, charitable and humane Rowley should coolly approve these outrages and attribute them to the judgement of God, for a mere difference of religious sentiment, all this seemed to my mind very extraordinary . . . but this bigotry was too prevalent at the period and the Methodists, I must candidly avow, were as violent on this subject as any other class of society.' *Life and correspondence*, pt.2, 192-193.
88. *Life and correspondence*, pt.2, 117, citing *London Chronicle*, 19 July 1791.
 89. Birm. Ref. Lib., photostats of Garbett correspondence in Shelburne MSS., Ann Arbor, Michigan: Garbett to Marquess of Lansdowne, 8 Dec. 1792, 30 April 1793.
 90. *Aris*, 3, 10 April 1780.
 91. *Ibid.*, 7 Feb. 1791. Burton hoped that ladies and gentlemen wishing to complete their education by adding an acquaintance with 'the most sublimest parts of Knowledge' to a taste for polite literature would also attend, but this was clearly a low priority.
 92. For Katterfelto, see David Erdman, *Blake, prophet against empire*, 3rd. edn. (Princeton, 1977), 93-94, 106; *D.N.B.*; A.S. Brown, 'Gustavus Katterfelto, Mason and Magician', *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*, LXIX (1957), 136-138.
 93. *Aris*, 11 June 1792.
 94. *Farley*, 5 Dec. 1778, 2 Jan. 1779; *Aris*, 3, 10 April 1780, 28 Jan. 1793.
 95. For Palingenesis, see Aram Vartanian, 'Trembley's polyp, La Mettrie and Eighteenth-century French materialism', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, XI (1950), 259-286; Schaffer, 'Natural Philosophy and Public Spectacle in the eighteenth century', *History of Science*, XXI (1983), 22. Cf. *Disquisitions*, 160-165, which quote *L'homme machine* in support of Priestley's position.
 96. Erasmus Darwin, *The temple of nature* (1803), cit. N. Garfinkle, 'Science and Religion in England, 1790-1800: the critical response to the work of Erasmus Darwin', *J.H.I.*, XVI (1955), 376-388.
 97. *Aris*, 21, 28 Jan. 1793.
 98. *Ibid.*, 16 Dec. 1793. If Samuel Pipe-Wolferstan, who usually turned out to hear him, is any guide, John Warltire was relying less on chemistry, and more on lectures on Stonehenge, to put bread on the table in the 1790s.
 99. Birm. Ref. Lib., Minutes of Birmingham Brotherly Society, I, 3-5, 7-8.
 100. Cf. S. Shapin, B. Barnes, 'Science, nature and control: interpreting Mechanic's Institutes', *Social Studies of Science*, 7 (1977), 31-74.
 101. James Lucock, 'Narrative. . .relative to. . .Old Meeting Sunday Schools.'
 102. For Beddoes, see Schaffer, 'Natural Philosophy'; T.H. Levere, 'Beddoes and the Establishment of his Pneumatic Institution', *Notes and Records of the Royal Society*, XXXII (1977), 41-49, 'Thomas Beddoes at Oxford', *Ambix*, 28 (1981), 61-69; F. Cartwright, 'The Association of Thomas Beddoes with James Watt Junior', *Notes and Records of the Royal Society*, XXII (1967), 131-143; Langford, *Birmingham life*, II, 44.
 103. Robert F. Kargon, *Science in Victorian Manchester: enterprise and expertise* (Baltimore, 1977).
 104. Ian Inkster, J.B. Morrell, eds., *Metropolis and province: science in British culture, 1780-1850* (London, 1983).
 105. Arnold Thackray, 'Natural knowledge in cultural context: the Manchester Model', *American Historical Review*, 79, no.3 (June 1974), 672-709.
 106. Porter, 'Science, provincial culture and public opinion'.

107. Cf. above p.73 and fn. 67.
108. As Larry Stewart pointed out in his commentary on an earlier spoken version of this paper, there is an important problem here, to which everyday language is not well adapted. Schaffer's account of experimental natural philosophy as public moral spectacle, and Porter's insistence on science as part of polite culture, not a 'utilitarian' antagonist to it, are both open to the objection that they seem to undervalue the importance of the search for useful application as a motive for the early diffusion of the new science: in other words, that J.T. Desaguliers, Benjamin Martin and the other pioneers of practical Newtonianism were in fact the instigators and representatives of a social movement which was intentionally 'utilitarian', even if its results, in terms of direct contribution to technical advances in early industry, are harder to demonstrate [cf. Larry Stewart, 'The Structure of Scientific Orthodoxy: Newtonianism and the Social Support of Science 1704-1728', Toronto PhD. 1978, and 'The selling of Newton: science and technology in early eighteenth-century England', *Journal of British Studies*, 25, no.2 (April 1986), 78-192]. The 'industrial' view of eighteenth-century science may thus seem vindicated after all. 'Usefulness', however, is not a value in itself. As John Stuart Mill reminded readers of his well known essay on Bentham and Coleridge, it depends on some prior ascription of value; and however much they may have had in common, it is by no means certain that what was valued as 'useful', and why, by a society whose ideas of itself were still conceived within a Biblical time scale and shot through at all levels by millennial expectation, was the same as it was a hundred years later, when humanity had been left to its own positivist devices within the unfolding of geologic time and the millenium had been postponed to an indefinite though 'progressive' future. It may in fact be true that 'utilitarian', 'moral' and 'polite' motives for the cultivation of natural knowledge are easier to disentangle in the first half of the eighteenth century, when the commercial and opportunist elements of post-Revolutionary English society were still new and incompletely assimilated, than they are in the second, when differences had been merged in the established, affluent and increasingly conservative state of George III's reign. Even so, however, it is worth recalling how much of the early diffusion of practical Newtonianism took place within the ethos of Grand Lodge Freemasonry, which was expressly formulated not only to sacramentalize the new science by ritualizing its moral frame, but also to assimilate its practitioners into polite culture [cf. Margaret Jacob, *The radical Enlightenment: pantheist, freemasons, and republicans* (London, 1981)].
109. Cf. Maureen McNeill, *Under the banner of science: Erasmus Darwin and his age* (Manchester, 1987); Morris Berman, *Social change and scientific organization: The Royal Institution, 1799-1844* (London, 1978). If the Priestleyan vision survived anywhere in tact, it did so on the other side of the Atlantic in the circle of Thomas Jefferson, whence it profoundly influenced the emerging traditions of American science and the new nation's sense of its own identity and destiny. Needless to say, its promises and paradoxes are still very much with us. Cf. Daniel Boorstin, *The lost world of Thomas Jefferson* (New York, 1948).
110. Langford, *Birmingham life*, II, 385.
111. Roger Cooter, *The cultural meaning of popular science* (Cambridge, 1985). Langford (*Birmingham life*, II, 506) records the first visit of J.G. Spurzheim in Birmingham in October 1828. This itself is testimony to the town's changed place on the popular lecturing circuit. Spurzheim had been lecturing on phrenology since 1813. In eighteenth-century conditions, he would surely have come sooner.
112. Langford, *Birmingham life*, II, 369.
113. Cooter, op.cit., ch.6.

RICHARD PRICE AND THE FREEDOM OF THE CITY OF LONDON

D. O. Thomas

Richard Price's *Observations on the nature of civil liberty* was first published on 12 February 1776. Price was very agreeably surprised by the success which his pamphlet achieved as he did not expect that it would run beyond the first edition. Later in the year on 14 August he wrote to William Adams:

I never thought that any thing I could write would produce any such effects. When after finishing my Pamphlet I went to Mr. Cadell to talk with him about printing it, I had no other expectation than it might sink in the first edition. I therefore intimated to him that it would probably be sufficient to print 500 copies; but upon my saying that I should put my name to it he said he would venture to print a thousand.¹

To his astonishment the first edition was sold out in three days. The second was announced on 20 February, the third on the 27th. On 12 March Price signed the short preface of the fifth edition the publication of which was announced on the 18th of the same month.² Meanwhile a remarkable event had taken place: on 14 March the Common Council of the City of London resolved to present Price with the Freedom of the City.

The presentation of the Freedom of the City of London in recognition of the publication of a political pamphlet was so unusual, if not unprecedented, that it is interesting to inquire into the reasons why this honour was awarded to Price. What led the City to take notice of a political pamphlet, especially one written in defence of the claims to self-government made by the rebellious colonies with whom the Mother Country was at war? Why should the City of London go out of its way to honour an author who defended a radical position not only in connection with the dispute with the American colonies but also in support for the reform of British political institutions?

Before attempting to answer these questions I shall set out the main known facts governing the presentation of the award. The resolution of the Common Council passed on 14 March 1776 reads as follows:

That the thanks of this Court be given to the Reverend RICHARD PRICE, Doctor in Divinity, Fellow of the Royal Society, for having laid down, in his late publication "Observations on the nature of Civil Liberty, etc." those sure principles, upon which alone the supreme legislative authority of Great Britain over her Colonies can be justly or beneficially maintained; and for

holding forth those public objects, "without which it must be totally indifferent to the Kingdom, who are IN, or who are OUT of power."

It is ordered, That the said Resolution be fairly transcribed, and signed by the Town Clerk; and by him delivered to the said Reverend Doctor *Richard Price*.

A motion being made, and question put, That the Freedom of this City be presented, in a Gold Box of the value of Fifty Pounds, to the Reverend Doctor RICHARD PRICE, as a grateful testimony of the approbation of this Court for his late pamphlet, intitled "Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty . . ." and that the Chamberlain do attend him with the same—the same was resolved in the affirmative, and ordered accordingly.

This Court doth desire the Right honourable the Lord Mayor to provide the Gold Box upon this occasion.³

It is clear that the Common Council acted with a sense of urgency when it resolved to present Price with the Freedom of the City: the usual practice when such a motion was proposed, was to adjourn the matter until the next meeting for further consideration, but on this occasion a vote to suspend a resolution of 1771 which required this postponement was carried.⁴ That standing orders were departed from occasioned some bitter comment. John Lind claimed that the faction that supported Price had abused their position by moving the suspension of the standing order requiring a motion affecting 'the city case' to be left over to a subsequent meeting, by violating a long established custom that due notice should be given for motions conferring the Freedom of the City, and by smuggling the motion through the Council. This was done, he alleged, by circularizing those likely to support the motion beforehand, and by deferring putting the motion until the end of the meeting when the attendance had thinned and those not in the secret and likely oppose had left.⁵ Lind's allegations receive some measure of corroboration from correspondence in *Lloyd's Evening Post* for 13-15 March 1776. There it is claimed that the project 'was the manoeuvre of a party'. The writer alleged that all the business to be transacted on that day had been specified in the summons to attend, all, that is, except the award to Price. A correspondent in the *Gazetteer* for 3 April 1776 claimed that William Hurford had circulated Price's pamphlet to eighty members of the Council likely to be sympathetic to the motion before the meeting, and that several members seceded from the meeting before the motion was put, leaving only 121 members present. The motion, it was said, 'was smuggled in a thin court'.⁶

On 23 March 1776 Price replied to thank the Lord Mayor, the Aldermen and the Commons for this honour. His pamphlet, he said, had been written:

With no other intention than to plead the cause of liberty and justice, and to remind this country of the dreadful danger of its present situation. The testimony of approbation which they have received from a body so respectable, annually elected by the first City in the world, and so distinguish'd for giving an example of zeal in the cause of liberty, will, it may be hoped, lead the public to fix their views more on such measures as shall save a sinking constitution, and preserve us from impending calamities.⁷

Price's reply was reported to the Common Council on 29 April 1776. In the meantime, on 28 March, the Court of Assistants of the Company of Drapers had presented Price with the Freedom of that Company and had ordered the Warden and Masters to admit him,⁸ an order that was complied with on 4 April.⁹

By the publication of his pamphlet and presentation to the Freedom the City, Price became a celebrity. A host of writers, some of them engaged by the Government, hastened to refute his arguments: among them, Adam Ferguson, Henry Goodricke, Richard Hey, John Lind, James McPherson, John Shebbeare, and John Wesley. Boswell mentions that the award of the Freedom featured in the conversation at Dilly's, the publisher,¹⁰ and Horace Walpole notes the effect that Price's pamphlet and the compliment paid to it by the City had upon the financial institutions:

At the end of the month was published a pamphlet that made a great sensation. It was called 'An Essay on Civil Liberty,' and was written by Dr. Price, a Dissenter, strongly connected with Lord Shelburne. It was a defence of the Americans, and maintained the improbability of subduing them. But the part that hurt Administration was the alarm it gave to the proprietors of the funds by laying open the danger to which they were exposed by ruinous measures of the Court. I think this was the first publication that made any impression. All the hireling writers were employed to answer. The author was complimented with the freedom of the City, and it was thought some complaint would be made from that quarter of the manoeuvres of the Bank. Indeed the Directors of the Bank grew more reserved in furthering the jobs of Administration.¹¹

Since the gold box which Price is said to have received on this occasion has vanished without trace, since no detailed account of the ceremony at which Price was presented with it is available, and since no mention of Price's receiving this honour is to be found in the records of Chamberlain's Court, some writers have been led to wonder whether Price ever did receive this honour. The editor of *London's roll of fame, 1757-1884*, for example, evidently thought the fact that no record of Price's receiving the honour had been entered in the records of the Chamberlain's Court was sufficient evidence that he was not admitted to

the Freedom.¹² However, from Price's own acknowledgement of the receipt of the honour, it would appear that he was admitted, and the following accounts testify both that the gold box was made for the occasion, and that a copy of the Freedom of the City engrossed on vellum was also presented to Price.

The Corporation of London
Dr. to John Newman Goldsmith and Jeweller, No.49 Lombard Street,
London. Partner and successor to the late Mr. Dyer.
1776

June 17	To a polished Gold Freedom Box with the City Arms Engraved in Petite Coup and enamel'd ornaments on the top plate etc. Engraved Inscription ornamented on the bottom	£50.
	To a new gold top lining in Consequence of damage done after delivery, and Extra Work	10.10.
	To a large pierced Shagreen Case with Satin lining	1.11.6
		<hr/>
		£62. 1.6
		13

The Honble City of London
To Henry Parker Clerk of the Chamber Dr.

22d June	Paid Mr. Loney for ingrossing the Copy of the Freedom of this City/ and duplicate for the Revd. Richard Price D.D. F.R.S.	4. 4.—
	Paid Mr. Sharp for decorating two large skins of Vellum in an elegant manner for the said Freedom/ and duplicate	5. 5.—
	Orphans and Stamp Duty	7.—
	The usual Fee for my Trouble and Expences in settling the same	10.10.—
		<hr/>
		£20. 6.—
		14

Although, as I have noted, there seems to be no account extant of the ceremony at which Price received the Freedom, it is highly likely that if there was one, it took place before 21 July for on that day Price wrote to Benjamin Hopkins, Chamberlain of the City of London:

I am happy in the opportunity given me, by receiving from your hands the Freedom of the City of London, to repeat my thanks to the Lord Mayor, the Aldermen and Common Council for the great honour they have done

me. It is impossible I should not be deeply impressed by testimonies of their approbation so condescending and generous.¹⁵

The receipt of this letter by the Court of the Common Council was reported in *Lloyd's Evening Post* for 22-24 July 1776. There was an amusing sequel at a meeting of the Court of the Common Council marked by considerable hilarity, an account of which I quote in full from the subsequent issue, i.e. July 24-26, of the same newspaper.

In the Court of Common Council, on Tuesday last, the Lord Mayor laid before the Court the silversmith's bill for making the gold box, which has been presented to Dr. Price. The charge for this was £50, but what created some risibility, was, a subsequent item of ten guineas for repairing this box before it was presented to the Doctor. The very mention of repairs to an article entirely new, was a kind of paradox which the Court did not seem perfectly to relish: an explanation, therefore, became necessary, whereby it appeared that someone of the members who had not the love of liberty before their eyes, and by whom, amongst others, the box had been viewed, had of malice aforethought, thrust his fingers against the bottom of the box, and made a hole in it. To repair this breach, required the additional charge of ten guineas. The bill, after much jocularly and laughter was ordered to be paid.

A comparison of the terms of the awards made by the City indicates that they were made in accordance with an established pecking order revealed by the amounts to be spent on the gold boxes. In 1768, 200 guineas was spent on a box for Christian VII of Denmark; the Duke of York (1761), the Duke of Gloucester (1765), the Prince of Brunswick (1765) and the Duke of Cumberland (1766) each received a box worth 150 guineas; Arthur Onslow (1761), Charles Townshend (1766) and John Dunning (1770) each received one worth 100 guineas. Then, as now, awards were made in a way that served to indicate and confirm rank in the social hierarchy, and it is interesting to note that the 'radicals' even when they had the opportunity to do so did not depart from the practice. There is no evidence that Price resented being placed in this way or indeed that he was aware that he had been.¹⁶

II

There can be little doubt that Price's pamphlet caused a great stir. The interest it aroused was partly due to Price's adverse comments of the conduct of the nation's finances. Earlier in the decade he had attracted considerable attention both in his *Observations on reversionary payments* (1771)¹⁷ and in his *Appeal to the nation on the subject of the national debt* (1772) by his criticism of the ways in which the finances of the country were being managed and which would, if not reformed, lead

'to some of the worst calamities'.¹⁸ In *Observations on the nature of civil liberty* he warned that the expenses of the war carried with them the threat of public bankruptcy.¹⁹ Arthur Lee, who was in London in February 1776 wrote to Governor Golden of New York:

People here begin to feel the matter as very serious, since the publications of Dr. Price and Lord Stair have convinced them that new taxes must be imposed for supporting this armament, which it is certain will cost upwards of twelve millions.²⁰

There was more than a hint of unease in official quarters: on 17 February Theophilus Lindsey wrote to John Jebb:

I shall take care of your note to Dr. Price. His pamphlet is a noble one indeed. I will give you one proof of it. It was yesterday signified to the printer that he would be prosecuted by the Director of the Bank, if he proceeded in printing another, and dispersing it. This menace, I am told, intimidated Mr. Cadell; but that Dr. Price was advised, without fear, to print as many copies as the public demanded; and there is an intention of printing it in a smaller size, that it may be an easier purchase.²¹

But Price's pessimistic analysis of the financial situation was not the only reason why his pamphlet attracted attention. Very much against the tide of public opinion he prophesied that Britain would not win a war against the colonies.²² But financial and military defeat would not be the only calamities that would have to be faced; the attempt to invade the rights of the colonists would lead to the destruction of liberty at home. Further, Price won warm approval from all those who combined support for the American colonists with a campaign for parliamentary reform. It was not the first occasion on which he had supported the American colonists, nor was it the first time he had appealed for parliamentary reform. What gave his pamphlet its distinctive if not unique appeal was that it combined justification for both of these objectives under one principle, that is the principle of self-government. In highly abstract terms Price proclaimed the right of every community to govern itself, and the right of each independent individual to participate in some measure in the government of society.

Price had been sympathetic to the cause of the colonists for several years before the outbreak of hostilities. In an entry in his journal for 12 July 1768, Syllas Neville records Thomas Hollis saying, 'that besides myself he knows 4 or 5 only (his cousin [Timothy Hollis], Mr. Strahan, Mr. Brand, Mr. Price, etc) who think as he does concerning the Americans.'²³ Writing to Benjamin Franklin on 3 April 1769, Price referred to the colonists as, 'formerly an increasing number of FRIENDS, but now likely to be converted, by an unjust and fatal policy, into an increasing number of ENEMIES'.²⁴

In a paper written in the latter half of 1774 and entitled 'A sketch of proposals for discharging the public debts, securing public liberty, and preserving the State' Price counselled that the Administration should return to the policies in operation before the Stamp Act.²⁵ When he composed this paper his attention was concentrated upon financial problems and what he believed to be a pressing need to curtail Government expenditure and reduce Government indebtedness. An accommodation with the colonists, essential to restoring financial good health, would be possible, he believed, if the Government would forbear interfering in matters of internal legislation and content themselves with the exercise of the powers secured to them by the Navigation Acts. In another paper entitled 'A rough draft of a petition on American Affairs', probably drawn up at Shelburne's behest and written either in the closing months of 1775 or early in 1776, Price went into greater detail in his criticism of the Government.²⁶ In particular, he opposed the Coercive Acts on the ground that they altered the traditional form of government in the colonies, placing them more firmly under the control of the Crown, and because they invaded the rights which, like their fellow-subjects in Britain, they had long enjoyed under the established forms of law. In addition, the Government were in the wrong because they had ventured to impose novel and unacceptable forms of taxation. But Price did not confine himself to arguing the colonists' case on legal or constitutional grounds: he also pointed to what he thought would be disastrous consequences of the war: the dismemberment of the Empire, the loss of valuable resources, the casualties and the bloodshed, the distress occasioned to manufacturers and traders, the reduction in the revenue, the expense of war and the attendant increase in the National Debt. In reading this document it is difficult to know whether Price was stating his own views or whether he was drafting something he knew would be acceptable to Shelburne.

In the first of his pamphlets on American affairs, *Observations on the nature of civil liberty*, although it is known that he submitted the conclusion to Shelburne before publication, it is easier to feel confident that the views expressed were Price's own. It is here that the defence of the colonists and the advocacy of parliamentary reform are justified under the same principle. It is clear that his objectives were much more radical than the traditional aims of the Whig opposition: the repeal of the Septennial Act, a places and pensions bill, the reduction of 'corruption' or 'influence', and a reduction of the standing army. The measures for reform which he supported included the redistribution of parliamentary seats, a fuller and fairer representation of the people,

abolition of pocket boroughs, more frequent if not annual elections, an extension of the franchise, a reduction in taxation (which would entail a reduction in the number of revenue officers and thus a reduction in the scope and potency of 'influence') and a reduction in the National Debt. But Price was not as thoroughgoing a radical as many of his friends and contemporaries and not as thoroughgoing in his practical proposals as his defence of the principle of self-government would lead one to suppose. Indeed whereas a cursory reading of his pamphlet might suggest a very radical approach based upon a straightforward and rather a simplistic application of an *a priori* principle, a more careful reading will show that Price was much more cautious, much more tentative and much more ready to take account of particular circumstances and the practical difficulties of realizing political principles. In *Observations on the nature of civil liberty* he maintains that a person who does not participate in the government of his society is a slave. He also maintains that 'a government is, or ought to be, nothing but an instrument for collecting and carrying into execution the will of the people'.²⁷ In *Additional observations* he affirms that 'the people are the spring of all civil power and they have the right to modify it as they please';²⁸ in *Two tracts* he reaffirms that 'the people (that is, the body of independent agents in every community) are their own legislators'.²⁹ These statements might lead the reader to expect that Price would be an advocate of universal manhood suffrage. But this is not what we find. When he comes to consider what is practicable he limits the possession of a vote to those whose property is sufficient to allow them to be independent in the exercise of their judgement. Although he commends the feasibility of Cartwright's scheme for universal franchise, he is more circumspect when he comes to detail his own proposals.³⁰ Although he did advocate an extension of the franchise, he thought it more important to obtain a fairer distribution of seats; in *Additional observations* he said that he would be satisfied with the existing system of representation 'provided that it was elected for a short term by a number of independent persons equal to the number of present voters'.³¹ Again, although Price advocated more frequent elections—partly on the grounds that they would reduce the efficacy of bribery at the polls and partly because they would make Parliament more responsive to public opinion, he was not as firm an advocate of annual elections as his friend and neighbour, James Burgh. Price certainly advocated 'shorter parliaments' (the phrase he often used) but he did not thereby commit himself to annual ones. In *Observations on the nature of civil liberty* Price's position is considerably removed from the demand, 'for an annual, equal and universal representation of the Commons' that was made in 1780 by the Duke of Richmond and supported by John Jebb.³²

Another instance in which he modifies the abstract principle of self-government when he deals with practical problems is to be found in the conclusion of his pamphlet where he espouses Shelburne's plan for conciliating the colonies. In essence this reserved to the colonies the right of internal legislation, including all forms of revenue taxation, while reserving to the British parliament the right of external legislation, including the regulation of the commerce of the whole Empire. This stance was not altogether consistent with the theoretical position that Price also advocates in the body of the pamphlet, namely, that every community has the right to exercise complete control over its own private affairs, and that the only basis upon which the mother country and the colonies could participate in the same polity was that of a federation in which all the members participated on an equal footing.³³

It is difficult to determine with what degree of care Price's pamphlet was read by his contemporaries: whether they concentrated their attention upon the abstract principles, or whether they took full account of the cautious pragmatism of his proposals; whether they struggled to see how the doctrine of popular political sovereignty could be reconciled with the doctrine of the balanced constitution; whether they tried to reconcile the claim that some measure of political freedom is everyman's birthright with the claim that it is prudent to restrict the franchise to those capable of independent judgment; whether the doctrine of national sovereignty for the colonies could be harmonized with the retention of the Navigation Acts. What we can be more confident about is that the proclamation of the principle of self-government gave heart to the pro-American and the political reformers by showing how support for the colonists could be justified on the same ground as the struggle for far-reaching parliamentary reform.

III

Before trying to determine what measure of agreement there was between the views that Price expressed in his pamphlet and those held by the leading politicians in the City at the time it was published, it might be helpful to enter a word of caution about the use of the term 'radical' to describe the ideas of political reformers in the eighteenth century. This use has been sanctioned by Dame Lucy Sutherland and the practice has been adopted by other distinguished historians including Colin Bonwick, John Cannon, and George Rudé.³⁴ But the practice is not without its dangers and difficulties. As Bonwick notes the use of the term 'radical' as a noun substantive does not occur before 1790 and therefore there is a danger of anachronism in applying it to

persons and movements of the earlier decades. Furthermore, the use of the term can mislead by suggesting that there is a greater measure of agreement amongst those to whom it applied than the facts warrant, and also by suggesting that the measure of disagreement between those to whom it applies and those to whom it does not was sharper than it was. In *A dictionary of political thought*, Roger Scruton characterizes the radical as (a) one hostile to the *status quo* and anxious to make sweeping changes; and as (b) one who wishes to take his political ideas to their roots, and to affirm in a thoroughgoing way the doctrines that are delivered by that exercise.³⁵ In applying the term 'radical' thus understood to the would-be reformers among the City leaders in the 1760s and 1770s there is a danger of suggesting that their reforming intentions were in fact uniformly more sweeping than they were and that in all instances these intentions were deducible from a coherent and consistent set of basic principles. From what I have said about the divergence of Price's practical proposals from his abstract principles, it is easy to see how the term 'radical' can be misleading even when it is applied to Price himself. A related danger is to succumb to the temptations of hindsight by assuming that the synthesis of the various elements in the programme that Price brought together under one principle, that is, the principle of self-government, were present in the minds of the early reformers. It is, for example, misleading to assume that all those who supported the colonists in their struggle with the Administration would have accepted the claim that the colonists were entitled to all the privileges of national autonomy, just as it would be misleading to suppose that those in favour of some measure of parliamentary reform sought to bring about a full measure of democracy. If we bear these dangers in mind, we can remain alive to the possibility that Price's statement was not so much an expression of existing opinion among the reformers as a demonstration of what they could adopt. It then becomes possible to see how Price's success in giving the reformers an intellectual synthesis of their aims in abstract terms could alienate many of those sympathetic to reform and result in weakening the political effectiveness of the movement. Perhaps, many who saw in a clearer light what the reformers could be up to took fright.

Long before Richard Price's pamphlet was published, there had developed within the City what might be regarded as a tradition of hostility towards the Government. As Dame Lucy Sutherland pointed out, in the period stretching from 1700 to 1782, with the exception of the years of 1747-1754 and 1756-1761, the City was consistently anti-ministerial.³⁶ The Opposition in the House of Commons regularly sought the support of the City against the Government. And the

combination was often successful. It helped to secure, for example, the repeal of the Stamp Act and the withdrawal of all but one of Townshend's duties.

The hostility to the Government expressed itself both in opposition to the Government's policy in America and in a campaign for constitutional reform. Although both of these causes were to some extent interdependent, it is convenient to discuss them separately. On the American question the dominant trend in City politics from the close of the sixties until the outbreak of hostilities in 1775 can be found in an address delivered in July 1769 in which the Livery questioned the constitutionality of parliamentary interference in the affairs of the colonies.³⁷ In the following year, when Richard Oliver spoke in the Commons after his election, he maintained that, 'The principles of fair government forbid that they [the Americans] should be taxed without representation, as much as that the people of this country should pay taxes to which, or to the continuance of which, they have not consented.'³⁸

In 1771 the Society for the Supporters of the Bill of Rights included in a test for the candidates for Parliament a willingness to 'endeavour to restore to America the essential right of taxation by representatives of their own free election'.³⁹ The same theme occurs in a test for candidates proposed by the Liverymen in the autumn of 1774.⁴⁰ Four of the five candidates—Frederick Bull, Brass Crosby, George Hayley and John Sawbridge—agreed to be so bound.

In a speech to the Middlesex freeholders in 1770 John Horne Tooke tied the enjoyment of particular rights to the enjoyment of liberty in more general terms and, in a way that anticipated Price's claim that liberty is indivisible, maintained that any diminution in the security of liberty in the colonies constituted a threat to liberty at home:

The security of their freedom and their right is essential to the enjoyment of our own. We should never for a moment forget the important truth, that when the people of America are enslaved, we cannot be free and they can never be enslaved whilst we continue free. We are stones of one arch, and must stand or fall together.⁴¹

In January 1775 the Common Council (consisting of the Mayor, Aldermen and Councillors) congratulated Chatham when he proposed the withdrawal of troops from the colonies as a conciliatory measure.⁴² In February of the same year the Common Council petitioned Parliament against the bill for restraining the trade of New England.⁴³ In the same month the Common Council declared that the Coercive

Acts were 'not only contrary to many of the fundamental principles of the English constitution, and most essential right of subject, but also apparently inconsistent with natural justice and equity'.⁴⁴ In June 1775 a meeting of two thousand and five hundred citizens renewed support for the Liverymen who had in April declared that the colonies were justified in resisting Great Britain.⁴⁵

But although the majority of the citizens of London in the period leading up to the outbreak of hostilities were opposed to the Government's policies in America, their attitudes were by no means shared by everyone. Powerful bodies in the City could always be relied upon to support the Government of the day: these included the wealthy City financiers who made their fortunes by subscribing to Government loans, discounting Government paper, and financing Government contracts.⁴⁶ The way in which loans were negotiated made it easy for the process of borrowing money to be used to gain political support. Subscriptions to Government loans were not conducted in public; nor could members of the public subscribe. Negotiations were conducted in private between Treasury officials on the one hand and members of the monied interests on the other. Priority was given to Members of Parliament or to those who could engage the support of Members of the House. (It should be noted however that it is extremely difficult to estimate to what extent the Government used these measures to secure support. It is, for, example, difficult to estimate to what extent financial advantages were given to nominees.⁴⁷) The interests of the merchants in the City were often different from those of the financiers. Many of them were disturbed by measures that threatened the security and continuity of trade and they were therefore disposed to advise conciliation upon the Government. On the other hand, there were many who benefited from the operation of the Navigation Acts and viewed with alarm the possibility that the protection these gave to their interests might disappear. There were many too who stood to gain from the increased demand for supplies of all kinds that the war would stimulate. In a letter to Richard Champion, Edmund Burke lamented the failure of the 'mercantile interest' to support the Opposition during the winter of 1773-1774 at a crucial stage in the development of the crisis.⁴⁸ And Michael G. Kammen has shown how the prospect of benefits to be gained from a war led some of the manufacturers, particularly in the iron industry, to support the Government, and how even the London merchants became reluctant to oppose it.⁴⁹ Furthermore, after the commencement of hostilities there appears to have been a surge of support for the Government among the citizens of London that cannot be accounted for solely in terms of an awakened perception of

commercial interests. It would appear that something like what we should now call 'the Falklands factor' was in operation, namely, an expression of loyalty to existing authority when that authority is embroiled in war.

The City did not therefore always speak with one voice, and the divisions among its members weakened the force of their representations. After the commencement of hostilities the tide began to turn against the radicals and support for the government grew rapidly even within the official organs of the City. In October 1775 there was a meeting of London merchants at the King's Arms Tavern at which 1171 protested against the continuation of the war. But the force of the petition was diminished by a counter-petition signed by 941 merchant supporting the policies of the government and by another address from 1029 Liverymen also supporting the Government.⁵⁰ This disunity was easily exploited by the Government. When the Liverymen at Common Hall petitioned the King on 5 April 1775, complaining that his policy was 'big with all consequences that can alarm a free and commercial people', the King reacted by declaring that he would no longer receive petitions from the City unless they were from the whole body of freemen.⁵¹ But the differences between the critics and the supporters of the Government were not only the cause of tension. Among those hostile to the Government's policies there was considerable difference of opinion as to the grounds on which the colonists should be supported. Many of the merchants, for example, were predominantly influenced by what they took to be their commercial interests; they did not necessarily subscribe to all the arguments that the radicals adduced in defence of the rebels. Although they were disappointed by the disruption of trade and fearful of the extra taxation that war involved, although they resented the depreciation of Government stocks and were easily made apprehensive by the threat of national bankruptcy, they did not all share the view that the colonists were justified in claiming for themselves the rights of self-government and the status of partners on the basis of equality with the Mother Country in a transatlantic community.

Even among the pro-Americans there were many who would not be prepared to accept Price's arguments in their cause. Although it is tempting to see in their endorsement of the principle 'no taxation without representation' an anticipation of Price's advocacy of the principle of self-government, it would be misleading to suggest that those who claimed that the colonies should be allowed to tax themselves conceded that they should enjoy full sovereignty, just as it would be misleading to suppose that those who claimed that the colonies were

justified in resisting the Government conceded that the colonies had the right to become independent if they so chose. Indeed, it has been claimed by John Sainsbury that it was the determination of the colonists to seek independence that fatally weakened the pro-American cause on the City.⁵²

At the time Price's pamphlet appeared it is probable that his arguments in defence of the colonists would not have won the support of the majority of the citizens of London. This would explain why the radicals had to resort to rather questionable methods to secure the award of the freedom for him. Had they been confident that support would be forthcoming these methods would not have been necessary. It is not possible then to view the award simply as an expression of wide popular support within the city for Price's views. It was rather an attempt to bolster the radical cause and to identify the City with a viewpoint that many of its citizens, if not most, would not have readily accepted. What tends to confirm the validity of this explanation is the fact that in the years following the award the radical movement in the City became relatively quiescent. The support it once enjoyed had passed its peak, and it might well be the case that the attempt to move the reformers in a radical direction by endorsing Price's views had the effect of weakening pro-American influence within the City.

As far as Price's practical proposal's for constitutional reform are concerned, there was no suggestion in his pamphlet that had not been anticipated by the various prospectuses that had been adopted at some stage or other by the leaders of the radicals in the City in the years preceding its publication.

In March 1768, Almon's *The Political Register* set forth a complete programme of parliamentary reform which included: a large extension of the franchise, annual elections, secret ballots and economical reform.⁵³ Many of these items were taken up by William Beckford who, on 10 February 1769, induced the City to instruct its Members of Parliament to press for shorter parliaments, a places bill, a bribery bill and secret ballots in addition to the redress of Wilke's grievances.⁵⁴ This development is important not just on account of the substance of the recommendations but also because it shows that Beckford, the leader of the Shelburnite faction within the City, which included John Sawbridge, James Townsend and Richard Oliver, accepted the doctrine of instructions. This doctrine which was anathema to Burke and the Rockinghamites was accepted in the same year by the Society of the Supporters of the Bill of Rights.⁵⁵ In *Observations on the nature of civil*

liberty Price gave it a firm endorsement.⁵⁶ Again in March 1770 at a meeting of the Liverymen in Common Hall, Beckford spoke in favour of the abolition of rotten boroughs, a bribery bill, shorter parliaments, a reduction of the numbers of pensioners and placemen in the Commons and the parliamentary control of the Civil List.⁵⁷

Many of the reformers like many of Price's friends were more radical or progressive in their prescriptions than he was. John Sawbridge, for example, who was Mayor in the year that Price received his award, began his yearly motion for annual parliaments in 1771. As I have already noted, although Price was in favour of the repeal of the Septennial Act, he wrote more convincingly in favour of shorter, not annual, parliaments. Again, while there was wide support in the City for a programme of electoral reform to include an extension of the franchise as well as a more equitable distribution of seats, Price laid much greater stress on the latter than on the former. On the other hand, when we look for anticipations of Price's formulation of the principle of civil liberty there is room for doubt whether in the period before the publication of his pamphlet there were many in the City who would have endorsed the principle that every independent agent has the right to participate in the government of his society. The programme of the City reformers included shorter parliaments, a reform in the distribution of seats and the elimination or reduction of what they conceived to be corrupt practices, but they still tied representation to property and had little sympathy for the view that a person has a right to voter simply because he is a human being.⁵⁸ As one of Price's trenchant critics, the anonymous author of *A remonstrance with the Court of Common Council*, pointed out: this was not a principle that the City itself had embodied in its own constitutions.⁵⁹

One leader of the radicals to accept this principle was John Wilkes, but the speech in which he declared that every free agent should be represented in Parliament was made on 20 March 1776 after the publication of Price's pamphlet. Price did not allow his puritanical dislike of Wilkes's riotous behaviour to blind him to the constitutional significance of his political objectives. In his autobiography Thomas Somerville recalled:

The simplicity of Dr. Price's manners, and the sincerity stamped upon every sentence he uttered gave a peculiar charm to his conversation. I was, however, surprised by a departure from his mildness and gentleness when any subject of a political nature was introduced such as the expulsion of Mr. Wilkes from the House of Commons, which was at that time a constant topic of conversation in every company. When I mentioned the gross

immoralities of Mr. Wilkes rendering him unworthy of popular favour, he said he was a man he could trample under foot, but the question he had been the occasion of moving was of such constitutional magnitude, that his private character ought to have no influence in the decision of it.⁶⁰

Wilkes was not censorious: on the contrary, in his speech in the Commons he referred to Price as 'the incomparable Dr. Price' and there is no evidence that he exploited the ambiguity of the phrase. His speech shows that he was influenced by Price's pamphlet and the work of Price's mentor, James Burgh. Like Price, Wilkes held that 'the most natural and perfect idea of free government is that of the people themselves assembling to determine by what laws they chuse to be governed'; like Price, he conceded that in a society of any size there has to be representation, that representation is not incompatible with political liberty, but that the system in Britain was defective and sorely in need of reform. Like Price, Wilkes made use of a calculation taken from Burgh's *Political disquisitions*: that 254 members of the House of Commons were elected by 5723 persons. Both Price and Wilkes used the calculation incautiously because they failed to notice that Burgh's claim was misleading. What the calculation shows is not what Price took it to show, namely the numbers that had voted for 254 members at an election, but the lowest number of voters that *could* have secured their election.⁶¹ Like Price, Wilkes believed that a fair and equal representation of the people would create a parliament able and willing to resolve the American crisis in an equitable way, but the passage in his speech which most reflected the way in which he had been taken up by enthusiasm for the democratic principle in a form that far outreaches Price's practical proposals is the following:

The meanest mechanic, the poorest peasant and day-labourer, has important rights respecting his personal liberty, that of his wife and children, his property, however inconsiderable, his wages, his earnings, the very price and value of each day's hard labour which are in many trades and manufactures regulated by the power of Parliament. Every law relative to marriage, to the protection of a wife, sister, or daughter against violence and brutal lust, to every contract or agreement with a rapacious or unjust master is of importance to the manufacturer, the cottager, the servant as well as to the rich subjects of the state. Some share therefore in the power of making those laws, which deeply interest them, and to which they are expected to pay obedience, should be reserved even to this inferior, but most useful, set of men in the community. We ought always to remember this important truth, acknowledged by every free state, that all government is instituted for the good of the mass of the people to be governed; that they are the original fountain of power, *and even of revenue*, and in all events the last resource.⁶²

IV

In conclusion, I shall try to summarize the tentative answers to the questions that I posed at the outset: why should the City fathers have honoured the author of a pamphlet that supported colonists in rebellion against Britain, and why should they have supported a vigorous defence of proposals for parliamentary reform. The main reason must be that Price's pamphlet had justified the policies that the radicals advocated throughout the period when they were in the ascendant in City politics. While, as I hope I have shown, Price's own practical proposals were more moderate than those of the radicals, both on the American crisis and on parliamentary reform, nonetheless his statement of the principle of self-government organized in a succinct and easily assimilable way the arguments in defence of the colonists and for a fuller measure of representative government. But Price's pamphlet did not serve simply as an expression of radical opinion. When it appeared, sympathy in the City for the radicals was on the wane: honouring Price by the award of the Freedom can therefore be seen to have had a twofold purpose: to identify the City more closely in the public mind with radical causes, and to identify the radicals themselves much more closely with extreme formulations, if only in highly abstract terms, of their objectives. Their success in persuading the Council to honour Price can be seen as an indication of the strength of their influence; at the same time the need to secure the award and the manner in which it was secured indicate the growing weakness of their position.

Aberystwyth

1. *The correspondence of Richard Price*, vol. I, ed. D.O. Thomas and Bernard Peach (Durham N.C. and Cardiff, 1983) [hereafter *Corr.*], 248.
2. In the course of the year at least fifteen, possibly, sixteen, editions in England, two in Ireland, one in Scotland, and five in America. In addition there were two editions of a translation into Dutch, and one edition of a translation into French. See forthcoming D.O. Thomas, John Stephens and P.A.L. Jones eds., *Richard Price: a bibliography* (St. Paul's Bibliographies).
3. Resolution in the Journals of the City of London for 14 March 1776, Guildhall Library, reprinted in the ninth edition of *Observations on the nature of civil liberty*. See also *Addresses presented from the Court of Common Council to the King* (London, n.d. [c.1778]), 127-128.
4. See City of London Common Council, Journal, 14 March 1776, 66:296, cited by Colin Bonwick, *English radicals and the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1977), 280-281.
5. John Lind, *Three letters to Dr. Price* (London, 1776). See extracts in W. Bernard Peach, *Richard Price and the ethical foundations of the American Revolution* (Durham, North Carolina, 1979), 236. On 14 Feb. 1777, Jeremy Bentham wrote to

- Samuel Bentham, 'Dr. Price is coming out with more of his stuff, in which Lind I understand is to be attacked. He was saying t'other day to Cadell the bookseller that none of all the attacks that have been made upon him have hurt him except Lind's.' *The correspondence of Jeremy Bentham*, vol. II, ed. Timothy L.S. Sprigge (London, 1968), 23-24.
6. See also John Sainsbury, *Disaffected patriots: London supporters of revolutionary America, 1769-1782* (Kingston and Montreal / Gloucester, 1987), 134.
 7. Richard Price to William Rix, Town Clerk of the City of London, *Corr.*, I, 243-244. In recognition of the honour done to him Price dedicated his *Additional observations* to 'The Right Honourable the Lord Mayor, the Aldermen and the Commons of the City of London'.
 8. Minutes of the Court of Assistants, 28 March 1776, 'The Court of the Common Council of the City having Ordered the Freedom of this City to be presented in a Gold Box to Richard Price Doctor in Divinity and Fellow of the Royal Society as a mark of their Approbation of his pamphlet entitled "Observations on the Nature of Civil liberty, the Principles of Government and the Justice and Policy of the War with America" and he having expressed a Wish to be a member of this Company—Resolved That the said Richard Price Doctor in Divinity and Fellow of the Royal Society be presented with the Freedom of this Company Gratis and That it be referred to the Master & Wardens to Admit him accordingly.'
 9. Warden's Court Book and Freedom Book for Thursday 4 April 1776, 'Price Richard Doctor in Divinity & Fellow of the Royal Society is Admitted into the Freedom of the Company of Drapers London by Redemption Sworn &c.' I am obliged to Mr. R.T. Brown for sending me extracts from the records of the Court of Assistants (see note 4 above) and from the Freedom Book of the Draper's Company.
 10. See James Boswell, *The ominous years 1774-76*, ed. C. Ryskamp and F.A. Pottle (London, 1963), 253: 'Friday 15 March . . . I drove in a hackney-coach to Dilley's, was received by Ned with the briskest kindness; but as I was intent on seeing Sir John Pringle, and settling what I should do to vindicate my father, I was disturbed by his vivacity; and John Wilkes's contest for being Chamberlain, and Price's gold box, were so indifferent to me at the time that Dilly's keen quick, and shrill talk of them was like letting off squibs close to my ears.'
 11. A. Francis Steuart ed., *The last journals of Horace Walpole during the reign of George III from 1771-1773*, 2 vols. (London, 1910), I, 529-530.
 12. *London's roll of fame, 1757-1884* (London, 1884), 57-58. I am grateful to Mr. Oliver Stutchbury for drawing my attention to the fact that not all the recipients registered their receipt of honour in the Chamberlain's Court.
 13. Mr. Newman's Bill for Gold Box for Dr. Price's Freed[om]. Read in Common Council 23d. July 1776. Corporation of London Records Office, Common Council Papers 23 July 1776. Reproduced here by courtesy of the Corporation of London.
 14. Clerk of the Chamber's Bill for the Revd. Richard Price's Freedom. Read in Common Council 23d. July 1776. Corporation of London Records Office, Common Council Papers 23 July 1776. Reproduced here by courtesy of the Corporation of London. For this and the preceding reference I am indebted to Miss Betty Masters.
 15. *Corr.*, I, 247-248.
 16. See *Addresses presented by the Court of Common Council to the King* (London, [1778]), 11, 14, 58, 62, 66, 69, 78, and 86. I am indebted to Mr. John Stephens for these references.
 17. *Op.cit.*, 135ff.
 18. See *Appeal*, new edn. (London, 1774), 10.

19. *Observations on the nature of civil liberty*, 3rd. edn., 73.
20. Francis Wharton ed., *The revolutionary diplomatic correspondence of the United States*, 6 vols. (Washington, 1889), II, 83 (15 April 1776), cited in Carl B. Cone, *The Torchbearer of Freedom* (Lexington, 1952), 78.
21. J.T. Rutt ed., *The theological and miscellaneous works of Joseph Priestley*, 25 vols. (London, 1817-1831), I, *Life and correspondence*, 289fn.
22. See Solomon Lutnik, *The American Revolution and the British press, 1775-1783* (Columbia, Missouri, 1967), 76.
23. Basil Cozens-Hardy ed., *The diary of Syllas Neville (1767-1788)* (London, 1950), 51.
24. See *Corr.* I, 77. For further details of Price's support for the colonists, see D.O. Thomas, *Richard Price and America* (Aberystwyth, 1975).
25. See D.O. Thomas, 'Richard Price: A sketch of proposals for discharging the public debts, securing public liberty and preserving the state', *Enlightenment and Dissent*, no.1 (1982), 91-105.
26. William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Shelburne Papers, vol. 88, fols. 36-44.
27. *Op. cit.*, 2nd. edn., 87.
28. *Op. cit.*, 26.
29. *Op. cit.*, General introduction, v.
30. *Additional observations*, 37fn., 'He who wants to be convinced of the practicability, even in this country, of a complete representation, should read a pamphlet lately published, the title of which is, TAKE YOUR CHOICE.'
31. *Ibid.*, 42-43. Later in his career in 'A letter to Lieut.- Col. Sharman' (1783) Price recommended that the franchise should be extended to copyholders and leaseholders.
32. John Disney ed., *The works...of John Jebb*, 3 vols. (London, 1787), III, 285-289.
33. See *Observations on the nature of civil liberty*, 8-9, 28, 104-109; and D.O. Thomas, *The honest mind* (Oxford, 1977), 209-210.
34. Lucy S. Sutherland, *The City of London and the opposition to government 1768-1774* (London, 1959), 4-5; Colin Bonwick, *English radicals and the American Revolution*, xiv, 269; John Cannon, *Parliamentary reform, 1640-1832* (Cambridge, 1973), 23, 56; George Rudé, *Hanoverian England 1714-1808* (London, 1971), 162-182.
35. *Op.cit.* (London, 1983), 391.
36. See Lucy S. Sutherland, 'The City of London in eighteenth century politics', in *Essays presented to Sir Lewis Namier*, ed. R. Pares and A.J.P. Taylor (London, 1956), 49-74; see also G. Rudé, *op.cit.*, 145.
37. *Middlesex Journal*, 30 May—1 June 1769, cited by D.M. Clark, *British opinion and the American Revolution* (New Haven, 1930), 164.
38. *Jopson's Coventry Mercury or the Weekly Country Journal*, 16 July 1770, cited by Clark, *op.cit.*, 178.
39. *Ibid.*
40. *Ibid.*, 166.
41. M.C. Yarborough, *John Horne Tooke* (New York, 1926), 41-42, cited by Robert E. Toohey, *Liberty and empire* (Lexington, 1978), 16.
42. Clark., *op.cit.*, 167.
43. *Ibid.*
44. *Ibid.*, 166.
45. *Ibid.*, 167-168.
46. On the division of interests, see Sutherland, *The City of London and opposition to government*, 6-7.
47. On the related question whether government contracts were used for political purposes, see Sainsbury, *op.cit.*, 120ff.

48. Edmund Burke to Richard Champion [10] Jan. 1775, *The correspondence of Edmund Burke*, vol. III, ed. G.H. Guttridge (Chicago, 1961), 95-96.
49. See Michael G. Kammen, 'British and imperial interests in the age of reason', in *Anglo-American political relations 1675-1775*, ed. A.G. Olson and R.M. Brown (New Brunswick, N.J., 1970), 150-151.
50. *Gentleman's Magazine*, XLV (1775), 476-477; Clark, *op.cit.*, 99-100.
51. Clark, *op.cit.*, 167.
52. See Sainsbury *op.cit.*, 127.
53. Cited in Cannon, *op.cit.*, 55.
54. *Ibid.*, 61.
55. George Rudé, *Wilkes and liberty* (Oxford, 1962), 195.
56. *Op.cit.*, 10.
57. *Gentleman's Magazine*, XL (1770), 108-112.
58. See Sutherland, *The City of London and the opposition to government*, 23.
59. Appended to Dr. William King's, *An essay on civil government* (London, 1776).
60. Thomas Somerville, *My own life and times, 1741-1814* (Edinburgh, 1861), 146.
61. See *Observations on the nature of civil liberty*, 10, and Burgh, *op.cit.* (London, 1774-1775), I, 45. The number 254 is significant because Burgh claimed that 254 was more than half of the greatest number known to have attended and voted in a debate (502 in a debate held in 1741). This figure was substantially accurate. See P.D.G. Thomas, *The House of Commons in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1971), 125.
62. *The speeches of John Wilkes*, 3 vols. (London, 1777-1778), I, 107. Cf. *Observations on the nature of civil liberty*, 12, 14.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF WILLIAM GODWIN'S *DAMON AND DELIA*

Mark Philp

Among the many anniversaries shortly to be celebrated is the bicentenary of the publication of William Godwin's *An enquiry concerning political justice* (1793). It is probably safe to assume that this event, unlike the French commemoration of 1789, will not be treated as an opportunity for monumental schlock at great public expense—Godwin's standing with the general public is not quite of the same order. That said, judging by his publication profile, his reputation has been rising consistently over the last few years, and there seems to be no abatement of this process in prospect. The recent biographies by Don Locke and Peter Marshall have now been supplemented by William St. Clair's *The Godwins and the Shelleys* (Faber, 1989), which has found its way on to the best-sellers' list, and which includes amongst its virtues the identification of a number of new works by Godwin, mostly written prior to 1793, including a three volume work designed for the eighteenth-century aristocrats' equivalent of the coffee-table under the title of *The English Peerage*. Godwin's political philosophy is the subject of a forthcoming study by Greg Claeys, and Alan Ryan is due to produce a 'Past Master' on him. Judging from the number of papers on Godwin's literary work given at the various bicentennial conferences throughout the country, it seems likely that Tysdahl's study of the novels will soon find competitors.

Godwin's work is also becoming much more widely available. Penguin have published an edition of *Caleb Williams* [edited by Maurice Hindle, (1988)] which lacks the critical textual apparatus of the McCracken Oxford English Novels edition, but which provides an invigorating and enthusiastic introduction and a number of appendices, including Godwin's important but unpublished essay 'Of History and Romance'. They have also issued *Wollstonecraft and Godwin* [ed. R. Holmes, (1987) which includes the infamous, but heart-felt, first edition of Godwin's *Memoirs of Wollstonecraft*.] Moreover, a sixteen volume edition of Godwin's works is to be published by Pickering and Chatto roughly in time for the bicentenary of *Political justice*.

The discovery of 'new' works by Godwin, and their publication to allow a wider audience access to them, is an indication of the revival of scholarly interest in Godwin and it has undoubtedly helped to improve our understanding of him. But not all 'new' works are equally

enlightening. The three volume *English peerage*, published three years before *Political justice*, reminds us rather forcibly that the relationship between Godwin's need to survive and his output was often rather direct, but it does not shed much light on Godwin's principles or his character. The publication of a facsimile edition of Godwin's first novel, *Damon and Delia* (1784), however, is a rather different matter—although quite how different is open to dispute. Peter Marshall claims (perhaps a little prematurely, given St. Clair's discoveries) that it 'is not only the last of Godwin's major works to be discovered but is one of the best of his early works', while Tysdahl accounts it 'a disarming little story completely different from Godwin's other novels.'¹ Tysdahl's claim is certainly justified. Nothing in the later novels prepares the reader for the lightness of touch and the ironic Fieldingesque style of *Damon and Delia*. But is this sufficient to justify the claim that the novel is one of Godwin's major works? The best short answer to this question is that it is a rather weak piece of work whose flaws do much to aid our understanding of Godwin.

The weakness of the novel is rooted, oddly enough given Godwin's later obsession with individuals (Caleb, Fleetwood, St. Leon, Mandeville etc.), in his failure to give his characters any real substance or depth. To borrow Henry James's distinction, Godwin's narrator tells rather than shows. The narrative does not develop the characters, they simply move around unconditioned by events. Neither Damon nor Delia have much to interest the reader. Damon lies feverish in bed owing to an unduly severe attack of sensibility following the abduction of Delia and so is absent from the few moments of excitement in the novel; whereas Delia's character is hardly embellished by her falling for him. Sir William Twyford, an aristocratic Puck who entertains himself by spreading mischief among Delia's army of grotesque suitors, is given only the most transparently thin pranks to play on his victims. And none of the other many minor characters who over-populate the book, with the possible exception of Mr. Godfrey, is really anything more than a rather feeble caricature. The plot is standard late eighteenth-century fare—two virtuous, accomplished, elegant and, of course, beautiful individuals meet by chance, fall in love, are separated by a number of obstacles, overcome these while exemplifying their virtue, and are married to universal acclaim. The pleasures to be gained from such novels are largely to be found in their wit and their ability to sustain uncertainty and tension for the reader, and while Godwin's ability to do this is not substantially inferior to the hundreds of others who scribbled away to keep body and soul together, he never rises above the ranks of the mediocre. The one character for whom an exception is often made is

Mr. Godfrey—whom it is assumed is loosely based on Godwin himself. Certainly, it does seem that Godwin is trying to get something off his chest when writing the Godfrey section (pp.100-113)—it takes a disproportionate amount of space, during which time the whole action of the novel is put to one side, and it gives us more background on Godfrey than on anyone else in the text, hero and heroine included. Moreover, the section has no purpose integral to the action of the novel—indeed, the characterization it gives of Godfrey is such that one barely recognizes him when he reappears as the cudgel wielding heroic rescuer of the abducted Delia. Consequently, however interesting a figure Godfrey is to modern readers (because of the parallels with Godwin), his appearance does nothing for the book *qua* novel.

How, then, does a bad novel add to our understanding of Godwin? Godfrey certainly plays some role here, if we take him as representing Godwin's fictionalized self. He is a man with few means and many abilities. In his youth his means were always fewer than those of his contemporaries, and his abilities greater. At university, refusing to play the sycophant, he finds his social superiors less than eager for his company. After graduating he takes up a post as a curate at forty pounds a year. The obscurity of his position is galling to his ambitions, but he tries to combine them by attempting 'to form the peasant to generosity and sentiment.' (p.103) This project turns out to be less than one hundred per cent successful—people, being what they are, found fault with their curate and his plans come to nought. He subsequently tries tutoring for the nobility, but the children are rather stupid. Moreover, his employer, once the novelty of the tutor's presence wears off, manages to forget him entirely 'in the hurry of dissipation, and the pursuits of an unbounded ambition.' Leaving their service he writes a masterpiece, only to run up against the prejudices of the publishing industry. In the end someone is foolish enough to print it, thus allowing it to be massacred by the critics. Godfrey resorts to hack work which gives him at best a precarious existence: 'the time of dinner often came, before the production that was to be purchased was completed; and when completed, it was frequently several days before it could find a purchaser.' (p.109) Damon, by a simple twist of fate, comes across a copy of Godfrey's book and turns up to save him. Despite the fact that Godfrey seems to have been incredibly naive about the world and his fellow occupants, and 'though misfortune had taught him asperity upon certain subjects, it had not corrupted his manners, debauched his integrity or narrowed his heart. He had still the same warmth in the cause of virtue, as in days of the most unexperienced simplicity. He still dreaded an oath and revered the divinity of innocence. He still

believed in a God, and was fiercely attached to his honour, though he had often been told, that this was a prejudice, unworthy of his comprehension of thinking upon all other subjects.' (pp.112-113) One way, then, in which the novel extends our understanding of Godwin is this presentation of Godfrey (and implicitly of himself) as someone whose abilities fail to achieve recognition as a result of the prejudices and customs of eighteenth-century patrician society. Perhaps most striking about this presentation is that it combines supreme confidence in the abilities of Godfrey with a story which (unwittingly) reveals his complete lack of nous. Godfrey refuses to compromise his principles and yet is unable and unwilling to suppress his ambition. Moreover, society is so structured that the principles of the virtuous man cannot deliver the rewards which ambition craves. This conflict between virtuous ambition and the existing social order further damages a weak novel, but it also brings Godwin's own character and motivation to the fore.

Damon and Delia is supposed to be a light-hearted piece of work. Indeed, one of the most surprising things about the novel is its playfulness, which is not a feature of many of Godwin's works—with the exception of *The herald of literature*, and to a lesser extent *Imogen*. Yet, despite the eagerness of many critics to draw our attention to Godwin's use of light-hearted irony (Marshall), and to its fund of wit and liveliness (Tysdahl), it is not difficult to see at the heart of the novel concerns and tensions of a deeply serious nature which mark Godwin's entire *oeuvre*. Much of the awkwardness of the Godfrey section in the novel consists in the clash between its evident moral seriousness and the flippant tone of the rest of the novel. This sits oddly because if Godfrey provides a standard of virtue the rest of the cast cannot simply parade as harmless comic turns. On the contrary, they are necessarily implicated in the corrupt social order which fails to do justice to the talents of its members. Sir William, the odious Lord Martin, Mr. Prettyman, and the others, all of whom would not look too out of place in a Fielding novel, are ripped from their Fieldingesque setting and rudely transported into the less forgiving court of Rousseausque virtue by Godwin's failure to caricature the inflexible moral integrity of Godfrey. The one point at which an opening occurs for gently ribbing Godfrey is on the question of his ambition—but by the end of Godfrey's story Godwin is running ambition and virtue so closely together that the former takes on a fully moral character. In doing so, he adds a further nail to the novel's coffin by implicitly condemning the society which the rest of the novel sports with. Nonetheless, it is this move which reveals in *Damon and Delia* Godwin's own driving ambition and his own sense that the failure of the

existing social order to accommodate that ambition is an indictment of that society rather than of the individual's moral values. Moreover, the equivocal, slightly down-beat ending, suggests, what Godwin's later work confirms, that a society in which virtue meets its rewards is a radically different one from that to be found in the last twenty years of the eighteenth century.

Damon and Delia deserves our attention less because of its virtues as a novel, since these are hardly compelling, and more because of the light it sheds on the depth of Godwin's discontent, his sense of thwarted ambition, and his inchoate recognition that his failure to thrive on his own terms was confirmation of the depth of corruption of the whole. In succeeding years Godwin's ambition was to be sanctified under the banner of truth and justice, but even in this early novel he shows that he is incapable of taking himself less than wholly seriously. This may seem a harsh judgement on the man, but it is one tempered by the knowledge that the bicentennial of the publication of *Political justice* will be paying homage not to Godwin's ambition but to his achievement. He would doubtless have preferred to see the latter as uncontaminated by the former, but in celebrating the achievements of his rationalism we are not obliged to indulge all its pretensions.

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*W. Godwin's, *Damon and Delia*, ed. P. Marshall, is published by Zena, Croesor (1988), 182pp, £14.95 and is obtainable through the University of Wales Press.

1. Marshall's introduction, of some 14 pages, is unpaginated, the quotation comes from the first page; B.J. Tysdahl, *William Godwin as Novelist* (Athlone, 1981), 176.

A SERVANT'S VIEW OF JOSEPH PRIESTLEY

Alan Ruston

We cannot expect to come across eye witness accounts of Joseph Priestley's life in Birmingham in 1790 appearing in published works much beyond 1825. After 1840 the prospect is remote. However, an obituary notice appearing in the Unitarian monthly journal, the *Christian Reformer*, in October 1848, provides us with a fascinating account of life in the Priestley household in 1790/1791 from the viewpoint of a fourteen year-old boy. Isaac Whitehouse (1776-1847), 'a worthy but Poor man . . . a gas fitter', was engaged as a servant at Fairhill sometime during 1790. He retained vivid memories of that exciting but dangerous period into his old age, and passed them on to someone who turned out to be his obituarist.

It cannot be pretended that the obituary constitutes a primary source that can be verified. The *Christian Reformer* records the words of 'J.B.D.' (who cannot be precisely identified) which are based on the notes he took of conversations held some years before with a relatively uneducated man who was recalling events that took place in his boyhood some fifty years previously.

However, taking these limitations into account, the content of this mid-nineteenth-century article has the ring of truth and immediacy about it, providing as it does some intriguing detail on Dr. Priestley and which emphasizes his kindness and understanding to a young servant. The obituary does not say whether Isaac Whitehouse had ever been a Unitarian or attached to a Nonconformist congregation, but its failure to mention the point indicates that he was not so connected. If he had been, then the fashion of obituaries of the worthy poor of the period would have required the inclusion of an appeal for the support of the widow.

The text of the obituary is reproduced in full with the editor's note. For me the most human and engaging view of Priestley presented here is the picture of Mrs. Priestley giving her husband pocket money whenever he went from home!

OBITUARY

[p.637] 1847, Dec. 24, at Shelton, Staffordshire, ISAAC WHITEHOUSE, aged 71 years. The deceased was a worthy but poor man, who got his living for many years as a gas-fitter. The deleterious effects of this

occupation, in which lead and its preparation are much used, ultimately shortened his days. His history, not otherwise remarkable, may probably obtain a brief notice for him in the *Christian Reformer*, from the circumstance that he resided with Dr. Priestley as a servant boy at the time of the wicked riots of 1791. On different occasions he has conversed with the writer of these lines, and communicated circumstances respecting his revered master, whom he honoured even to his old age, impressively saying of him, that "he should never live to see such another man." Notes of these conversations were committed to paper at the time. And, although some pieces of information which clung so long to the relator's memory may appear trifling in themselves, still, to the admirers of Dr. Priestley, Whitehouse's disconnected recollections may not prove wholly unacceptable.

Isaac Whitehouse was born at Coseley Old Mill, in the parish of Sedgeley, Staffordshire, April 20th, 1776. Previously to his going to live with Dr. Priestley, he was for a short time in the Messrs. Russells' warehouse in Paradise Street, Birmingham, when he boarded and lodged with Mr. Gibson, superintendent of their establishment, who lived in a house adjoining the warehouse.¹ When at Messrs. Russells' warehouse there was another person there of the name of Whitehouse, who afterwards became a Unitarian minister.² It must have been in his fourteenth year that he went to live with Dr. Priestley, for he continued with him nearly two years,—till the riots in July, 1791. His duties were to wait on the Dr., to assist him in his laboratory, and to go on errands, such as carrying the proof-sheets of the various works published by Dr. Priestley during his residence in Birmingham to and from the printers,—principally to Mr. Harris's, Birmingham Gazette Office.* The name of Dr. Priestley's residence was Fairhill, situated nearly two miles from Birmingham. His laboratory was a very complete one. He used to do any light iron work on his own anvil; heavier articles he had forged in Birmingham. He had a printed catalogue of his own writings, a copy of which he gave to Whitehouse. The Dr. composed in a short-hand, and a Mr. Birtles, a writer in an attorney's office, used to come occasionally to copy this out in long-hand, after the Dr. had read the short-hand to him. Sometimes Mr. Birtles would stay writing for a fortnight, and sleep at Fairhill. When the short-hand MSS. were done with, being written upon one side only, the Dr. would give them to Whitehouse to use in writing upon the other side. The Dr. was very kind to Whitehouse; he desired his son William to teach him to write, arithmetic, and the use of globes. He gave him a pair of globes, having himself got a new pair, with Capt. Cook's tracks marked on them. These Whitehouse kept in his bed-room, with many books and maps of Palestine, etc., the Dr. likewise gave him; but the rioters destroyed all, throwing the globes out of the window. Indeed, Whitehouse's bed-room was more like a library, the walls being covered with Dr. Priestley's books. The Dr. also gave him permission to read any book in his library, making only this condition, that he carefully put the book back again into its place when he had done with it. Whitehouse read many volumes on this kind

permission. The Dr.'s son Joseph was with his mother's brother, Mr. Wilkinson, at Bradley's iron-works. There were two women servants kept in the house besides Whitehouse. The Dr. did not keep a horse. He generally walked to town, and had a hackney carriage when Mrs. Priestley went with him. The Dr. went twice to London each summer Whitehouse was with him. He rose early, particularly in summer, often at five o'clock, and went to bed at ten. There were family prayers in an evening at nine o'clock, and frequently in a morning. The Dr. had a little bit of an impediment in his speech, which you might discover when he was in a great hurry in speaking. He was never idle for five minutes at a time, but engaged in reading, or some other [p.638] way. When reading, he always had a pencil in his hand, with which he made notes in the margin of the book. The Dr. kept a good deal of company, and many persons of all religious denominations about Birmingham visited him. Mr. Berrington, the Catholic of Barr, used frequently to call to see him, and many other Catholics.³ He was particularly friendly with Mr. J. Proud, the Swedenborgian minister of the Temple, and was accustomed to lend him books, which Whitehouse conveyed backwards and forwards.⁴ The Dr. had a catalogue of his library, with references to the shelves, as well as the numbers on the books. The Dr. had three sons, Joseph, William, who was short-sighted and wore spectacles, and Henry.

Mrs. Priestley was a very industrious woman, never at rest except when she was asleep. She used to assist in all household duties except washing, and always made pastry herself. She frequently came to direct and assist Whitehouse in the garden in weeding and planting. She managed all pecuniary matters, and if the Dr. was going out, he used to ask her for money. On Sundays he stayed in Birmingham to dine.

When the rioters came to Fairhill, there was much difficulty in persuading Mrs. Priestley to get into a coach to go away; her friends were almost obliged to use force. The rioters broke all the glass apparatus in the laboratory,—retorts, alembics, carboys, &c.—and there was a cart-body full of broken glass on the floor. They found some wine in the cellar—raisin wine, made by Mrs. Priestley, who used to prepare many sweet wines. They broke off the necks of the bottles and drank the wine, frequently getting their lips cut in the struggle and contention that was going on. One man was ascending through the cellar window, with a bottle of wine in each hand and a bread loaf under his arm, when some of the rioters who had got upon the roof of the house were pushing the coping-stones off the parapet. One of these stones fell upon the man's head, struck a portion off one side and broke his arm; he died in a few minutes. They had much difficulty in getting lights to set things on fire. They tried by rubbing phosphorus upon the floors. At length they got a candle and set fire to the house in different parts. It burnt as long as it would, not one attempting to put it out. There was a sun-dial on the grass-plot at the front of the house; the rioters heaped the Dr.'s books around this and set them on fire. Most of the mischief was done by youths between boys and men. Whitehouse saved a telescope about six feet long, and a very powerful burning lens, so powerful that it

would melt a brick. He carried them to a labourer's house in the fields till a period of safety. The Birmingham authorities did not interfere to put a stop to the work of destruction. Mr. Russell carried information to London, and letters were sent from thence to Nottingham for soldiers to proceed to the spot.⁵ As soon as the rioters heard that soldiers were coming, they collected in groups of five or six, and skulked off across the fields. The rioting continued for three or four days, during which Whitehouse remained on the spot.

At the time of Dr. Priestley's going to America, Whitehouse received a present of three guineas from Mrs. Priestley. She also came down to Mr. Wood's, the Unitarian minister, when she called upon his mother to inquire whether she would allow him to go with them.⁶ He, however, had been put apprentice to a shoemaker, and his mother would not consent to his going to America, which he always regretted since. People thought as much of going to America then, as we do of going to Australia now. Whitehouse's father was the owner of the windmill at which he was born, and likewise of a bit of land. He had twelve children.

Whitehouse subsequently lived at Warwick, where he frequently saw Dr. Parr.⁷ It was Parr's custom, when riding out, to get his servant to ride before, instead of behind him, having once been attacked by a bull.

Isaac Whitehouse has left a poor and infirm widow, with whom he had been united nearly fifty years.

* Whitehouse used to take a proof to the printer's most days, and generally twice a day.

J.B.D.

Oxhey, Watford,
Hertfordshire

1. The Russell family are well known for their long business and social connection in Birmingham. The business of William Russell (1740-1818) 'was the export trade from Birmingham and Sheffield to Russia, Spain and the United StatesOn the settlement of Joseph Priestley at Birmingham in 1780, Russell, who was a member of his congregation, became his generous supporter and intimate friend. The dinner of 14 July 1791, which led to the Birmingham riots, was mainly promoted by Russell and, as he states, on commercial grounds, in the interest of the Birmingham trade with France.' (Alexander Gordon, *D.N.B.*). See also S.H. Jeyes, *The Russells of Birmingham* (London, 1911); E.M. Geffen, *Philadelphia Unitarianism 1796-1861* (University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1961).
2. This would have been Revd. Mark Whitehouse who was Minister at Derby 1804-1810 and at the Old Meeting Houses at Findern and Ilkeston from 1810 (See Surman's Index of Nonconformist Ministers at Dr. Williams's Library).
3. Revd. Joseph Berington (1746-1827), the Roman Catholic priest and author regularly got himself into trouble because of his unorthodox stands on theological and social issues. 'So liberal, indeed, were his views that on being invited to preach at the meeting house of the Socinian Dissenters, he excused himself on the sole grounds of the novelty of the proposal. . . .About 1786 Berington appears to have been the priest at Oscott, a small hamlet about a mile and a half from Barr, in Staffordshire where

Miss Mary Anne Galton, afterwards Mrs Schimmelpenninck, then resided with her father. That lady relates that Berington, Dr. Priestley, Mr. Boulton and Mr. Watt used to attend the social meetings held at Barr . . . (Thompson Cooper, *D.N.B.*) See also, *Biographical Dictionary of English Catholics* (Joseph Gillow, 1885), vol. i, although some of the facts in these two sources do not agree.

4. Joseph Proud (1745-1826) started life as a General Baptist minister but joined the Swedenborgians in 1788, and 'visited Birmingham (June 1790) where a "temple" in Newhall Street was being built by a wealthy merchant and he agreed to become its minister. . . . [he] opened the Birmingham temple on 19 June 1791. Priestley, who was present at one of the opening services, immediately wrote a series of letters to its members, and made an appointment to read them, before publication, to Proud and his friends on 15 July, an intention frustrated by the riots which broke out on the previous day. Proud's relations with the unitarians were friendly. He preached in their chapel at Warwick in 1792.' (Alexander Gordon, *D.N.B.*).
5. William Russell.
6. This probably refers to Revd. William Wood F.L.S. (1745-1808), the botanist, who succeeded Priestley in 1773 as Minister at the Mill Hill Chapel, Leeds, where he remained till he died.
7. Revd. Samuel Parr (1747-1825), Curate of Hatton, Warwickshire; a writer and a strong Whig. In July 1790 'he was present at a dinner given to celebrate the ordination of his friend, William Field to the High Street Chapel in Warwick. He there met Priestley, with whom he at once formed a friendship. The acquaintance, it seems, became dangerous in 1791, when the rioters were expected to attack Hatton parsonage after their outrages on Priestley's supporters in Birmingham.' (Leslie Stephen, *D.N.B.*).

John Sainsbury, *Disaffected patriots: London supporters of revolutionary America, 1769-1782*, Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press/Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1987, xi + 305pp.

This book is a condensation of the author's McGill University Ph.D. dissertation entitled 'The Pro-American Movement in London, 1769-1782: Extraparliamentary Opposition to the Government's American Policy' (1975), the heart of which appeared in an article in the *William and Mary Quarterly* in 1978.¹ It provides us with the best available study of the personnel, institutions, and political methods of the English pro-Americans in London during the revolutionary war. The book is based upon solid archival research, and combining the techniques of both historical narrative and quantitative analysis, it is a well-written and convincing account of popular opposition to the government's colonial policies. A number of important conclusions emerge from this study that will require significant readjustments in our understanding of political radicalism. For example, Sainsbury has demonstrated a telling connection between the London Wilkites and the pro-Americans of 1775. He astutely draws out the ways in which the issue over general warrants in England was associated with the debate over writs of assistance in the colonies; there was both ideological congruence and historical continuities in leaders and techniques between pro-Wilkism in the 1760s and pro-Americanism and parliamentary reform in the 1770s (pp.15-18, 24-25, 31-42, 52-54, 82-88, 112, 119, 146-147). Since the study of popular politics in the mid-1770s has largely been neglected, this helps open the way for a new, more evolutionary conception of the emergence of radicalism. Sainsbury follows John Brewer on the adaptation of radical Tory and Country ideology by the Commonwealthmen and depicts a shift during the American Revolution from Country ideology concerning shorter parliaments and the exclusion of placemen to more modern demands for an equal representation (pp.19-20, 164). Perhaps more importantly, his research in the popular petitions, poll books, and city directories reveals the same consistent political affiliation among London petitioners and addressers who were also voters as George Rudé, John Phillips, and Thomas Knox found in their studies of large urban constituencies (p.119). Individual level analysis of the behaviour of the late-eighteenth-century urban voter and petitioner demonstrates, once again, just how vibrant and exciting popular political culture could be.

Disaffected patriots sheds some new light on the question of anti-Catholicism in relation to pro-Americanism, suggesting that there was no simple relationship between the issues of 'popery and America'

(pp.156-158). The book also sets forth a balanced and well-nuanced discussion of the possibility of insurrection in England. While revolt was never likely, some London pro-Americans hoped for an armed uprising, and it was certainly feared by the authorities; the threatening nature of radicalism is thereby further illumined. One of the strengths of the book is the detailed account of the London Association and its activities (pp.106-113), and just as Sainsbury offers us good reasons for understanding the pro-Americans as genuine radicals, we are given fresh insights on how internal dissensions within the movement rendered their efforts abortive (pp.46-47, 78, 86-87, 96-97).

Unfortunately, this book went into print with reference to only two books² and no articles published in the last decade, and thus the pivotal studies of Thomas Knox, Peter Marshall, John Phillips, Nicholas Rogers, and Linda Colley are ignored, and John Money's monograph and articles are unassimilated. The neglect of this literature has serious repercussions for his interpretation in three pivotal areas: Parliament, the English provinces and the influence of religion. Sainsbury argues, that in Parliament and in the provinces, pro-Americanism was 'not an effective political movement', and he sharply contrasts their apathy with the great persistence of popular pro-Americanism in London (pp.ix, 164). Mary Kinnear's important dissertation, 'Pro-Americans in the British House of Commons in the 1770s', was available in 1973, and it demonstrated an irrefutable connection between populous constituencies and pro-American Members of Parliament, but Sainsbury was unaware of her research.³ On popular politics in the provinces, Sainsbury was misled by Bernard Donoghue's account of the lack of electoral support for pro-American candidates in the general election of 1774. This election can now be shown to be an unusually inappropriate point of departure to measure the extent of opposition to the government. Sainsbury argues that 'organized support' for the colonies, with 'few exceptions' like Bristol, was confined to London; colonial aspirations in the provinces were treated with 'apathy or hostility', and once again, a strong contrast is drawn to popular politics in London (pp.69, 164). Important articles by Thomas Knox and Peter Marshall have proven that London was not unique; at least twenty one boroughs and five counties were seriously divided over the American crisis. Ignorance of Knox's studies causes Sainsbury to completely miss one of the few successes the London Association enjoyed outside of London in Newcastle-upon-Tyne (p.108).⁴ Sainsbury thus underestimates the importance of provincial pro-Americanism. Finally, he has also failed to fathom the strength of pro-American sentiment among Dissenters: 'Contemporaries commented on the passivity of the nonconformists as

a group' (p.81). In London, the Yearly Meeting of the Society of Friends had positively recommended Quakers to avoid any involvement in the agitation concerning America, and Sainsbury could find no Quaker pro-American signatures on the petition for conciliation (p.117). It is a lapse of no little importance to miss entirely Arthur J. Mekeels's study, *The Relation of the Quakers to the American Revolution* (Washington, 1979), and in the provinces, it can now be shown, the Dissenters were consistently the most important single stimulus behind the pro-American agitation.⁵ Sainsbury's case for the importance of English pro-Americanism is thus severely weakened by confining his study to the metropolis and unaccountably neglecting almost everything published on the subject of popular politics since 1978.

In his earlier dissertation and article, Sainsbury concluded that there were no socio-economic differences between pro-American petitioners and pro-government addressers during the popular agitation over the government's coercive policy in the fall of 1775. In one important respect this book takes us considerably beyond his dissertation. A closer analysis of the occupations of petitioners and addressers led him to the conclusion that there was a socio-economic basis to political divisions in London. Many pro-government addressers were wealthy merchants and directors of moneyed companies who stood to profit by the war. Altogether, some 24% of the pro-government addressers had some economic connection with the government, and Sainsbury gives us an excellent discussion of the political implications of government contracts. In addition, one third of addressers were merchants, although only a small fraction of these were traders to North America. Here Sainsbury's research is a tremendous advance over the arguments adduced by Dora Mae Clark. On the lower socio-economic side, 44% of the addressers were tradesmen and craftsmen, but they were not independent; many of these also enjoyed contractual links with North's Administration (pp. 70, 115-116, 118, 120-125). In contrast, 66% of the pro-American petitioners were wholesalers, retailers, and craftsmen, particularly the latter, drawn from the same occupational categories as the members of the London Association and London's Common Council. The American conflict threatened these people with 'economic dislocation with no apparent compensatory benefits' (pp.118-119). London's independent tradesmen feared the central government would 'sacrifice native interests to alien ones' and their 'patriotism' was thus characteristically xenophobic. They viewed such financial innovations as the national debt, growth of moneyed companies, and stock jobbing as pernicious. The London pro-Americans tied their sense of economic oppression to the True Whig notion of conspiracy, with all the elements

of secret cabinet mythology (pp.8-15). Since the wealthier merchants and those with government contacts were devotedly pro-government, whereas the majority of pro-Americans were lesser tradesmen and craftsmen, Sainsbury does not shrink from calling this 'economic and class antagonism' (p.15). The divisions in London were thus based 'to a large extent' on socio-economic distinctions (pp.69, 119, 164).

Sainsbury's conclusions may have important implications for the way the evolution of radicalism is understood, yet he uses such language as 'lower middles class' aspirations and 'class consciousness' without providing us with a theoretical framework concerning his meaning (p.43). He does hint in the concluding paragraph that these data point to a greater element of continuity between the earlier Wilkite and Wyvillite radicalism of the 1770s and 1780s and the new artisan radicalism of the 1790s, but this insight remains undeveloped. In fact, Sainsbury's research in popular politics in London reflects exactly the same pattern of socio-economic division over America first discovered by Peter Marshall in his study of Manchester. Recent research in England's largest cities suggests that the evolution of radicalism in many, if not most, urban settings outside London was indeed related to both radical religion and socio-economic conflict.⁶ If Sainsbury had gone to the trouble to consult recent research, his unwarranted generalizations concerning the uniqueness of social and political developments in London could have easily been avoided, and this, in turn, might have resulted in a much clearer treatment of the evolutionary character of English urban radicalism.

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1. John Sainsbury, 'The Pro-Americans of London, 1769-1782', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd. Ser., 35 (1978), 423-454.
2. The two books are J.G.A. Pocock ed., *Three British Revolutions: 1641, 1688, 1776* (Princeton, 1980), and Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and J.H. Plumb, *The birth of a consumer society: the commercialization of eighteenth-century England* (Bloomington, Indiana, 1982).
3. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Oregon. She followed this up with 'British Friends of America "Without Doors" during the American Revolution', *The Humanities Association Review*, 27 (1976), 104-119, which Sainsbury also failed to note.
4. See James E. Bradley, *Popular politics and the American Revolution in England: petitions, the crown and public opinion* (Mercer, Georgia, 1986). Thomas R. Knox, 'Popular Politics and Provincial Radicalism: Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1764-1785', *Albion* 11 (1979), 224-241; 'Wilkism and the Newcastle Election of 1774', *Durham*

- University Journal*, 72 (1979-1980), 23-37; Peter Marshall, 'Manchester and the American Revolution', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 62 (1979), 168-186.
5. See Bradley, *Popular politics and the American Revolution*, ch.7.
 6. See Bradley, *Popular politics and the American Revolution* on Southampton, Great Yarmouth, and Cambridge; the results of my research on several larger boroughs will appear shortly.

R.G.W. Anderson and Christopher Lawrence editors, *Science, medicine and Dissent: Joseph Priestley (1733-1804)*, (Wellcome Trust/Science Museum, London, 1987), xi + 105pp, £9.95.

In 1983 the Wellcome Institute in London celebrated the 250th anniversary of Joseph Priestley's birth by a meeting at which the majority of the papers collected in this volume were first presented. Appended to this collection is the catalogue of an exhibition of Priestleyana which was displayed in the same year at both the Royal Society of London and the Wellcome Institute. The great advantage of such celebrations, and the publications to which they give rise, is that they encourage a diversity of historians to reappraise the celebrity. Despite a constant trickle of publications from the relatively small Priestley industry, the volume under review provides a timely assessment of scholarship on Priestley. However, as with many similar collections, the papers contained in this volume do not, when taken together, offer a coherent view of Priestley and they also differ greatly in both quality and style.

Of the three topics cited in the book's title—science, medicine and Dissent—the middle one is almost entirely confined to the opening paper by Christopher Lawrence. By contrast both science and Dissent provide themes running through most of these essays. Yet even these themes are handled in very different ways by the contributors who offer diverse and even incompatible perceptions of what constituted both science and Dissent for Priestley. If no coherent account of Priestley emerges, the common denominator linking several of the papers lies in their authors' repeated challenge to traditional notions of Priestley as scientist and as Rational Dissenter.

Lawrence's opening paper not only engages medicine but also summarizes Priestley's life. Although its title, 'Priestley in Tahiti: the medical interests of a dissenting chemist', raises the prospect of voyages ignored by all previous biographers, the author's aim is to suggest that Priestley's biographers have overlooked the medical context of his life and work. Thus we find him rubbing shoulders with medical men, who were often also Dissenters, and preaching a sermon praising the Infirmary at Leeds. Lawrence also argues that Priestley and his contemporaries perceived his research on gases in terms of its medical applicability. From this perspective it is possible that his work on fixed air (carbon dioxide) was occasioned by correspondence with an apothecary who hoped that it would alleviate putrid fevers, especially scurvy. The case does, however, need to be argued more forcefully.

If the medical aspect of this collection can be summarized quickly, Priestley's science is appropriately accorded far more emphasis. John McEvoy's contribution is based on his earlier papers and particularly on a jointly authored paper with J.E. McGuire in which they drew close links between Priestley's theology and his philosophy of nature.¹ In the present volume McEvoy extends this approach to try to account for Priestley's antipathy towards the oxygen theory and his support for the phlogiston theory. McEvoy contends not only that Priestley was primarily a religious thinker but that we should understand his science in terms of his religious commitments. Thus, by a long chain of reasoning we are led from Rational Dissent through metaphysics, epistemology, and methodology to Priestley's theologically-based conception of matter as constituted by attractive and repulsive powers operating by invariable laws. Moreover, by clearly differentiating substances and properties Priestley initially sought to identify phlogiston as a real substance which could be either weighed or isolated. When these attempts failed he retreated to the claim that phlogiston operated according to laws. Possessing sophisticated views on methodology, Priestley then sought to undermine the opposing oxygen theory. Although McEvoy offers an able discussion of Priestley's natural philosophy his argument is less than convincing since these philosophical concerns shed but a partial-light on Priestley's rich discussions of the two competing theories. It is, for example, far from clear why his philosophical presuppositions should not have made him just as enthusiastic towards oxygen theory as he initially was towards phlogiston. The author's approach could perhaps be enriched by a fuller appreciation of Priestley's chemical practice.²

An interesting contrast is provided by Simon Schaffer's political analysis of Priestley's scientific discourse. In a rather unfocused paper Schaffer initially confronts the apparent paradox that while Priestley was a revolutionary in the political realm, his chemistry was reactionary since he resisted the chemical revolution associated with Lavoisier. That, Schaffer argues is an inappropriate way of reading the political meaning of Priestley's science; he prefers to interpret Priestley as initiating a significant break with the British natural philosophical tradition which had been dominated by a Whig authoritarian structure. Particularly in *The history and present state of electricity* (1767) Priestley undermined the power and authority of the lecturer and presented nature as more directly open to the reader.³ This shift opened up two contrary readings of Priestley's writings: a radical one which contrasted nature with the corrupting effect of government and a liberal but highly intellectualized conception which sought a total system underlying both

nature and government. Yet both readings made use of facts in order to guard against false doctrines and corruptions in both science and politics. What principally interests Schaffer is the role of facts and how they function both to stabilize and to undermine systems of thought. While many historians have sought to interpret the facts discovered by Priestley within such contexts as the history of chemistry, the history of electricity, etc., Schaffer ingeniously suggests how we might decode the political meanings of scientific facts *per se*.

A very different understanding of Priestley's political position is provided by D.O. Thomas who turns his attention to questions of progress, liberty and utility. Priestley emerges as radical only in the period beginning with the French Revolution, having previously defended the Whig conception of a balanced constitution. Even his conception of progress was circumscribed by the demand that in matters of religion we are bound by revelation where progress only occurs by the elimination of corruption. Likewise while championing the cause of liberty, as freedom from control, Priestley also insisted that government had a rôle, albeit a fairly minimal one, in ensuring those freedoms even if thereby limiting them. There is, moreover, a strong utilitarian theme running through Priestley's political philosophy which, as Thomas argues, is in conflict with the libertarianism (in the political sense of the term) he advocated.

Martin Fitzpatrick delivers another jolt to our image of Priestley by reminding us that despite our admiration of the label 'Rational Dissent', Priestley, like his mentor Hartley, was steeped in millenarianism. One aspect of his millenarianism which is relatively easy to accommodate into our preferred picture of Priestley requires that knowledge, especially scientific knowledge, will increase along the gradually progressive curve that ends in the millennium. However, it is important to note that Priestley could also plunge into prophecy or adopt an apocalyptic outlook in which the sinner would be smitten by God's wrath. Priestley may, after all, have paid more attention to the second part of Hartley's *Observations on man* (1749) than historians generally acknowledge.

It is tempting to account for the exchanges between Priestley and the Scottish common sense philosophers not only in terms of their different theories of mind but also by also pointing to their different social and political situations. Priestley, the English radical, who emphasized intellectual criticism and associationist psychology, can be set against the Scottish moderates with their dualism and complacent acceptance of

common-sense principles. In his reinterpretation of the controversy Michael Barfoot draws particular attention to Priestley's necessitarian theory of causal judgement and his concern that Reid had too brusquely rejected both moral necessity and Hartley's physiological theory and instead adopted a weak voluntarist position. But Barfoot is also concerned to argue that we should not over-polarize these two positions since by reconstructing the context of the dispute we can appreciate the writers' common concern with re-establishing the foundations of both natural and moral philosophy in the light of Hume's writings. While both were alarmed by Hume they drew extensively, although differently, on Hume's programme and on the resources he had supplied. This careful reading moves Priestley, as it were, from the orbit of the Lunar Society and makes him closer to Scotland.

Just as Priestley has often been contrasted with Reid, so the contrast with William Whewell seems an obvious one: the radical, provincial Dissenter stands naturally opposed to the Tory, Cambridge Anglican. In his superbly-crafted paper John Hedley Brooke dwells on this contrast in order to show that these stereotypes apply only at the most superficial level and that a more careful analysis shows that Priestley and Whewell cannot be assigned to these opposing boxes. To take just one example: we would expect Priestley to have been deeply involved in the practical application of his work on the chemistry of gases while Whewell would have been disdainful of applying scientific theories. However, neither proposition can be sustained since Priestley made virtually no use of his chemical knowledge of gases while Whewell on occasion stresses the importance of applying scientific knowledge to practical subjects. But Brooke's point is not only that Priestley and Whewell would have been disdainful of applying scientific theories, interpreting and testing any general proposition against the historical evidence. By the end of this paper both Whewell and Priestley emerge as historically problematic and Clío less as a muse than a protean spirit.

If Brooke rightly warns against any simplistic interpretation of Priestley, this volume as a whole moves discussion further away from any comfortable consensus except on the point that old stereotypes are no longer serviceable. Priestley's distance from both Reid and Whewell has been significantly reduced, his radicalism has been partially offset by his more reactionary views and his rationalism by his apocalyptic. Priestley emerges as a far more complex character but one who nevertheless could (despite his proclaimed rationalism) erect balsawood bridges across the deepest intellectual chasm.

If this collection of exploratory essays represents the state of the art in the 1980s, it also indicates by omission several important topics which appear to be no longer on the agenda. We have virtually lost sight of Priestley's social milieu: Dissent has been distilled into 'Rational Dissent' and Hackney, Warrington Academy, Mill Hill chapel, and the Lunar Society receive barely a passing mention. One further topic which is hardly discussed is nevertheless omnipresent. There is more than a slight incongruity between the text and the lavish illustrations (the sub-text?) many of which show electrical machines, chemical apparatus and even a laboratory. Were not these used, even designed, by the same Joseph Priestley? The new agenda for Priestley scholarship rightly emphasizes his religion, his philosophy, and his politics but his science is only treated in so far as it can be subsumed under and reduced to these other headings. This is no call for a return to Partingtonian history of chemistry but a plea to reintroduce Priestley's scientific practice on to the agenda. Perhaps the outstanding task for Priestley scholars of the 1990s is to try to reintegrate the many different, although partial, insights we now possess into a new synthesis.

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1. J.G. McEvoy and J.E. McGuire, 'God and nature: Priestley's way of rational dissent', *Historical Studies in the Physical Sciences*, 6 (1975), 325-404; J.G. McEvoy, 'Joseph Priestley, "aerial philosopher": metaphysics and methodology in Priestley's chemical thought', *Ambix*, 25 (1978), 1-55, 93-116, 153-175, and 25 (1979), 16-38.
2. J.R.R. Christie and J.V. Golinski, 'The spreading of the word: new directions in the historiography of chemistry', *History of Science*, 20 (1982), 236-266.
3. These themes have subsequently been developed in S. Schaffer, 'Scientific discoveries and the end of natural philosophy', *Social Studies of Science*, 16 (1986), 387-420.

James E. Bradley, *Popular politics and the American Revolution in England. Petitions, the Crown and public opinion* (Mercer University Press, Macon, Georgia, 1986), xii + 264pp. \$34.95.

Although Dr. Bradley's book is concerned with a particular issue, and indeed with a specific year, it carries implications of a much broader nature. His general title and more precise sub-title are both justified by his material. His aim is to examine British popular attitudes towards the growing crisis over the American colonies in 1775, the year of Concord, Lexington and the Olive Branch petition, and the year in which Crown and Parliament declared America to be in a state of rebellion and passed the American Prohibitory Act. He proposes to draw from such an examination a series of general reflections on the social composition, spontaneity, consistency and ideological awareness of those who participated, however peripherally, in political activity during the later eighteenth century.

This involves a thorough, not to say obsessive, study of the petitions and addresses sent by various localities to Crown and Parliament in 1775. There is a careful distinction between the 15 petitions advocating conciliation which were presented to, and virtually ignored by, Parliament in February, and the larger number of conciliatory petitions which were presented to the Crown in the autumn. In the former case the emphasis was upon the threat to commerce; in the latter it was upon the constitutional rights of English subjects. Much attention is also given to the loyal addresses to the Crown which stressed the sovereignty of Parliament and advocated a policy of coercion. Overall, the conciliatory petitions won more signatures than the coercive addresses, but the latter enjoyed the backing of a substantial section of the *élite*, via the corporations of many parliamentary boroughs. Dr. Bradley challenges the assumption that the nation was broadly united in support of coercion. In the wake of John Sainsbury's work on London opinion, he identifies much pro-conciliation sentiment.¹ However, because the coercive addresses were printed in the *London Gazette*, a governmental propaganda organ, and received more attention in the press than did the petitions, historians have seen 'only one pole of a distinctly divided public opinion' (p.119). The *London Gazette* not only reflected, but helped to create, public opinion by conveying an impression of massive popular enthusiasm for the ministry's American policy. Wherever possible, comparisons are made between the number of petitioners and voting turnout in the general election of 1774, showing that many petitioners were non-voters (although it is conceivable that some who did not vote were in fact qualified to do so) and thus going further than

studies based on poll books in elucidating the nature of popular participation in politics. He concludes that 'a body of people equal to about one-fifth of the English electorate expressed their opinion on the American crisis. . . . a number equal to one-tenth of the electorate expressed opposition to the government's American policy' (pp.208-209) and speculates that about one third of the 'political nation' opposed the coercion of America, making it 'England's least popular modern war' (p.210). Some of these conciliatory petitions are printed in Appendix I.

It must be admitted that the sample of boroughs which Dr. Bradley deploys in support of his thesis is rather small: the same places are cited over and over again. In chapter VI, a discussion of social and religious differences between conciliatory petitioners and coercive addresses, five small and medium boroughs suffice for purposes of analysis. In denying that the contests in the general election of 1780 were fought on purely local issues, Dr. Bradley draws upon four boroughs. The evidential base is somewhat narrow and far from nationally representative. One senses a lack of harmony between sweeping generalizations and limited evidence.

This does not prevent the author from offering the serious and plausible contention that a comparison with their voting in elections and involvement in other issues (such as pro- or anti-corporation activities) shows that those who signed petitions or addresses did so with a respectable measure of genuine ideological commitment and political consistency. Contrary to popular contemporary belief, the bulk of the conciliatory petitioners were not disaffected Dissenters (most were Anglican laymen) and the majority of coercive addressers were not recipients of government patronage. This is one of the most interesting features of an important book which—reinforced by other work which Dr. Bradley is preparing—may exert considerable academic influence. It would be right to add that the book is handsomely produced, with much of the statistical information clearly set out in tabular form, and that, to the great advantage of the reader, there are footnotes, not end-notes.

Some reservations, however, cannot be avoided. What happened to this 'conciliatory' opinion once the war was under way and before it was obviously lost? A few clues are offered (pp.204-206). But if the issue then became 'greatly confused' (p.86) and what had seemed like a tragic civil conflict became a more acceptable patriotic struggle with the involvement of the Bourbon powers, then the earlier sentiments of 1775

can hardly be termed 'anti-war' in such a principled sense, still less 'the first modern example of a widespread popular protest against war' (p.11). In fact there is much evidence that by 1777 the war received considerable public endorsement. Dr. Bradley credits Burke with 'a balanced perspective on the strength of popular opposition' (p.208). He would thus presumably take seriously Burke's analysis of 8 October 1777 in which he lamented a wave of approval for coercion: 'I am convinced that everything that is not absolute Stagnation, is evidently a party Spirit, very adverse to our politics and to the principles from whence they arise . . . The Tories do universally think their power and consequence involved in the success of the American business. The Clergy are astonishingly warm in it.'² On this last point, Dr. Bradley performs a valuable service by reminding us of the religious dimension of the British response to the American crisis, drawing heavily on the metropolitan and provincial press. He could, perhaps, have carried his analysis a stage further. In the spring of 1776 the press was full of horror stories about the about the sufferings of the American Episcopalian clergy at the hands of the rebellious colonists. It is not difficult to perceive the diverse ways in which high Anglican and Dissenting opinion would respond to such news. Dr. Bradley comments on the anti-government, 'pro-American' and 'radical' stance of the *Kentish Gazette* (p.131 fn.). Yet that newspaper published (17-20 April) a list of 64 persons pledging almost £200 in subscription to a fund for the relief of the American Episcopalians. Similar, and often longer, lists appeared elsewhere in the press.³ There can be little doubt but that this kind of material sympathy with the Episcopalians implied support for coercive measures and a correlation of pro-Episcopalian subscribers with the signatories to the coercive addresses might have strengthened Dr. Bradley's claims as to the consistency of those signatories. But it is also possible that the Episcopalian issue alienated some 'pro-American' feeling in Britain, just as it apparently harmed the applications of the English Dissenters for an extension of that toleration which their American counterparts were allegedly withholding from the Episcopalians.⁴

Dr. Bradley writes repeatedly of a 'new authoritarianism' on the part of the government in the 1770s (pp.x, 148, 201, 211, 213). At no point does he inform the reader of the criteria by which he judges a régime to be 'authoritarian' but the word 'new' suggests that he means 'authoritarian' in comparison with the practice of Britain earlier in the eighteenth century. One would have thought that Ian Christie's essay 'Was there a "new Toryism" in the earlier part of George III's reign?' had banished that delusion once and for all.⁵ As it is, one must repeat that the

conciliatory petitioners of 1775 received gentle treatment compared with that suffered by the Tories after 1714: the rejection of Tory election petitions on purely partisan grounds by a Whig-dominated House of Commons, the attainder of Francis Atterbury and Walpole's licensing of the stage. It is a grotesque exaggeration for Dr. Bradley to claim that the public opinion which gave rise to the conciliatory petitions was 'suppressed' (p.214), especially when he concedes on the very next page that 'Englishmen at home were actually more free to express their opposition to the government than were Loyalists in the colonies'. It is ironic that Dr. Bradley should pin the label 'authoritarian' upon a period when general warrants were declared illegal, when Dissent ceased to be a crime at law, and when parliamentary debates were reported in the press and elsewhere with much greater freedom than before. There is nothing here to challenge Professor Christie's verdict that 'Liberty was not waning but broadening in the years after 1760'.

Similarly the author diagnoses other 'innovations' immediately after 1760. His benchmark for popular agitation is 1769-1770 and there are several assertions as to 'growing political consciousness' from that time (e.g. p.208). Yet why begin in 1769-1770? Why ignore 'the political consciousness' shown by the Kentish petitioners, the Sacheverell rioters, the opponents of the Excise Scheme, the English Jacobites, the Tory populists of the 1740s? If 'popular consciousness' meant anything in the eighteenth century (and Dr. Bradley does not define it), then it certainly did not begin in 1769-1770. To admit that, however, would undermine the claims as to the novelty and originality of the phenomena which this book describes.

There are several other dubious assertions. The term 'pro-American' is used vaguely and uncritically; it is unquestioningly assumed that the conciliatory petitioners were 'pro-American' (pp.204, 213) and that they were, at least by implication, 'radical'. One suspects that Lord John Russell would be surprised to find himself described as a 'leader of popular revolt' (p.1). For the Parliament of 1774-1780 Dr. Bradley finds 207 'pro-American' M.P.s and 484 'government counterparts' in a House of Commons of 558 (p.88). He follows W.C. Lowe's misunderstanding (p.27, fn.1) in assuming that the number of Lords' protests began to increase in this period as if they had not been at a high level before; in fact their numbers had been very much greater in the early 1720s than during the American crisis. The tone of the book is unabashedly Whiggish throughout: we encounter the 'emergence of modern democracy' (p.x) and much Trevelyanesque talk of two party rivalry based on Church and Dissent. We read of the 'courage' of the

conciliatory petitioners and are reminded of the 'notoriously' conservative bodies which supported coercion (pp.115, 132). Whiggishness reaches a height in Dr. Bradley's treatment of George III's 'unresponsiveness' to conciliatory opinion which helped to cause the war (p.214); for a more balanced assessment the reader will need to turn to P.D.G. Thomas's recent article in *History* which was published after this book went to press.⁶

For these reasons the book is stronger in the particular than in the general, and while Dr. Bradley's detailed research will be appreciated, some of his conclusions will be received with a justified caution.

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1. Now published as John Sainsbury, *Disaffected patriots: London supporters of revolutionary America, 1769-1782* (Kingston and Montreal, 1987).
2. Burke to Charles James Fox, 8 Oct. 1777, *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke*, ed. T.W. Copeland et. al., 10 vols. (Cambridge, 1957-1978), iii, 383.
3. Among many examples see *Public Advertiser*, 7, 19 March, 4, 9, 16 April, 14 May 1776. There are similar lists in the *London Evening Post* and other newspapers for March and April 1776.
4. G.M. Ditchfield, 'The Subscription Issue in British Parliamentary Politics, 1772-1779', *Parliamentary History*, 7 (1988), 54, 76.
5. First published in *Journal of British Studies*, V (1965-1966), 60-76, and reprinted in Ian R. Christie, *Myth and reality in late eighteenth-century British politics* (London, 1970), 196-213.
6. P.D.G. Thomas, 'George III and the American Revolution', *History*, 70 (1985), 16-31.

A.J. Ayer, *Thomas Paine* (London, Secker and Warburg, 1988), xi + 195pp, £12.95.

David A. Wilson, *Paine and Cobbett: the transatlantic connection* (Kingston and Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988), xx + 218pp., \$27.95.

The growth of scholarly interest in Thomas Paine in recent years has been marked by the publication of several new studies of his life and thought. Given Paine's idiosyncratic character, his peculiar life style, and his political writings which never easily fitted into any of the contending political ideologies of his time, surely more studies will appear over the next decade. Much less has been written about William Cobbett, and it is to David Wilson's credit that his able study introduces the reader to elements common to both Paine and Cobbett.

Over the past thirty years, studies of Thomas Paine were dominated by A. Owen Aldridge, who has written a biography and published several articles about Paine's life and thought. In the turbulent 1960s, one might have expected several fresh assessments of Paine. This was not the case. Historians and political theorists had to await the early to mid-1970s for the latest round of Paine studies when two major biographies appeared as well as what is still the finest study of Paine by Eric Foner. The mid- and late-1980s have proved to be yet another fruitful time for an examination of Thomas Paine. The works presently under review come on the heels of yet another biography, a major new study by Aldridge, and an assortment of essays analysing particular aspects of his life and work.

The subject himself provides the only ground common to both books. One expects a figure as distinctive as Paine to have evoked differing responses from Ayer and Wilson, yet both authors are united in their admiration for Paine, his work, and his rhetorical style, although for quite different reasons.

Most attractive to A.J. Ayer are Paine's liberal attitudes, especially about religion and governmental intervention on behalf of the poor and disadvantaged. Ayer, a welfare statist, appreciates Paine for being among the first modern writers to propose innovative ideas to ameliorate the condition of the poor. David A. Wilson is more enthralled with how Paine and Cobbett can only be understood if we evaluate their ideas in a transatlantic context. In addition, he shows how these writers were on the cutting edge of late-eighteenth and early-

nineteenth-century progressive thinking, giving direction and purpose to how a democratic society could resolve its most tendentious problems.

It may seem odd that a distinguished philosopher like Ayer would bother with a decidedly unphilosophical writer like Paine. His book is neither philosophical nor scholarly by any definition of those terms, nor is it an intellectual biography. In the final analysis, this book is less about Paine than it is about Ayer. It is an interesting, though extended, intellectual rumination about Paine's life and work, a vehicle for Ayer to comment on contemporary problems. In his own imaginative way, Ayer offers us not an analysis of what Paine thought but rather what he, Ayer, thinks about what Paine thought: whether Paine's ideas were right, whether they were coherent, and what sense we can make of these ideas in our own contemporary times. He wants to know, for example, whether Paine is relevant today in an era when conservative politics enjoy unheralded prominence in a Britain under Margaret Thatcher and an America under Ronald Reagan.

If Ayer is unsuccessful in his enterprise, it is not because he is neither interesting nor engaging. The book is a fast read, even when Ayer interjects his own political ideology; the main problem with the book has less to do with Ayer's *penchant* for personalizing Paine's ideas than with his attempt to apply Paine to the twentieth century. At times, we are left wondering whether these reflections matter, from either an intellectual or a historical perspective. Paine was a product of the late-eighteenth century and the experiences of his life. Hence, the suggestion that he presaged this person or that event is simplistic. For example, Ayer reflects on Paine's anti-monarchical, pro-republican position and concludes that if Paine were alive today, he would reject 'the mild form of monarchy that we still possess in England but if our snobbery is ineradicable, as it appears to be, I suppose that it might as well play upon the royal family as upon television personalities or pop-stars. So far as this goes, it does not seem to me to matter that our monarchy should be hereditary.' (p.77) Paine, of course, totally rejected monarchy; he has suddenly become an irrelevant factor in his own book.

In commenting on the first part of *Rights of Man*, Ayer repeats Paine's dictum that laws ought to be made to prohibit harm to society. This statement provokes Ayer to express his opinion on a rash of issues: from crime and drugs, to the Nüremberg trials, alcohol, cigarettes, and law enforcement. His opinions are progressive, but what they have to do with Paine is highly suspect. Ayer comments that 'a great deal of this

may sound platitudinous' (p.86). Indeed, it too often does. Ayer's book has, then, its own peculiarly individual allure, and admittedly Ayer himself is charming: to read this book must have been like listening to Ayer himself as he sat by the fire and chatted about the great issues of the day. One comes away from this small volume having gained little insight into Thomas Paine, but having learned a great deal about A.J. Ayer. Only this makes his *Thomas Paine* worth reading.

Wilson's *Paine and Cobbett* is another matter. This book is an important contribution to eighteenth-century studies. The author intends to draw our attention to a new understanding of Paine and Cobbett, the relationship between them, and their impact on the contemporary political thinking. Although Wilson is generally successful in this enterprise, he does at times travel over well-mined ground, especially given George Spater's two volume biography of Cobbett which appeared in 1982.

Like Ayer, Wilson follows his subjects through their respective biographies, beginning separately with their birth and ending, respectively, with the publication of Paine's *Rights of Man* and Cobbett's death. The two figures are united by Cobbett's fickleness towards Paine: he admired him in the 1780s, hated him in the 1790s, then reconciled himself to Paine thinking when he converted to radical Toryism. It was then that he decided on the celebrated 'rescue' of Paine's bones to return them to England in what was both a bizarre tribute to his rediscovered master and a pious hope that the presence of Paine's bones in England would stimulate British parliamentary reform.

From the perspective of organization, this methodology makes for a most uncomplicated book with first a discussion of Paine, followed by that of Cobbett. One gains on concentration because the focus is always on a single figure. Unfortunately, the complexities of the argument between the two subjects are lost, although Wilson takes great pains in the last quarter of his book to elucidate the manner in which Cobbett used Paine for his own intellectual, journalistic purposes. In addition, the author has appended a short, though essential epilogue to ferret out the differences between the two men. Whereas Ayer's work is an extended rumination, Wilson's consists of two extended essays, which, taken together, amount to a full-length, comparative study of their 'ideas in a transatlantic context'.

While his overall thesis is hardly startling, Wilson offers some interesting observations. A major one has to do with the rhetorical style

that Paine and Cobbett employed in their work. Most Paine scholars over the past half century have accepted Paine's rhetorical style as unique: this is true of A. Owen Aldridge, J.T. Boulton, E.P. Thompson, and Eric Foner. Wilson argues to the contrary that Paine's rhetoric, which Cobbett later imitated, was not new at all. Paine did not devise a new rhetorical style designed to appeal to lower and middle class tradesmen, artisans, and merchants. Wilson argues, effectively, that Paine used an already existing style of plain speech.

Using the insights of Wilbur Howell, Wilson argues that Paine's rhetoric was part of the so-called 'new rhetoric of political Radicalism' that swept the transatlantic world in the late-eighteenth century. He insists that 'Paine did not "create" a new literary style; instead, he participated in the growing movement towards plain speech' (p.32) and, as Wilbur Howell has pointed out, the battle between Paine and Burke was, among other things, a battle between the new and old rhetoric.

And yet, one wonders how new Wilson's insights about rhetoric are. He fails to cite, for example, the important work of Olivia Smith who in her *The Politics of Language: 1791-1819* (Clarendon Press, 1984) writes that 'the task of developing an informal and intellectual language for the new audience was left largely to the self-educated, to such writers as Thomas Spence, Thomas Paine, William Hone, and William Cobbett' (p.111), i.e., to the very people Wilson writes about. Wilson seems to want to advance the argument further than Smith by suggesting that these figures never invented the language of plain talk at all. They simply adopted a pre-existing one which, says Wilson, Paine popularized. This may well be true, but without citing Smith's work and the role played by others (such as Spence or Horne Tooke), it is difficult to assess Wilson's position. No doubt Paine's contribution was central in the spread of the new language of plain talk, but did these other radical writers play a significant role?

A second important point about Paine is that Wilson sees Paine's earliest writings as being more than informative. All of them, especially Paine's excise tax plea, are crucial because they demonstrate that Paine both wrote well and early on in the new style and was aware of the major issues of his time, discussed them often, and could write about them with ease. Thus, 'all these assumptions can be found in the one pamphlet which Paine wrote before he left England, *The Case of the Officers of Excise*'. (p.29) For Wilson, this pamphlet provided the foundation for all of Paine's later work, especially *Common Sense*, which appeared four years later.

Wilson has a few surprising omissions in his discussion of both writers' transatlantic connections. First and perhaps most inexcusable is the absence of any reference to J.G.A. Pocock's magisterial, *The Machiavellian moment: Florentine political thought in the Atlantic republican tradition* (Princeton University Press, 1975), which covers republican thought in the terms Wilson sets forth. When he concludes that Cobbett's reform platform consisted of 'support for annual parliaments, the secret ballot, equal electoral districts, payment of members of parliament, and universal suffrage' (the latter never once clearly defined by Wilson), we are presented with a catalogue of what was essentially the Country programme that Pocock analysed almost fifteen years ago (p.173). Indeed, Wilson suggests, erroneously, that Bolingbroke was not part of this tradition (p.153). And in his conclusion, he distinguishes the Real Whig from the Country programme (p.185). In the *Eighteenth-century Commonwealthman*, Caroline Robbins authoritatively demonstrated thirty years ago that they were different expressions of the same tradition of opposition politics with shared roots in the English Civil War.

Moreover, from the perspective of scholarly debate, the reader will not find here any of the complex issues raised over the past two decades in historical scholarship on the eighteenth century: Harringtonian republicanism (Pocock, Bailyn, Wood) versus Lockean liberalism (Kramnick, Diggins, Dickinson) versus Scottish moral philosophy (Wills). Some acknowledgement of the issues raised in this debate would have added substance to Wilson's position. As it is, his claim that he for the first time sets Paine and Cobbett in the transatlantic world has less impact because others have also done just that (notably Clark, Aldridge, and Foner).

Wilson's work so deeply contrasts with Ayer's that they are not even part of the same genre, despite their common subject matter. Wilson's important study of Paine and Cobbett contributes to our growing understanding of the British/American context of late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century political thought. Ayer, on the other hand, has presented us with an entertaining volume. It will have the limited function of serving to stimulate our thinking about how the twentieth century might have embodied the ideas of Paine's own time.

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Richard E. Brantley, *Locke, Wesley, and the method of English Romanticism* (University of Florida Press, Gainesville, 1984), xi + 300pp., \$35.00.

The contemplation of the title of Professor Brantley's book alone suffices to conjure up a vision of extensive bibliographies, and suggests the need for a polymathic author. Locke and Wesley, taken individually, have proved too much for some; together they are daunting. Their combined association with the tangled web of English Romantic method encourages the hope that our author will be not only a voracious reader with an adequate grasp of philosophy and theology, but a student of literature highly skilled in ideological and linguistic detection. Reservations notwithstanding, Brantley is our man. His full notes and useful appendices testify to his wide and careful reading of primary and secondary sources; he is at home in the eighteenth-century intellectual climate; he is abreast of current literary theory. What does he produce from these formidable resources?

Brantley seeks to show the significance of John Wesley's dialectic of philosophy and faith for the method of English Romanticism. He argues first that Wesley's empirical theological method is derived from Locke's epistemology; and secondly that Wesley's 'mediation of Locke's thought is an immediate context of English Romantic poetry: Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, and Keats, whatever their differences from each other, resemble each other in their formulations of experience, which echo Wesley's'.

The Wesley who thus emerges is not a narrow-minded pietist aloof from matters intellectual, but one who exercised a considerably more than religious influence upon Methodist contemporaries and literary successors alike. He transmitted a Lockean philosophical method to the poets under review, and communicated a Lockean idiom to their language. Brantley's trail takes us from things, through ideas, to words.

We first investigate Wesley's 'Lockean connection', which was forged by Peter Browne's *The procedure, extent and limits of human understanding* (1728). Wesley spent more than three months abridging this work, and was impressed by the way in which Browne drew out 'Locke's implication that spiritual influx can supplement biblical truth and knowledge'. For Browne, 'faith', construed as 'a mind based sixth "sense" which receives and interprets sense data, extends Lockean reason'. It thus transpired that 'Wesley's strange warming of the heart and his view of God's love as shed abroad therein parallel the view of

sense perception as sufficiently accordant with the nature of the thing itself'. That is to say, that both spiritual and natural actuality are inward and outward.

In delineating Wesley's philosophical theology, Brantley draws attention to his sensationalist diction, and to his use of the analogy between faith and empirical observation. Faith, writes Wesley, is the 'feeling of the soul, whereby a believer perceives, through the "power of the Highest overshadowing him" . . . both the existence and the presence of him in whom he "lives, moves, and has his being" and indeed the whole invisible world, the entire system of things eternal'. Wesley's consistent denial of innate ideas is deemed to be a further indication of his radical empiricism.

With the fourth chapter we come to the 'Romantic' method, and to Brantley's demonstration that the intellectual aspect of the Evangelical Revival was 'present to' the English Romantic mind: the 'Lockean-Wesleyan continuum is background to, if not the context for, Romantic thought and expression'. We cannot here follow him in detail through his chosen poets, though the assertion that 'the subject-object, empirically rational dimension of "Tintern Abbey" is consistent with its "sense sublime" in the same way that Wesley's theology of immediate revelation is consistent with his Lockean epistemology', typifies his overall case.

In 'A methodological postscript' the conclusion is underscored that the poets considered 'owe something of their theory, and much of their practice, to the relation between Locke and John Wesley. This mix, then, is English Romantic method.' We await Brantley's application of his method to Cowper, Shelley, Hazlitt and Lamb; and we may hope that references to Jonathan Edwards and to German Romanticism will be pursued further. Meanwhile Brantley has done well to throw his considerable weight behind those who would rescue Wesley from the intellectual oblivion to which some have too readily consigned him.

Professor Brantley is an enthusiast (at least in the modern sense of the term!). He is quick to inform us of what has never been done before, and what he is doing for the first time. He does a good deal of 'contending'. He resurrects archaic 'nays' for emphasis; he can outdo the most turgid older divine with a convoluted ten-line sentence. He picks upon those who have not seen what is so clear to him. No doubt candour is to be expected from one who has dwelt so long in the

eighteenth century. But problems arise, and these may be classified under three headings.

1. Insufficiently close analysis of terms. (a) It is one thing to say that Locke and Wesley both employ the term 'assurance'; it is quite another to imply that 'assurance' *qua* 'the highest degree of probability' is synonymous with 'assurance' *qua* 'blessed!'. (b) The assertion that Locke's 'primarily natural experience' coalesces with Wesley's 'primarily spiritual experience' in Wesley's philosophical theology raises unaddressed questions concerning our ability to, and means of, making the posited distinction. (c) The reference to 'The fundamentalist absolute trust in the New Testament' of 'many evangelicals who followed [at the time, or in his wake?] Wesley' is anachronistic if the fundamentalists are his contemporaries, and is in any case question-begging. A similar question is begged when Brantley accepts Carl F.H. Henry's description of 'evangelical faith' as 'biblical essentials'.

2. Overstatement of the case. (a) The reference to Wesley's 'anti-ecclesiastical disregard of Church order' may lead some to infer that Wesley's outlook was radical. On the contrary, he was much in favour of order, and rebelled only when hidebound attitudes towards it obstructed the preaching of the Gospel. (b) When Browne's emphasis upon the continuing witness of the Spirit is said to be his 'most original contribution to Lockean thought, and to Anglican', we may well suspect a failure to appreciate the Calvinist tradition. (c) The assertion that 'at no time before or since the eighteenth century did the interdiscipline of theology and philosophy flourish more luxuriantly than it did then' would seem to ignore patristic thought. (d) It is surprising that Brantley should declare that the OED definition of 'evangelical'(1791): 'those Protestants who hold that the essence of the Gospel consists in the doctrine of salvation by faith in the atoning death of Christ, and deny the saving efficacy of either good works or the sacraments', fits 'pretty well' Whitefield, Evangelical Anglicans and 'rigid' Dutch Reformed, Presbyterian and Baptist Calvinists, but not Wesley. His point is that Wesley's evangelicalism included a philosophical component as well; but it is not shown that that of the other groups mentioned did not—frequently it did. (e) To 'draw a parallel between Wesley's conversion and such resurgences of empiricism as that of A.J. Ayer' verges upon the fantastic. Indeed, the introduction of the inadequately-stated verification principle (not to mention the failure to note its subsequent modification) is a red herring. (f) Although Brantley's normal practice is to claim no more than that Wesley's philosophical theology was 'in the air' breathed by the poets discussed, he can also say

that this philosophical theology informs a central dialectic of the poets', and that Wesley's 'thought and expression counterpart, and largely account for, the poets' languages of philosophy and faith'. These linguistic oscillations from the generally influential to the causative throw into relief the distinction between 'harbinger' and 'generator'. In his better moments Brantley knows that he cannot opt for the latter. (g) Wesley's homiletic declaration that 'A full conviction of our ignorance may teach us . . . to trust the invisible God, farther than we can see him', is said to be 'Perhaps the most peculiarly Wesleyan statement in the sermon from which it is taken'. But Wesley has no monopoly here: the Puritans (properly agnostic where necessary) repeatedly remind us that although we may have a true apprehension of God, we may not have a full comprehension of him.

3. Selective argumentation. As he zealously forges ahead, Brantley on occasion fails to pay due heed to balancing considerations and to counter evidence. (a) The importance of the Toleration Act of 1689 should not be overlooked. On the one hand it inspired Lockeans to seek for a sweetly reasonable basis for religious harmony, enforced uniformity having failed. On the other hand it encouraged those who wished to think their own thoughts, no matter how divisive the results. Brantley pays little heed to the rationalistic, as distinct from the evangelical, Arminians, who were a foil (and, on occasion, a thorn in the flesh) to Wesley—yet Arminians of both kinds were influenced by Locke. What are we to make of this? Was Wesley more selectively Lockean and/or was Locke more fecund than Brantley allows. In this connection more might have been made of Isaac Watts's vacillations in interpreting Locke's thought, to which Brantley adverts; and the importance of Locke in the curriculum of the more 'liberal' Dissenting academies might have been noted. (b) If Wesley had such a considerable methodological influence even upon his followers, why were so many Methodists beguiled by the deist Henry Dodwell's *Christianity not founded on argument*, which they (wrongly) construed as leaving the way open for faith? (c) Brantley notes Wesley's distrust of 'Behmen and a whole army of Mystic authors', but when treating of Blake he omits to account for Blake's fondness for such writers. If important non-Wesleyan influences upon the poets are overlooked, the picture is skewed. (d) The suggestion that there is a 'frequently Lockean motivation underlying Wesley's choice of scripture texts' leaves one with the uncomfortable feeling that here the cart is put before the horse. Is post-conversion Wesley not more the biblical expositor who utilizes his intellectual heritage, than the Lockean philosopher who resorts to the Bible for bolstering texts? (e) Wesley's 'strictures against Humean

attitudes towards religion' are mentioned, as is his acceptance of Hume's critique of causation; but the former might well have been explored further, especially in view of Brantley's demolition of V.H.H. Green, who argued that Wesley 'offered nothing that could satisfactorily meet the intellectual difficulties of his times'. To which Brantley retorts, 'But the reverse is true.' Whereupon this reviewer gently suggests that while Wesley met the perceived intellectual needs of some (and, humanly speaking, the religious needs of many more), he by no means satisfactorily solved the intellectual difficulties of his time: indeed, those difficulties linger still. Brantley does not show how far, if at all, Wesley met the challenge of Humean scepticism; neither does he show how, if at all, Wesley's sixth "sense" (i.e. the religious) relates to Hutcheson's moral sense or Reid's common sense, both of which owed something to Locke. This is the more surprising when we are assured that 'Wesley, writing after it became smart if not fashionable to think that not even things, much less their secondary qualities, exist outside the mind, seems intent upon countering over-Berkleian subtleties.' Granted, a note introduces the matter (and, incidentally, describes Hutcheson, Hume, Ferguson and Adam Smith as *English* moralists), but we must ask for more: the question of the philosophical worth of Wesley's intellectual legacy may not be shirked, least of all by one who claims so much for it.

When detailed knowledge is combined with the zealous overstatement of a plausible case we have the makings of a stimulating and provocative book. Such a book has been written by Professor Brantley.

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Gerard Reedy, S.J., *The Bible and reason: Anglicans and Scripture in late seventeenth-century England* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), viii + 184pp.

When he landed at Dover on 25 May 1660 and was presented by the Mayor of the town with a richly decorated Bible, Charles II accepted it, saying, 'that it was the thing that he loved above all things in the world'. The bystanders who knew about Charles' predispositions and proclivities might well have been startled by this pronouncement, but their anxieties might have been relieved by the reflection that he was not making a private confession so much as a statement of public policy. This symbolic gesture signalled his avowed intention to maintain the Protestant faith in England on a secure and lasting basis. At the heart of this avowal was the acknowledgement that Scripture, and Scripture alone, is the basis of the true Christian faith. From the Restoration onwards it fell to the lot of the leading divines of the Anglican Church to justify this claim: to show how and why Protestants were justified in basing their faith exclusively upon Bible.

One of Father Reedy's aims in this book is to examine the methodological principles used by Anglican divines of the late seventeenth century in interpreting Scripture and in justifying their acceptance of it as the sole basis of their faith and practice. He is chiefly concerned with the works of Isaac Barrow (1630-1677), Robert South (1634-1716), John Tillotson (1630-1694), and Edward Stillingfleet (1635-1699). He pays particular attention to the ways in which they conceived the interpretation and the acceptance of Scripture to be rational (or reasonable). It hardly needs to be said that this inquiry is full of interest for the students of the Enlightenment and eighteenth-century theology in view of the claim frequently made that these divines were, as Leslie Stephen put it, 'rationalist to the core'.

In shaping the justification of the Anglican position the divines had several considerations in mind. They had to distance themselves from the standpoint taken by Roman Catholic theologians: this they did by denying the need to rely upon extra-scriptural tradition in interpreting the Bible, by denying the need to refer to the authority of the Pope, and by denying the need for the skills of an order of priests to interpret Holy Writ. The fundamental saving truths of the Bible, they maintained, are accessible to the simplest reader. They also had to distance themselves from the enthusiasts who relied upon an 'inner light' in interpreting Scripture. To this end they laid a special emphasis upon the literal sense of the words of Scripture, and tended to avoid allegorical, anagogical

or typological interpretations. They distance themselves too from philosophers such as Hobbes and Spinoza who made a radical distinction between the realm of reason and that of faith, and who in doing so claimed that the credibility of faith rested not upon the rationality or reasonableness of the belief but on the authority of those who promulgated it. The Anglican divines sought to abolish what they conceived to be the misleading disjunction of reason and revelation by showing that there are good reasons for believing that all that is contained in Scripture is true and that Scripture does indeed contain all that is required for salvation. Father Reedy appreciates the importance of clarifying what the divines meant by the reasonableness of Scripture and takes great care in setting out the principles of their methodology. He attaches considerable importance to the distinction between a narrower sense of reason and a wider one: by the former is meant an appeal to the principle of non-contradiction and the evidence of the senses; the wider sense also includes the testimony of those whose authority is established by their ability to perform miracles. The deployment of this distinction is of crucial importance because it shows that the conception of reason that found favour with the Anglican divines was much wider than that which could be derived from the Cartesian notion of clear and distinct ideas or from the empiricists' conception of evidence. It enabled the divines to account as rational not only belief in accounts of events that from a scientific point of view must be regarded as mysteries, but also the acceptance of doctrines such as those of the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Atonement. Bearing in mind the wider sense of rationality we can see that Leslie Stephen's claim that the Anglican divines were 'rationalist to the core' could be very misleading, for their concept of rationality could be taken to validate many beliefs that would not be accepted as rational by those working with a much more restricted model. Reedy is right to emphasize that the rationalism of the Anglican divines was much wider than a commonly accepted view of the rationalism of the Enlightenment.

The methodology of the Anglican divines was dominated by two broad principles: expressions in Scripture are to be understood in the plain, literal sense of the terms they employ and the propositions they contain are supported either by empirical and historical evidence or by the testimony of those who were directly inspired by the Deity. In employing these principles the Anglican divines gave many hostages to fortune. The attempt to demonstrate the credibility of the Gospels on the grounds of the rationality or reasonableness of the beliefs they contain is a hazardous enterprise, for if the arguments are seen to be

flawed the credibility of the whole is brought into question. If, for example, it is claimed that the sentences in Scripture are to be understood in the plain, literal sense of the terms they employ, and if it is claimed that the meaning of Scripture is manifest to common sense, what are we to say when our attention is drawn to passages which do not appear to yield their meaning in this way? Or, what is to be said of the claim that the credibility of Scripture is vouchsafed by the ability of the prophets and the apostles to perform miracles, when, as John Owen argued, the testimony that the miracles occurred is found only in Scripture itself. Again the claim that the textual integrity of the Scriptures had been secured through time by the providential care of the Holy Spirit became less than convincing when it was demonstrated that the texts of Scripture had been corrupted by the errors of those who had transcribed them. The divines, though well versed in the languages of the Scriptures, learned in the works of the Fathers, and ingenious in exegesis, do not appear to have been as expert on the reliability of the texts. Their attempts to justify the integrity of the texts were vulnerable then to the researches of Richard Simon who in the closing decades of the seventeenth century inaugurated a new era in textual criticism. By showing how the texts had suffered as they passed through the hands of many 'public scribes', he cast doubt upon the thesis that the integrity of the text had been safeguarded by Providence, and also upon the thesis that the credibility of the Scriptures was guaranteed by the ability of the authors to perform miracles. Even more hazardous was the argument that the writings attributed to Moses could be relied upon with perfect confidence because they were quoted by Christ and the Apostles.

One of the most interesting parts of Reedy's book is that in which he shows how the divines responded to the criticisms made by Socinian authors. Although the divines and the Socinians shared in common the belief that the saving truths of Christianity are accessible in plain language to the simplest reader, the divines wished to distance themselves from the theological conclusions that the Socinians drew from this. According to Reedy, South, acknowledged that there was a need for an educated clergy to help to interpret the texts; Tillotson acknowledged the need to take account of the historical circumstances that conditioned the claims made in Scripture, and Stillingfleet accepted the need for textual criticism. Again, in opposition to the Socinian claim that the saving truths of scripture are intelligible to the simplest reader, the divines came to lay greater stress upon the element of mystery in the essential doctrines. The old formula that the truths of Christianity though not counter to reason are above it, was fervently embraced. But

this formula, it would seem, introduces an element of ambiguity into the use of the term reason. One cannot easily synthesize the claim that there are good reasons for accepting revelation with the claim that revelation is above reason. Inconsistencies and incoherences are not without their usefulness in political discourse, but their deployment in theology leads to damaging confusion. In the short term it was perhaps convenient for the Anglican theologians to claim that their doctrines were defensible at the bar of reason and at the same time to assert that they were defending the mysteries that lie at the heart of faith, but in the long term the conflation of the wider and the narrower senses of reason proved to be debilitating because it led to a lack of clarity and conviction. On this question it could be wished that Father Reedy had said more about the reasons why the divines felt compelled to defend their faith on the ground that it was reasonable.

All those interested in the topics that Father Reedy discusses will be grateful to him for raising, in a clear and economical presentation, issues that remain of crucial importance for the appreciation of the work done by the Anglican divines of the seventeenth century, and for an evaluation of their legacy to the eighteenth century. He distils the essence of a vast amount of writing and sermonizing into a small compass by his arrangement of these materials and he provides an excellent introduction to his subject. The volume closes with two valuable appendices; one a transcript of the part of one of Stillingfleet's hitherto unpublished sermons that contains his responses to Richard Simon's *L'histoire critique de Vieux Testament* and Spinoza's *Tractatus theologico-politicus* from a manuscript in the possession of St. John's College, Cambridge, and the other a chronological list of the primary works of Anglican scriptural interpretation in the seventeenth century.

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