

The  
PRICE~PRIESTLEY  
Newsletter

No. 4

1980

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EDITORIAL

The most recent accession to the advisory editorial board of this newsletter is the distinguished historian, Professor R.K. Webb of the University of Maryland. Professor Webb will be well known to our readers as the author of The British working class reader (1950), Harriet Martineau, a radical Victorian (1960), Modern England (1968), and, in collaboration with Peter Gay, Modern Europe (1973), and as the translator of Elie Halevy's The era of tyrannies (1967). From 1968 until 1974 Professor Webb was the editor of the American Historical Review, and before taking up his present chair at the University of Maryland, he taught at Columbia and at the Wesleyan University. It is a great pleasure to welcome him to the editorial board, and we look forward to the benefit of his advice for many years to come.

Looking to future events, we hope to devote the seventh (1983) issue of the newsletter to Joseph Priestley, in celebration of the 250th anniversary of his birth. Unless we believe in magic, or the magic of round numbers, there would not appear to be any good academic reasons for celebrating the 250th rather than the 249th, but since custom attaches a peculiar potency to such anniversaries, we are glad to have this opportunity to solicit articles on Priestley for this issue. For the more immediate future we should like to enlist the co-operation of our readers for two projects: (a) for making a comprehensive bibliography of the books and articles written mainly about or of special relevance to Price and Priestley, say, since 1965, and (b) for making a list of all the books on Price and Priestley still in print. For the former we should especially like to receive details of articles in journals that are not in the normal course of events likely to come to the attention of historians and philosophers. In our next issue we propose to publish a list of all the subscribers to the newsletter together with their addresses. This, we hope, will facilitate communication, but it may well be the case that some of our readers would prefer not to appear in such a list, and if there are any such, we should like to hear from them before we next go to print.

There is one further topic on which we should like to solicit the opinions of our readers. This year we have had, regretfully, to increase the subscription. We hope to keep it at its new level, two pounds, for some time, but to do this we shall have to keep a close eye on the ways in which economies can be made. One suggestion we have received is that we should reduce the present format to one half its size. Some readers might think that this would involve a substantial and unwelcome loss of readability, but there is no doubt that reducing its present size, in format and in type, would make for considerable savings in costs, especially in postage. For the present we intend to retain the present format, but if our readers have strong views on the matter - either way, for change or for remaining as we are - we should be glad to hear from them.

M.F.  
D.O.T.



NOTES TO CONTRIBUTORS AND SUBSCRIBERS

CONTRIBUTORS are asked to send their typescripts to D.O. Thomas, Department of Philosophy, Hugh Owen Building, The University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, Dyfed SY23 3DY, Great Britain. Contributions of article length should be submitted in duplicate, and the author should retain a copy. Articles should not exceed 8,000 words in length. All contributions should be typed in double spacing, and the footnotes should be presented on separate sheets. It would be of immense help to the editors if authors would kindly adopt the conventions recommended in the MLA Handbook. It is hoped that readers will use the newsletter for the exchange of information by sending in short notes, queries, requests for information, reports of work in progress, and books for review.

SUBSCRIBERS who have not paid their subscriptions in advance will receive an invoice with each issue. The subscription for readers in Great Britain is £2.00 (including postage and packing) per annum. For overseas readers it is \$6.00, or £2.60 sterling per annum (including postage and packing).

All subscriptions and queries concerning them should be sent to Martin Fitzpatrick, Department of History, The University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, Dyfed SY23 3DY, Great Britain.

THE LIBRARY OF RICHARD PRICE

Richard Brinkley

The sale catalogue of the library of Richard Price presents the historian and bibliographer with some interesting problems. Although Price died in 1791 his library was not offered for sale until 1799, after the death of his nephew George Cadogan Morgan to whom he had bequeathed his 'books, telescope and scientific instruments'. (1) The books were sold by Leigh and Sotheby of London in June 1799. The sale occupied three days (June 12 - 14); there were 722 lots which raised £268. 5s. 0d.

It is difficult to establish which books belonged to Price and which belonged to Morgan; the only ones about which there is no uncertainty are those printed after 1791 - there are a number scattered throughout the catalogue - which obviously never belonged to Price. A number of the books have been inaccurately listed in the catalogue and there are some very general references - e.g. Lot 2 - 'Parcel of pamphlets, 4<sup>to</sup>' - which may well conceal the existence of important or interesting material which had belonged to Richard Price. Books are not listed in any systematic way and there is nothing in the entries in the sale catalogue to indicate their provenance or significance.

Fortunately, we know enough about George Cadogan Morgan to establish his ownership of a large number of books in the 1799 catalogue. His own main concerns were in the classics and medicine, although he did share a common interest with his uncle in astronomy and the struggle for American independence. At this point it may be noted that Price shared, to some extent, his nephew's interest in the classics, as this undated letter from George Cadogan Morgan to John Rutt makes clear:-

Dr. Price was by no means a stranger to the Greek and Latin languages ... From Cudworth's Intellectual System he imbibed a strong partiality for Platonism, and an eager desire to examine the system according to Plato's description of it, in his own language; this he accomplished, though agreeably to his own confession, after the labour of years and the experience of very great difficulties ... I will add that he was so great an admirer of Epictetus (whose writings are included in the 1799 catalogue) as always to carry a copy of his Enchiridion in his pocket, the Greek of which he interpreted with the utmost ease ... (2)

Richard P. Morgan, son of George Cadogan Morgan, has left, in his manuscript autobiography, a description of his father's library:-

His

His schoolroom was his study, an immense apartment, not less than sixty feet in length, and twenty-five feet wide, and proportionately high, with book shelves requiring a step ladder to get access to all the valuable works in his extensive library. ... It was well organized, in every sense, for the acquirement of useful knowledge ... My Father had been so much devoted to scientific pursuits, that his valuable library and philosophical apparatus constituted the greater part of the property he left ... (3)

The references to the 'extensive' and 'valuable' library support the view that many of its contents were not included in the 1799 sale catalogue.

In spite of the hindrances to the complete elucidation of all the entries in the 1799 catalogue, some comparison can be made between the books which Price and Morgan respectively collected. Price acquired a fairly wide-ranging collection; Morgan's books are overwhelmingly classical and scientific, with great emphasis on medical literature. Both collections may be described as 'working' libraries, for use rather than for ornament. Price acquired many books originally written many years earlier, but only rarely does he possess a first or early edition where a more convenient later one can be found; most of Morgan's copies of classical texts are in convenient editions such as those produced by Elzevir in Holland in the seventeenth century and which long held their own as standard editions.

The Elzevir edition of Descartes' Opera Philosophica (1672), however, is more likely to have belonged to Price. This is a good illustration of the caution with which attribution of ownership must be made on the evidence of the 1799 catalogue alone. When we turn to the books of Richard Price in greater detail, we find that the following subjects are particularly well represented; theology, politics (both 'contemporary' and 'historical'), economics (including trade and industry) and demography. His library is not as well stocked as one would expect with the publications of friends and associates. For example, D.O. Thomas refers to a copy of Jefferson's Notes on the State of Virginia (1784) (4) and to William Adams' sermon 'On the love of country' (1774) (5). Price is known to have been given a copy of the former and it is highly likely, in view of his close friendship with Adams, that he owned a copy of the latter; neither, however, appears in the sale catalogue. While some relatively ephemeral material, such as pamphlets and sermons, may be included in the various 'general' lots such as the 'Pamphlets 8 vo" with which the catalogue begins, one wonders whether other relatives such as William Morgan, Price's nephew and biographer, may have acquired some of the books most intimately associated with Price including books which had presentation inscriptions from their authors.



The theological material includes a number of Bibles, of which two are of particular interest. One is the 1786 edition of the Codex Alexandrinus text of the New Testament, the first scholarly edition of this part of one of the earliest known manuscripts of the Bible. The other is a Welsh Bible of 1727, one of only three Welsh books in Price's library. The other two Welsh books are Joshua Thomas' Hanes y Bedyddwyr ym mhlith y Cymry (1778), and John Walters' Welsh Dictionary, which began publication in 1770 but was still incomplete by the time of Price's death. There is an interesting 'Welsh connection' in a copy of the first Book of Common Prayer (1549) - in an edition printed at Worcester for the benefit of the Welsh, albeit in English - an early indication of the ways in which Welsh life was to benefit from the 1536 Act of Union!

'Sacred literature' is not very well represented in Price's library. There is an eighteenth-century edition of George Herbert's poems and two interesting eighteenth-century collections of hymns, a reminder that the Dissenters were more ready than Anglicans to depart from the metrical psalms in their worship: James Merrick's Psalms of David (1765), which was widely used by Anglicans and Dissenters alike although it is almost unknown today, and George Walker's Psalms and hymns for public worship (1786). Walker, like Price, worked hard in his efforts to obtain freedom of worship and was, again like Price, a fellow of the Royal Society. Most theological treatises in this catalogue, which can be fairly surely ascribed to Richard Price's library, date from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, although there is an edition of the works of Justin Martyr (c. 100 - 165) who is considered the first major Christian thinker to seek a reconciliation between the claims of faith and reason. Works of Ralph Cudworth and Samuel Clarke, both of whom influenced Richard Price greatly, are to be found, together with such latitudinarian and Arian divines as Isaac Barrow, William Whiston, and Conyers Middleton.

Isaac Barrow's works are included in the list of books which Price recommended to Benjamin Franklin in 1785 as the nucleus of a public library which was to be established in Franklin, Massachusetts. A copy of the original catalogue of the library is in the library of Yale University. (6)

The Deists, whose challenge to orthodox Christianity was met by Joseph Butler's Analogy of religion, are recalled by John Howe's Sober enquiry concerning the possibility of a Trinity in the Godhead (1694) and William Nicholls' Conference with a theist (second edition of 1698) but major writings by Deists, such as John Toland and Matthew Tindal, and their opponents such as Joseph Butler (although Price had a copy of the 1736 edition of the Rolls Chapel Sermons)

and

and Daniel Waterland, are absent from the sale catalogue.

The absence of Butler's Analogy of religion is especially strange since Price comments upon Butler in the 1785 edition of Observations on the importance of the American Revolution. It is not unlikely that Price's copy of the Analogy remained in the possession of a member of his family. There are a few biographical works such as Calamy's Nonconformists' Memorial and an edition of his much-reprinted abridgement of Richard Baxter's autobiography. We do not know whether Price acquired copies of the various works which, like his own Four Dissertations, were provoked wholly or in part by David Hume's 'Essay on miracles'. There is no copy of William Adams' Essay on Mr. Hume's Essay on miracles (1752) in the 1799 catalogue. A link with this controversy is, however, provided by George Campbell's Character of a minister of the gospel, as a teacher and pattern (1752). Campbell, like Price and Adams, responded to Hume's 'Essay' in his own Dissertation on miracles (1762). From 1759 until 1796 he was Principal of Marischal College, Aberdeen and doubtless associated with the decision to grant Price the Doctorate of Divinity of the University of Aberdeen in 1769.

The comments on Richard Price's theological books may be ended with a note on two works which reflect his great efforts to secure greater toleration and greater freedom of worship for Protestant Dissenters. An inquiry into the primitive church by Sir Peter King, later Lord Chancellor, was first published in 1691. King became well-known as a lawyer with much sympathy for Dissenters and became famous through his praise of religious toleration at the trial of Henry Sacheverell; he also supported Whiston when he was accused of heresy. The second edition of the Enquiry (1712-1713) included much new material and was intended to promote the comprehension of Dissenters within the national church. The Confessional (1766; Price owned the third edition of 1770) by Francis Blackburne, Archdeacon of Cleveland, reflected the ideas of a group of Anglicans who thought that the Church of England was in need of thorough reform and that subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles, which was required of all ordinands, should no longer be obligatory. Price was inevitably interested in this movement within the Anglican Church, which led to the presentation of the 'Feathers' Tavern' petition to Parliament in 1771, advocating a greater freedom within the Church of England for clergy who could not subscribe to all its formularies as currently existing. Parliament rejected the petition with the help of the opposition of Edmund Burke.

Political literature looms large among Price's books. During his life he observed, and on occasion was involved in, many political controversies and numbered many political

figures among his friends. As with the theological books, the emphasis is on relatively modern works, and many different political ideas are covered. Among the older texts are editions of Aristotle's Politics and of Machiavelli. The seventeenth century is represented by works as different as Salmasius' Defensio Carolo Regio (1649) which provoked Milton's Pro populo Anglicano defensio; the Roman Catholic Thomas White's The grounds of obedience and government (1655) which justifies passive obedience to governments which have been lawfully established and was alleged by some to have been written with the intention of influencing Cromwell in favour of the Roman Catholics in England; James Harrington's Oceana - originally printed in 1656, but present here in the 1737 Dublin version of John Toland's edition of 1700 - which is one of the classics of the tradition of civic humanism and was a considerable influence upon the development of Price's political thought.

It seems strange, in view of Price's admiration of Algernon Sidney, whom he places with Locke and Milton as one of the most important writers on civil and religious liberty, that the 1799 sale catalogue does not include a copy of Sidney's Discourses concerning government (one of a number of notable omissions throughout the catalogue).

There are also a number of historical works concerning various European countries which most probably belonged to Price, since they have some bearing on subsequent developments in civil and religious liberty; they include editions of Abraham Nicolas Amelot's History of the government of Venice (first printed in 1676) and René Aubert Vertot's History of the Revolution in Sweden (first printed in 1695).

Gilbert Burnet's Travels through France, Italy, Germany and Switzerland, originally published in 1686, attacked Roman Catholicism and arbitrary government with obvious reference to the increasingly unconstitutional rule of James II.

Price doubtless found an interesting parallel - in some respects at least - with widespread feeling in his own day about Great Britain and America in William Molyneux's The case of Ireland's being bound by Acts of Parliament in England, stated (1698). Molyneux, in a consideration of the relationship between Ireland and England in matters of legislation, boldly sought to prove the legislative independence of the Irish Pale. The book caused a certain sensation and the English Parliament condemned it as being of a dangerous tendency. It re-appeared, sometimes with additional material, as late as 1782. Molyneux's work is cited by Price in the third edition of Observations on the nature of civil liberty.

(7) It is likely that Josiah Tucker, Dean of Gloucester, whose Treatise concerning civil government (1781) belonged



Southwark and later private secretary to George Washington, may have been of interest to Price but are also likely to have belonged to his nephew.

Gordon's History may, however, have come from Price's library since Price and Gordon were in correspondence about this work, on which Gordon sought Price's advice.

More purely 'political' works probably did come from Price's collection. They include Gabriel Bonnot de Mably, Remarks concerning the government and laws of the United States of America (1784) and John Adams' Defence of the constitutions of government of the United States of America (1787) which included some mild criticism of Price. A vague entry in the 1799 catalogue (No. 624), 'Proceedings at Quebec, Virginia and Constitution of America ... 1776, etc' indicates printed reports of some of the colonial congresses of 1776 and an early printing of the United States constitution. Although Price was chiefly interested in the political and economic development of the United States the sale catalogue includes some of the publications of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and of the American Philosophical Society. Price was a member of the American Philosophical Society and a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. (10) The vision of Columbus (1787) by Joel Barlow, sometimes called 'the first American epic', reminds us that Price advised Barlow on the publication of this poem in London. The sale catalogue does not, however, include Thomas Jefferson's Notes on the State of Virginia, of which Price received a copy from Jefferson in 1785.

The great interest which Richard Price took in insurance and related matters such as probability, life expectation and population theory, is reflected by a considerable number of books listed in the sale catalogue. They include Abraham de Moivre's Doctrine of chances, the seventeenth-century works of William Graunt on the Bills of Mortality, Sir William Petty's Essay in political arithmetic (1683), and William Black's Comparative view of the mortality of the human species (1788), one of the earliest works to apply statistics to medical research, something which Price himself urged as desirable in Observations on reversionary payments.

Two works of Thomas Short, his New ... observations ... on ... Bills of Mortality (1750) and A comparative history of the increase and decrease of mankind in England and several countries abroad (1767) certainly belonged to Price. Short was a medical man whose interest in public health led him to the study of demography in later life. Like Richard Price, he saw luxury and vice as hindrances to the increase of the population. His New ... observations are more broadly based, in their statistical sources, than earlier English works on the subject.

The science of demography which had made great advances, particularly in France, during Price's lifetime

is represented by Moheau, Recherches et considérations sur la population de la France, (1778); Messance, Recherches sur la population, (1764); and Johann Peter Sussmilch, at one time chaplain to Frederick the Great, whose researches helped Price in his own writings on insurance. The Memoire de l'Academie des Sciences de Stockholm (Paris 1772) is doubtless included on account of the demographer and statistician Peter Wilhelm Wargentini who helped to prepare the official mortality statistics of Sweden and constructed mortality tables of his own in 1766.

The copy of Francis Maseres' Principle of life annuities explained in a familiar manner (1783) was doubtless the copy which the author presented to Price. Maseres, whose interest in the Canadian question has already been indicated, was cursive baron of the exchequer from 1773 until 1824; Jeremy Bentham described him as 'one of the most honest lawyers England ever saw'. His encouragement of life annuities stemmed, like Price's interest in similar projects, largely from his genuine public-spirited philanthropy.

It is no surprise to find the Doctrine of annuities (1779) by William Morgan, Price's nephew, in the catalogue since it includes Price's own 'Essay on the present state of population in England and Wales'. This is one of the sections of Price's library which illustrates his continuing willingness to learn from others; the various writers draw their conclusions from a wide variety of statistics and present their material in different ways.

Richard Price was keenly interested in the development of British trade and industry, partly because of his own interest in national finance and insurance and partly because of the effect which trade in general, and the supply of various commodities, and the conditions under which people worked had on the mortality rate in Britain. The books which may be, with reasonable certitude, traced to Richard Price's own library reflect many different points of view. The mercantilist school of thought is reflected in The trade and navigation of Great Britain (edition of 1767) by Joshua Gee, which deplures unnecessary imports, as Price himself, Mirabeau, and others were later to do (although Gee was more concerned with the advancement of British industry and commerce than the avoidance of luxury). On the other hand An essay on the causes of the decline of the foreign trade (1756) by Sir Matthew Decker puts forward a plan to reduce the decline, as he albeit erroneously sees it, in the foreign trade of Great Britain by reducing monopolies and restrictions on home and foreign commerce.

Price refers to Decker in 'A sketch of proposals for discharging the public debts', a manuscript which he wrote for Lord Shelburne in 1774; (11) in it he also cites Sir James Steuart, one of whose works is referred to later in this paper. Jacques Necker's De l'administration des finances de la France (1784), which Price possessed in both



French and English, was the only authoritative account of French finances under the ancien regime. Price doubtless knew of Necker's interest in the collection and preparation of statistics and his encouragement of their publication as an aid to the more exact knowledge of the subjects to which they relate.

The wider field of economic theory is represented by a considerable number of books. There are a number of very important works such as Adam Smith's Wealth of nations and an edition, in French, of Turgot's writings which it is impossible to identify from the entry in the 1799 catalogue. There are quite a number of British works, perhaps because of the widespread preoccupation with the reduction or removal of the National Debt to which Price gave a great deal of attention and on which his advice was sought by William Pitt. Some are historical like Timothy Cunningham's History of our customs ... National Debts and taxes from William the Conqueror (1764), and William Fleetwood's Chronicon preciosum (1707), an account of English gold and silver money and of wages and salaries from medieval times. The 1771 edition of the works of Charles Davenant (1656-1714) is doubtless included among Price's books because Davenant advocated speedy payment of the public (i.e. national) debt and because of its statistical data on the population of England. Price may also have been interested in his general ideas on the financing of national enterprises, and in his political writings in support of the Tories during the reign of William III. Contemporary works include Sir James Steuart's Inquiry into the principles of political economy (1767) which did not find favour with Adam Smith and Sir John Sinclair's History of the public revenue of the British Empire (1785-1790), which included a comparison between the British and French national finances in 1788, detailed suggestions for an income tax, and a call for the financing of new industries from surplus Government revenue. In general Sinclair was much more optimistic about the economy and the possibility of reducing the National Debt than Price ever was. Arthur Young's Political arithmetic (1774) includes a challenge to the Physiocrats and to Price whose ideas he considered erroneous. He disagreed with Price's contention that the population of England was decreasing and held that in any case a nation's strength depended upon national wealth rather than on a large population.

Richard Price's deep concern about the well-being, material as well as spiritual, of his fellow-men is reflected in three books of particular interest. Two are by John Howard the philanthropist, The state of the prisons in England and Wales (1777) and his Account of the principal lazarettos in Europe (1789). Howard and Price were friends for forty years and Price assisted him in the preparation of his manuscripts for publication. The other is Thomas

Clarkson's Essay on the slavery and commerce of the human species (1786). Price was dismayed that the United States allowed slavery to continue after independence and he strongly urged its abolition.

Both Richard Price and George Cadogan Morgan were interested in science and there are a number of scientific books which might have belonged to either of them. Price may well have owned the copy of Samuel Horsley's edition of Newton whose scientific works loomed large in the curriculum of the Hackney academy, and, even allowing for Morgan's lively interest in electricity, books about electricity by Benjamin Franklin (the only book by him in the catalogue - another curious omission), Charles, Earl Stanhope and Joseph Priestley, whom Price assisted in his publications on the subject.

Entry 618 in the catalogue, 'Ingen-housz on vegetables' refers to Jan Ingen-housz' Experiments upon vegetables (1779), in which he published his discovery that plants give off oxygen in sunshine and carbonic acid in the shade. Ingenhousz was a Dutch physician and scientist and a frequent visitor to Shelburne at Bowood, where he died in 1799.

From what we know of Price and Morgan it seems likely that the comparatively small number of books dealing with history - apart from political economic and religious history - travel and literature belonged to Morgan. English literature and history, apart from the exceptions mentioned, hardly appear at all, although there is a copy of Noah Webster's Dissertations on the English language (1789) in which he introduces his 'reformed' spelling to the public, and about which he sought Price's advice. Since this book incorporates some of Benjamin Franklin's ideas, it is likely that it was sent by him, or by Webster at his suggestion, to Price. James Harris' Hermes, or a philosophical inquiry concerning universal grammar (1751, here present in the edition of 1765) was cited by Richard Price in the second edition of the Review of the principal questions in morals (1769). (12)

The catalogue gives no indication of any association copies among the books included and this is one of a number of volumes where something of the exactitude of the present-day Sotheby's sale catalogue would have added greatly to its interests.

The 1799 sale catalogue does not throw as much light on Richard Price as the details of other people's books frequently do. This is partly due to the extreme brevity of the entries for individual items and partly due to the fact that so many of the books included are referred to by Price in his own writings or are books whose absence from his collection would have seemed peculiar. On the other hand there is the feeling, strengthened with each perusal of the catalogue, that a good deal of interesting material, and material which would have enabled us to gain a clearer idea of the books Price possessed as well as of the

general trend of his reading and studies, was never included. One suspects that if detailed research is done on the library of William Morgan, much material from Price's collection will be found there. The lack of information in the 1799 catalogue about Price's own books makes it most important that anyone who owns, or is aware of, any books which belonged to Richard Price should share their knowledge with others, possibly in information which can be included in later issues of this Newsletter.

#### NOTES

1. The British Library (Reference Division) holds a file of Sotheby's sale catalogues commencing in 1739. Details of the 1799 sale catalogue will be found in G.F. Barwick, List of catalogues of English Book Sales 1676-1900 now in the British Museum, London 1915.
2. Joseph Priestley The theological and miscellaneous works, ed. J.T. Rutt (25 vols., London, 1817-1831), XX, 308N.
3. This quotation is taken from a copy of Richard P. Morgan's 'Autobiography' in the possession of the Stockbridge (Mass.) Library Association. It is included here through the courtesy of Professor Michael McVaugh, Professor of History in the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
4. The honest mind, (Oxford, 1977) 271.
5. Ibid., 297
6. These details have been obtained from a xerox copy of the catalogue kindly supplied by the Library of Yale University.
7. Op. cit., 100.
8. Op. cit., 9.
9. Richard Price to John Howard (shorthand draft) 31 Jan. 1789. M.S. American Philosophical Society.
10. See D.O. Thomas, Richard Price and America-(Aberystwyth, 1975), 18.
11. MS. William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan.
12. Op. cit., 32, 37, and 90.

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THE IRONY OF HISTORY: PRIESTLEY'S RATIONAL THEOLOGYMargaret Canovan

This is a cautionary tale about the danger, inherent in all intellectual pursuits but perhaps most pervasive in the field of dogma, of producing ideas so incisive that they cut off the branch on which one is sitting. Joseph Priestley, Radical Dissenter and polymath, is now remembered chiefly as the discoverer of oxygen and last defender of the phlogiston theory in chemistry, and it might come as a surprise to those who know him as a chemist to hear that he himself regarded his scientific work as something of a hobby, and believed that his main contribution to knowledge lay in the field of theology and Christian history. That he should have been mistaken in his estimation of the relative importance of his writings may seem merely an instance of a common weakness - did not even Newton leave the heights of astronomy to plunge into curious interpretations of Scriptural prophecy? But the interesting thing in Priestley's case is that it is precisely the intellectual merits of his religious writings that doomed them to sterility, for their remote implications, unnoticed by their author, were bound to weaken the very position he was trying to defend.

Priestley had been brought up as a Calvinist, and trained at the Dissenting Academy at Daventry to be a minister, an office which he filled during the greater part of his life. He rapidly became known, however, as an arch-heretic, for he dropped in rapid succession such orthodox doctrines as the Trinity, the Atonement, Original Sin, and the Inspiration of the Bible, and eventually rejected both the Divinity of Christ, and the existence of human souls separate from our bodies. This doctrinal purge did not, however, lead him to lose his faith and cease to be a Christian: on the contrary, he became convinced that the original and true form of Christianity was in fact the highly simplified rational system that he had come to accept. According to this system, there was one God, omnipotent and totally benevolent, who had created the world and who ruled over it; but there was no corresponding principle of evil, for apparent evils in the world were really means towards the ultimate good of all creatures. Within the system of the universe, God had given each creature its nature and proper function, and He continued to control all events, which were linked in a causal chain willed in the Creation. Under His superintendence, the human race had gradually developed from its original crude state. Men's ideas on all subjects, including morals and theology, had been refined in the course of many generations, so that true religion itself was a product of progress. Consequently revelation was necessary, for although the evidence of design in nature proclaimed the existence and attributes of God, it was some time before men

acquired



acquired enough intellectual sophistication to recognise them. In any case, revelation was necessary to assure men of something they could never have been certain of without it - the reality of a future life. Priestley's rationalism did not lead him to dispense with the Bible. On the contrary, he believed that although Christ had been only a man, He had been sent by God for a special purpose: to preach the life after death, and to die and rise again, in order to show what God meant to do for all men at the last day.

He did not accept the doctrine of the literal inspiration of the Bible. The Scriptures seemed to him to command respect simply as historical sources of information about certain men who had been in unusually close contact with God. Where there was reason to suppose that the author of a Biblical book was writing from his own knowledge - when Moses, for instance, was describing the events of his own times - he might be expected to be right. In cases, however, like Moses' account of the Creation, where the writer could not have known anything at first hand about his subject matter, Priestley saw no reason to accept his authority. As for the Biblical prophecies, they were to be regarded as authentic if they had been wholly or partly fulfilled, and if it could be shown that they had been written prior to the events they purported to predict - conditions which Priestley believed to be fulfilled by all the major scriptural prophecies. On their authority he expected the coming of the Millennium, heralded by the catastrophes predicted in Revelation, and after it a purgatorial period during which the wicked would be reformed and made fit to enjoy eternal happiness. This unusually simple theological system seemed to him eminently reasonable, and he was sure that it could be proved by philosophical and historical evidence. He believed that he had a duty to propagating it by continually writing and preaching, and particularly to undermine the Church of England as being the chief local bastion of false doctrines.

His basic method of propagating Rational Christianity and attacking its enemies was to trace the history of the development of Christian doctrine, with a view to showing that most of the 'orthodox' doctrines were not part of the original revelation at all, but corruptions brought into Christianity from the Jewish and Greek cultures with which the early Christians were surrounded. To this end he produced a History of the Corruptions of Christianity (1782), a History of Early Opinions concerning Jesus Christ (1786), a General History of the Christian Church (1790-1803), innumerable controversial writings, notably his disputations with Samuel Horsley, and articles in his avant-garde theological periodical, The Theological Repository.

On the strength of his writings on the history of religion, Priestley has been hailed as one of the pioneers in England of the application of an historical method to theology, (1) and up to a point the encomium is just. Following in the footsteps of Edmund Law, (2) he did his

best to relate religious beliefs to the historical circumstances and cultural development of the men who had held them, tracing from their anthropomorphic beginnings increasingly sophisticated conceptions of the being and works of God. Since human capacities and understanding had developed gradually over a long period of time, God had, he believed, adapted his dispensations to the various stages of this development:

If we take a view of all the divine dispensations, we shall find, that the corrections which we have been led to make of these naturally low ideas of God, have been gradual, in proportion to the improvements of reason, and the advancement of mankind in other branches of knowledge. (3)

Consequently he felt that it was a mistake to tear religious ideas from their historical relations, for this could lead to serious misunderstanding, and had for instance, done so in the case of the Biblical references to sacrifices. These must be understood in the context of Jewish customs and attitudes; the Jews always took a sacrifice or some other gift with them when they went to the Temple, 'agreeable to a custom that is still universal in the East, never to appear in the presence of any prince, or great man, without a present'. (4) The relation between beliefs and their social and cultural context therefore deserved scientific study. As he remarked in his History of the Corruptions of Christianity,

An opinion, and especially an opinion adopted by great numbers of mankind, is to be considered as any other fact in history, for it cannot be produced without an adequate cause, and is therefore a proper object of philosophical inquiry. (5)

However, Priestley was not merely an impartial student of the development of opinions, but also a convinced Christian, believing that however imperfect previous revelations might have been, truth had been revealed once for all in Christ. As he wrote in 1782, the object of his endeavours was 'not a progressive religion, but a progressive reformation of a corrupted religion'. (6) Somewhere amid the bewildering turmoil of human opinion, divine truth was already present in the world; and while the problem of reconciling the progressive history of human thought with the final truth which has invaded it is something which no Christian theologian can avoid, it was a particularly fruitful source of anomalies in Priestley's case, because he had a particularly narrow conception of truth. Truth, in religion as in any other branch of thought, was for him something simple, rational, unambiguous and eternal. It was not a collection of symbols that could have different meanings at different times, while remaining in themselves

mysterious



mysterious and ultimately impenetrable; on the contrary, it was, like the statement that twice two equals four, something that was true for all times, and that had no special relevance to any one time.

It followed that although partial and imperfect religious conceptions must be understood in terms of the historical time to which they were related, true religion could have no such particular historical reference. The efficient causes of belief in true religion were not to be found, like the causes of error, in specific cultural conditions; if men had acquired true religious beliefs, they must have done so either because the truth was rationally manifest (like the existence of God), or else because the truth had been revealed to them (like the doctrine of a future life).

This had three important consequences. In the first place, all religious opinions which could be explained in terms of the specific historical circumstances that gave birth to them must be erroneous. Secondly, where there was no such possibility of accounting for the opinion by tracing it to some historical cause, it must have been acquired by reason or revelation, and must therefore be true. And thirdly, in spite of the universality of revelation, only in special, privileged epochs could men escape the contagion of conditioning circumstances, and reach the extra-historical state of true belief.

There were, then, two separate factors in the formation of historical Christianity: on the one hand the pure truth of revelation; and on the other, the accretions and distortions caused by men's attempts to adapt this truth to the forms of their own historically conditioned conceptions. Priestley believed that whereas the original revelation had been a very simple and rational message, almost all the doctrines which were accepted as orthodox were corruptions introduced in this way; and the object of his History of the Corruptions of Christianity was to disentangle the two strands, setting the historical basis of error against the divine origin of truth. In the Preface to that work, he claimed to have shown

... that everything which I deem to be a corruption of Christianity has been a departure from the original scheme, or an innovation ... I have generally been able to trace every such corruption to its proper source, and to show what circumstances in the state of things, and especially of other prevailing opinions and prejudices, made the alteration, in doctrine or practice, sufficiently natural, and the introduction and establishment of it easy. And if I have succeeded in this investigation this historical method will be found to be one of the most satisfactory modes of argumentation, in order to prove that what I object to is really a corruption of genuine Christianity, and no part of the original scheme. (7)

His explanations of the various 'corruptions' which had distorted the pure truth of Christianity showed ingenuity and imagination. Some of these theological accretions had arisen from Jewish social customs, which had been misunderstood later: the custom of infant baptism, for instance, had originally carried no theological implications at all, being only a natural expression of the power wielded by an Eastern patriarch over his household; for children, slaves and all were baptised, not in their own right, but in his. The majority of corruptions, however, had resulted from the attempt to comprehend Christianity within the conceptual frame-work of Greek philosophy. Before the time of Christ, Jewish thinkers had already derived from the Greeks the method of interpreting their Scriptures allegorically, and the early Christians turned to Platonism for concepts which exalted the crucified Christ into a more respectable leader. As Priestley remarked, this was entirely understandable:

Absurd and confused as the system must appear to us at this day, it should be considered that it was the only philosophy that was in vogue at the time of the promulgation of Christianity; so that persons of a liberal education could not well be supposed to adopt any other. (8)

This natural but disastrous step had led to the construction of the vast edifice of Christology, culminating in the Athanasian Creed; and implausible and unintelligible as these seemed in his own day, Priestley tried to show that they had grown up naturally in their original context. The personification of the Logos, for instance, had been suggested by the current scientific ideas about light, which the Greeks believed to be extruded by the sun in the daytime and drawn back at night. (9)

The reverse of Priestley's theory that religious errors could be explained in historical terms, was his logical, if startling, conviction that religious opinions for which there was no historical explanation (10) must be true, because they must have been derived from revelation, or at any rate based on sufficient evidence. This argument was one which he felt had great potential, and he extended it to cover the origin of institutions in A Comparison of the Institutions of Moses with those of the Ancient Hindoos. (11) Moses' institutions, he said, were so different from those of other contemporary nations that their origin could not be explained historically; he therefore concluded that they must have been the fruit of direct inspiration. He wrote to a correspondent,

To impartial persons the difference will appear very striking, so as to amount to a proof of the divine origin of the former - no other rational account can be given of the difference. (12)

As applied to Christianity itself, this method had rather more plausibility. One of the 'Maxims of Historical Criticism', for use in studying religious history which he laid down in the course of his controversy with Bishop Horsley over the opinions of the early Church, was,

Great changes in opinion are not usually made of a sudden, and never by great bodies of men. That history, therefore, which represents such changes as having been made gradually, and by easy steps, is always the more probable on that account. (13)

This was a double-edged weapon, which he wielded against the orthodox on the one hand and the infidels on the other; for while he himself could provide an admirable account of the natural historical growth of Trinitarianism, who could account in the same way for the original rise of Christianity? He challenged unbelievers to explain Christianity in historical terms - implying, of course, that if they could do so, they would have proved that it was not true. Gibbon's facile insinuation that wishful thinking accounted for its original spread was not enough; (14) a more comprehensive explanation was necessary for the triumph in so short a time of a creed which was partly verifiable, and for which men had been prepared to die. Priestley insisted that this causal problem must be taken seriously:

... men are beings, whose affections and actions are subject to as strict rules as those of the animate or inanimate parts of nature. Their conduct, therefore, must be accounted for on such principles as always have influenced the conduct of men, and such as we observe still to influence men. (15)

As a controversial position, this dichotomy between historical error and extra-historical truth had great strength; but its implications for the believer were extremely embarrassing. Priestley himself seems to have been too much caught up in controversy to be aware of them, but his Unitarian descendants inherited them as a legacy which stultified much of his work. (16) In his heroic struggles to disentangle from the mass of historically-conditioned error the pure strand of eternal truth, he did not stop to ask himself what relation that truth could have to his own, or any age; he was in fact making the unconscious assumption that he was living at a privileged time, in that his own interpretations, like the original gospel, were somehow exempt from the distorting influence of historicity.

There are intriguing similarities between his approach to the history of the early church, and that applied by nineteenth-century German historians to the history of Rome. Digging beneath the stories of Livy for the history of the first ages, the German historians assumed that the truth must be something intelligible and acceptable in their own times, however remote the ways of thought which had clothed



it in myth; and Priestley was doing much the same thing with church history, looking behind Platonic or Jewish conceptions for a truth which would be accessible to modern minds. The crucial difference, however, was that whereas a secular fact like the death of Romulus might have significance and objectivity independent of contemporary attitudes to it, a fact which is supposed to be religious, like the death of Christ, cannot be separated from its interpretations; and since Priestley's whole method excluded its interpretation in terms of contemporary attitudes, the vacuum was filled by an eighteenth-century interpretation, smuggled in as part of the fact itself.

His purpose, then, was to understand history in order to reject it: to penetrate the veil of first-century conceptions, in the faith that behind them lay a series of events which might have happened in the eighteenth century, and statements which had an eighteenth-century significance. This critical approach did not stop at the theological accretions of the Greeks, but applied even to the Gospels themselves, which he did not believe to be inspired. Their authority rested on their having been written by witnesses in a position to be sure of their facts, (17) and accepted by the early Church at a time when those facts were universally known. He said of one of his most notorious heresies - that the accounts of the miraculous conception in Matthew and Luke were interpolated -

... it appears to me, that it is our backwardness to consider the gospel historians in the same light in which we do other historians (notwithstanding the doctrine of their inspiration is nominally given up) (18) that prevents our forming a right estimate of this particular case. (19)

Consequently there was a need for critical study of the Bible, in order to identify those parts of it which were historical only, and to purge them away from eternal truth. In his Theological Repository, the most advanced theological magazine of the day, he called for a study of Jewish interpretations of the Old Testament at the time of Christ, in order to shed light on the use which He made of scriptural quotations; and he suggested that training in Jewish controversy had misled Paul in his interpretations of the scriptures. (20)

Unfortunately there was for the believing Christian a fatal flaw in this whole scholarly enterprise. Priestley himself was too busy to see it, but Bishop Horsley put his finger on it in the very smugness of his orthodoxy. He noted that his opponent had tried to interpret a phrase in John by reference to its similarity to other Jewish phrases, and remarked,

I fear, Sir, it hath been the custom of late to lay too much stress upon Jewish idioms, in the exposition of the didactic parts of the New Testament.



The gospel is a general revelation. It is delivered in a style, which is not perspicuous to the illiterate of any nation except the Jewish; it is as much locked up from general apprehension, as if the sacred books had been written in the vernacular gibberish of the Jews of that age. The Holy Spirit, which directed the apostles and the evangelists to the use of the tongue, which in their day was the most generally understood, the Greek, would for the same reason, it may be presumed, suggest to them a style which might be generally perspicuous. (21)

Horsley was being grossly unhistorical, but at least his position allowed him to suppose that Christianity was equally relevant to all times and places; whereas Priestley, carried away by his desire to disentangle pure truth from the distortion of particular historical circumstances, had stripped it of relevance to almost any time at all. What, the unbelievers might ask, was the use of a revelation which had practically never been revealed to anyone? Precisely because truth had always been the same - pure, simple and rational - it had been hidden from a human race whose views continually developed in complicated and irrational ways; and although Christianity had supposedly been revealed for the benefit of men, the very fact that it was eternal had caused it to be lost in the mazes of historicity - until a few men in the eighteenth century were granted the grace of standing outside history in order to find it again.

It was Priestley's rationalistic conception of truth which plunged him into this impasse. His unconditional rejection of the whole of historical Christianity cast justifiable suspicion upon his methods, but it could have been avoided only if he had adopted an attitude like that of Lessing, whose Education of the Human Race forms a striking contrast to his work. Lessing also held that religion was progressive, and that Christianity was only now being understood in its truth; but instead of rejecting its orthodox doctrines as worthless corruptions, he held that although they had been mysterious when they were revealed, their inner rationality had become apparent as men's minds became adequate to deal with them. Doctrines like the Trinity and Original Sin were therefore true both for the early ages and for the eighteenth century, although in the latter they could be understood at a higher level. 'When they were revealed', Lessing wrote, 'they were certainly no truths of reason, but they were revealed in order to become such'. (22)

The situation was doubly ironical in that Priestley had in fact described education as just such a process of acquiring mysterious knowledge in childhood, and coming to understand it later in life. (23) Perhaps if he had become aware of the problem at the heart of his historical method,

he might have developed a more subtle notion of truth to harmonise with it; but he never reached that position, and although he had a highly developed sense of historical growth, which his Dissenting forebears had lacked, the eventual result of his work was to lead 'Rational Christianity' into a cul-de-sac.

### Notes

1. By Alexander Gordon: Heads of English Unitarian history (London, 1895), 120.
2. Edmund Law: Considerations on the theory of religion (Cambridge, 1745).
3. The Theological Repository, Vol. I, 196.
4. 'History of Corruptions', in J. Priestley: Theological and miscellaneous works, ed. J.T. Rutt (25 volumes, 1817-32), Vol. V, 109. (In subsequent references, Roman numerals refer to volumes of this edition).
5. V, 15.
6. V, 503.
7. V, 8.
8. 'History of early opinions', VI, 196.
9. VII, 195.
10. He failed, of course, to distinguish between cases in which there was no explanation and cases in which none could be offered because the evidence was insufficient.
11. 1799.
12. Priestley to Benjamin Vaughan, 6 Dec. 1797, Harvard University Library.
13. 'Letters to Dr. Horsley', 1783, XVIII, 518.
14. 'History of corruptions', V, 486.
15. V, 483.
16. See Philip Harwood: Priestley and Unitarianism (London, 1842), passim.
17. He saw no reason to accept the first chapters of Genesis, since there could not have been any witnesses to the Creation - Theological Repository, Vol. 4, 1784, 28.
18. An example of Priestley's isolation from majority opinion in his own time.
19. 'History of early opinions', VII, 82.
20. Theological Repository, Vol. 2, (1770), 285.

- 21. Samuel Horsley: Tracts in controversy with Dr. Priestley (Gloucester, 1789), 110.
- 22. G.E. Lessing: The education of the human race (London, 1858), 64.
- 23. See his 'Miscellaneous observations on education' (1778), XXV, 43.

UNIVERSITY OF KEELE.

PRICE AND PRIESTLEY AT THE GRAVEL PIT CHAPEL, HACKNEY

Alan Ruston

Both Dr. Price and Dr. Priestley ministered to the same congregation at Hackney, one following the other, and the dates and broad outline of their ministry there have been widely documented. Dr. Price who was appointed morning preacher in 1770 resigned in February 1791 shortly before his death, and Dr. Priestley resigned in 1794 in order to leave for America. However, little has been written about the congregation itself and its history. Founded originally in the 1660s by Dr. William Bates as a Presbyterian group, there was a split in 1715 apparently about the calling of a minister, but the real cause of dissension was over Calvinism and the modified Arianism of the time of the seceders. It was the non-Calvinists that left and created the Gravel Pit Chapel to which Drs. Price and Priestley ministered late in the century. As the New Gravel Pit Unitarian Chapel the congregation continued until 1969 when they decided not to continue following a compulsory purchase order by the local authority on the premises. I am currently completing a short history of the Gravel Pit Chapel under the title of Unitarianism and early presbyterianism in Hackney which will be available in late 1980.

This project has been on the stocks for some years but was not completed because of the paucity of congregational records. Having been involved with the chapel before its closure I knew that they were not on the premises. At one time it was feared that they had all been lost when the buildings were damaged by bombing during World War 2. But in going through some deed boxes of papers relating to the chapel I found a list of the records existing in about 1910. The contents of this list together with details of the records held in libraries were published in Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society in 1977 (1).

In 1978 I found that many of the records listed above were in the vaults of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association (2). These had been sent there by a firm of solicitors a few years ago. Although no deeds were available (3), the bound volumes were, and thus I have been able to proceed with the history using the working records of the congregation. They are unlikely to have been seen by any researcher since World War 1. All the books are now on permanent loan to the London Borough of Hackney Record Office and are available for research purposes. Virtually all the minute and related books are from the nineteenth century and there are only four covering the previous period. Each has passing references to Price and Priestley. The books are:

1. Account Book, Gravel Pit Chapel, 1742-1787, showing collections and payments out for chapel maintenance.

This book shows that Dr. Price was paid one guinea

for



for preaching at the chapel on 18th February 1770. Similar payments to other supply preachers are shown from 24 December 1769 to 4 March 1770, so it is safe to assume that Dr. Price preached his first sermon as Minister of the Gravel Pit Chapel on 11 March 1770. He was also a supporter of the chapel in another sense, making donations for repairs in September 1784 and May 1785.

2. Gravel Pit Meeting Account Book, 1746-1787, of money collected at the sacrament and application of same.

This volume consists mainly of long lists of names of people to whom charity is given. There are only passing references to Dr. Price.

3. Account Book, 1791-1829.

This perhaps is the most interesting. There is only one reference to Dr. Price which appears on the opening page when £15-3-0 was paid to him for his ministry on 24 January 1791. Payments to Dr. Priestley are as follows:

Date	Comment	Amount
13 May 1792	3/5 of subs. from Xmas 1791 to 25 Mar. 1792 and £10.10.0 for Dec. 1791	£45.10.9.
24 Nov. 1792	Ministry	£52.10.0.
19 Jan. 1793	Balance to 29 Sept. 1792	£30.15.9.
9 May 1793	Ministry	£50. 0.0.
29 May 1793	Bal. to L.D.	£23. 1.9.
17 Dec. 1793	Ministry	£70. 0.0.
15 Feb. 1794	To Mich.	£21. 2.2.
24 Feb. 1794	On acc. subs.	£60. 0.0.
1 Mar. 1794	Of Club sub. (?)	£2. 2.0.
30 Apr. 1794	Of Club (?)	£0. 9.0.
2 July 1794	Dr. P. via Vaughan (under repairs)	£50. 8.0.
7 Aug. 1794	No receipt	£0.18.0.

All payments are consistent except for the one made on 2 July 1794, the reason for which it is difficult to explain. Several authorities on Priestley state that the congregation raised a subscription which was passed on to him in America by William Vaughan (4). This is confirmed in this account book,

3 Apr. 1794 'Subscribed as under for the use of Rev. Dr. Priestley £105'.

Each subscriber is marked # and # signifies 'thus have been paid to Mr. W. Vaughan'.

At five guineas Benj. Travers, Benj. Vaughan, Sam. Vaughan, Tho. Rickards, Geo. Maltby, Mrs. Maltby, W. Vaughan, Mr. McMurdo, Mrs. McMurdo, B. Mackin, J. Spurrell, T. Beverley, M. Dodson, Kinder and Aiken, Mr. Rashleigh, Mr. Thompson, a friend per Mr. McMurdo, Mr. Belsham, Mr. Field.

At two guineas P. Worsley.

At three guineas Mr. Ronalds.

J.H. Stone was listed to contribute but he made no payment (5). All the names shown were leading members of the congregation, but this is not a full list of those rich enough to make a contribution.

4. Gravel Pit Sunday School Accounts, 1790-1811.

The Gravel Pit was one of the first congregations to set up a Sunday School which was supported by Dr. Price. The opening page is inscribed:

'At a General Meeting of the Subscribers of the Gravel pit Meeting house, held, January 31st. 1790 for the support of a Sunday School. Present. Dr. Price, Mr. Morgan, Mr. Belsham, Mr. Spurrell, Mr. J. Towgood, Mr. Travers, Mr. Basnet, Mr. Cotton, Mr. Rickards, Mrs. Dawson, Miss M. Cooper. Dr. Price in the chair'.

Dr. Price was the first subscriber at one guinea.

It is a pity that no committee or annual meeting books of the period are known to exist. The account books only give tantalizing items of detail which tell a story in themselves but need to be filled out from other sources. But these records are an important find and the extracts given above may provide some background information for Price/Priestley scholars.

Notes

1. Alan Ruston, 'Gravel Pit Chapel, Hackney', op. cit., XVI, No. 3. (Sept. 1977). 136-7.
2. British & Foreign Unitarian Association, Essex Hall, 1/6 Essex Street, London WC2R 3HY.
3. The 1910 list mentioned several deeds from 1715 onwards as the chapel was owned by St. Thomas's Hospital, hence St. Thomas's Square off which Dr. Price lived. Where and when these deeds disappeared is unknown.
4. Autobiography of Joseph Priestley, intro. by J. Lindsay (Bath, 1970), 30. 'He went to Hackney, where William Vaughan provided his family with a refuge. William had been at Warrington, like his brother John, who acted as Priestley's agent after his emigration'.



5. For John Hurford Stone's connection with Dr. Priestley see my 'Two Unitarians in France during the Revolution', Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society, XVII, No. 1 (Sept. 1979), 15-28.

WATFORD

ADVERTISEMENT

Copies of Mr. Alan Ruston's book Unitarianism and Early Presbyterianism in Hackney may be obtained from the author at 41 Hampermill Lane, Oxhey, Watford, Herts. Price £2.00.

WHEN DID DAVID HUME MEET RICHARD PRICE?

John Stephens

Any examination of the relationship between Richard Price and David Hume must start with William Morgan's Memoirs of Price published in 1815. This has some first hand authority since its author was Price's nephew. Morgan lived in London from 1769 to 1771 when he was studying medicine, and again from 1774 when he worked for the Equitable Assurance Society. Since Hume had left London in 1768, never to return, (1) Morgan's authority cannot be first hand for any meeting between Hume and Price and must therefore depend on Price's later reminiscences: the same is true of Samuel Rogers's account (2) which confirms all the essential details in Morgan's. This dependence on oral testimony doubtless goes some way to explaining the inconsistencies in Morgan's account, when, twenty five years or more after the death of Price, he had not only to reproduce his uncle's memories but place them in a biographical context.

It will be best then to reproduce what Morgan says. He has been discussing the reception of Price's Review of Morals published in 1758 and proceeds:

The modesty, candor, and benevolence displayed in this work conciliated the minds even of those who differed most widely in their sentiments from the author. In this number Mr. Hume should be particularly mentioned, who, admiring the liberal manner in which his doctrines had been controverted, conceived so favourable an opinion of the writer, that it gave rise to an acquaintance which was continued on both sides with uninterrupted esteem and friendship. Mr. Hume had been so little accustomed to civility from his theological adversaries, that his admiration was naturally excited by the least appearance of it in any of their publications. Dr. Douglas (the late bishop of Salisbury), Dr. Adams, and Mr. Price, were splendid exceptions to this rudeness and bigotry. Having been opposed by these divines with the candor and respect which were due to his abilities ... he was desirous of meeting them all together in order to spend a few hours in familiar conversation with them. - Accordingly, they all dined by invitation at Mr. Cadell's in the Strand, and, as might be expected, passed their time in the utmost harmony and good humour. In a subsequent interview with Mr. Price, when Hume visited him at his house at

Newington

Newington Green, he candidly acknowledged that on one point Mr. Price had succeeded in convincing him that his arguments were inconclusive; but it does not appear that Mr. Hume, in consequence of this conviction, made any alteration in the subsequent edition of his Essays. The treatise on morals, though it raised the reputation of the author both at home and abroad, procured comparatively but few readers. (3)

The assertion that Price and Hume met as a result of the publication of the Review, is not found in Rogers' account and is almost certainly erroneous. (4) There are three objections to Morgan's dating, of which the most substantial is the presence of Thomas Cadell as the host. In 1758 he was a sixteen year old apprentice, newly arrived from Bristol, working for Andrew Millar. Millar had published all of Hume's works since 1748 and was one of his closest friends. It is safe to assume that - as a matter of course - he would have been the host on the occasion Morgan described had it taken place in 1758 or soon after. For Cadell to have been the host the meeting must have taken place in 1767 or 1768. Cadell had been made a partner in the business in 1765, presumably on the completion of his apprenticeship and Millar retired to Kew where he remained until his death in 1768, taking a smaller part in the running of the business. The meeting therefore would have taken place some time after February 1767 when Hume returned to London as Under Secretary of State. (5)

The second difficulty with Morgan's account is his assumption that it was the Review that gave Price a contemporary reputation reaching beyond this country. This is especially puzzling since the only evidence Morgan gives is a letter from Franklin, in which a review of the Review in the Bibliothèque des Sciences et des Beaux Arts for 1767, nine years after the date of publication, is cited. The printing evidence makes it clear that the Review cannot have been read much in the 1750's and 1760's since the first edition of 500 copies was still in print in 1768 when it was advertised in the second edition of Four Dissertations. (6) Compared with works of comparable interest and date, such as Burke On the Sublime or Reid's Inquiry this was not impressive. (7) In fact almost the only contemporary reference to the work comes in a volume of sermons by Thomas Amory published in 1766, but since he was a dissenting minister who later became Price's co-pastor at Newington Green, little stress can be placed on it and the same can be said for the commendation that James Burgh inserted into the second edition of his Dignity of Human Nature published in 1767. (8) Even as late as 1780 Lord Monboddo wrote to Price saying that he had never realised that he had written any philosophy, to which Price replied that the Review, though the least read of his



works, was not, he thought, his worst. (9) Similarly in the pamphlet war that followed the publication of Observations on Civil Liberty in 1776, very few writers show themselves aware of the existence of the Review and none any awareness of its significance for the ethical foundation of Price's political theory. (10)

The contemporary journals, the Monthly and Critical Reviews both had articles on the Review when it appeared: both treat it with respect, without any suggestion that it is an attack on Hume (or anyone else), and, ultimately, with a degree of indifference. The Monthly concluded that, 'ever candid reader, who is acquainted with the subject, will, we apprehend readily allow that Mr. Price has treated it in a very judicious manner, and that his book is one of the most valuable performances we have on the subject', whilst the Critical Review concentrates on the dubious character of metaphysics in general, not just Price's in particular. Investigations such as this 'may serve to exercise the powers of the mind and improve the reasoning faculty; but they are much more apt to divert the attention from pursuits of greater importance, and create a vitious propensity to use all the arts of sophistry in quibbling disputes'. (11)

This lukewarm or indifferent attitude receives some oblique confirmation from Hume himself. In 1759 Millar published Adam Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments. Since he was in Edinburgh Hume wrote to him describing the book's reception. At the end of a typically ironic letter he adds that he and Wedderburn had made presents 'to such or our acquaintances as we thought good judges and proper to spread the reputation of the book'. The list that follows includes Burke's name, on account of the recently published book on the sublime, but no mention is made of Price. This is a strange omission, implying both that Hume had never met Price and that he was unaware of the Review's existence. (12)

What evidence we have, therefore, suggests that Price was by no means well known in the late 1750's and early 1760's. Morgan indeed states, 'Excepting Dr. Franklin, Mr. Canton, and two or three other philosophical friends, his acquaintance at this period (i.e. c.1762) was chiefly confined to members of his own congregation'. (13) It was in the years after this that he became better known. His first paper in the Philosophical Transactions came out in 1763, (14) and he was elected F.R.S. in 1765, when his sponsors were Franklin, Canton and three dissenters. (15) Subsequently his work on life assurance gave him a still wider reputation which was supplemented by Four Dissertations, a somewhat more approachable work than the Review, which earned him a doctorate from Aberdeen and, later, the friendship of Shelburne. (16)

Although it is possible that Morgan mistakenly interchanged the names of Cadell and Millar and thus implied that Hume and Price met soon after 1758, the other evidence, the

independent testimony of Samuel Rogers as well as Hume's letter to Adam Smith, makes it extremely unlikely that the two men met as a consequence of the publication of the Review in March 1758. Possibly they met sometime after April 1759 and before Hume's departure for Paris in 1763, (17) in which case the intermediary could have been Millar or some other mutual acquaintance. The positive evidence suggests a later date in 1766 or 1767: this I will discuss below.

The consequence of these deductions is that Morgan's assertion that the Review was assumed to be an attack on Hume cannot, on historical grounds, be accepted. In one sense it clearly was in that Hume was the pre-eminent representative of the modern scepticism that Price wished to refute. (18) However he rarely attacks Hume by name and, frequently, cites passages from his work with considerable sympathy. (19) It was only in the later editions of the Review that Price, doubtless with Reid and Beattie in mind, found it necessary to make his disagreement with Hume more explicit by mentioning him by name when previously he had left the identification to the reader. As part of the same process he clarified the expression of many passages in the work that could conceivably be misinterpreted. This was a substantial task, as much of the expression in the first edition is confused.

## II

I now turn to the positive evidence for Price's acquaintance with Hume. In January 1767 Price published his Four Dissertations in the last of which he joined the ranks of those who had attacked Hume's arguments on miracles. (20) A month later Hume arrived in London, (21) and Price sent him a copy of the book, accompanied by a letter, now lost, apologizing for the strong language used about infidels. This provoked a reply from Hume, dated 18 March 1767, which reads, in part, as follows:-

So far from there being any Occasion to make me an Apology for your late Publication that you have prevented me in my Intentions of writing to you, and of returning you thanks for the Civility with which you have treated me. I had almost said unusual Civility. For to the Reproach of Learning, it is but too rare to find a literary Controversy conducted with proper Decency and Good Manners, especially when it turns upon religious Subjects ...

I own to you, that the Light in which you have put this Controversy is new and plausible and ingenious, and perhaps solid. But I must have some more time to weigh it, before I can pronounce this Judgment with

satisfaction

Satisfaction to myself. My present Occupations shall not deprive me of the Leisure requisite for that Purpose; as no object can possibly have equal Importance. These Occupations however have bereav'd me of the satisfaction of waiting on you, and thanking you in person for your Attention which I should have thought my Duty, if I did not find my time so fully employ'd ... (22)

Price replied as follows on March 24th:-

Sir,

The kind letter with which you have favour'd me has given me so much pleasure, that I cannot make myself easy without troubling you with this to thank you for it and for your great civility and candour. I was indeed afraid that I had taken a liberty you would not approve, but I have very agreeably found the contrary. Should I ever have an opportunity I shall take care to correct the expressions to which I referred in the note I sent you. I am not, I hope, inclin'd to dislike any person merely for an opinion however great, or to connect worth of character and God's favour with any particular set of sentiments. It is one of my most fix'd and favourite principles which I endeavour often to inculcate, that nothing is fundamental besides a faithful desire to find out and to practise truth and right. I am sensible that your time at present must be much taken up, and therefore I will not interrupt you too long. It would give me particular pleasure to see you at Newington Green, but this is a greater favour than I have any reason to expect. I may probably take the liberty to call upon you, and stand my chance of finding you at home. Before you left London last Autumn I had call'd several times upon you, but always had the mortification of missing you. I am, Sir, with great regard,

Your most obedient and humble servant,

Richd Price (23)

This shows that they had not met so far in 1767 but it seems a reasonable inference that they had been introduced sometime in 1766. This was the period when Hume was concerned mainly about Rousseau's strange activities so it is not surprising that a very slight acquaintance had no chance of developing any further. Price clearly regretted the language he had used in the first edition of Four Dissertations and was concerned at the effect that this strange lapse from his normal impeccable manners might have on Hume. It could well have been that Hume's response was to ask Cadell to arrange a dinner party to neutralise any possible embarrassment. Of the others who were present Hume had known John Douglas since the end of the 1750's. Adams, whose Essay on Miracles, like Douglas's Criterion, was published in 1751, does not

previously



previously seem to have met Hume, though his friendship with Price had grown after the publication of the Review, in which Price quoted from Adams's Sermon on the nature and obligation of virtue (1754). In his journal for 25 January 1789 Price wrote: 'My acquaintance with him (Dr. Adams) was occasioned by the publication of my book upon morals about 32 years ago. He had then published a sermon on the nature of virtue and religious obligation in which he gave the same account of moral obligation that I have given'. The circumstances of 1767 match exactly those reported by Morgan and documented by the extant correspondence between Price and Hume.

What they discussed at that elusive meeting must still be a matter for speculation. Since they had all written on miracles that would certainly have been the starting point. When Price and Hume met later they discussed Rousseau, as Price later told Samuel Rogers. (26) However one suggestion, which as far as I am aware has never been made, might possibly solve Morgan's riddle. Hume never said that Price convinced him that he was wrong only that his reasoning on one point was inconclusive.

Hume was anxious to show that all sorts of things that Price wished to demonstrate - the causal relation, the existence of the external world and so on - could not be known. Equally they could not be proved not to exist. In this sense Hume's reasonings were inconclusive and this perhaps, in a gently ironic way, is what he was saying.

1. Though Hume did pass through London in 1776. E.C. Mossner The life of David Hume, 2nd edn. (Oxford, 1980), 596.
2. Samuel Rogers, Recollections of the table talk (London 1887), 107, 'Hume told Cadell the bookseller that he had a great desire to be introduced to as many of the persons who had written against him as could be collected; and requested Cadell to bring them and him together. Accordingly, Dr. Douglas, Dr. Adams, &c. &c. were invited by Cadell to dine at his house in order to meet Hume. They came; and Dr. Price, who was of the party, assured me that they were all delighted with David.'
3. William Morgan, Memoirs of the life of the Rev. Richard Price (London 1815), 16-17.
4. This dating has been accepted by most writers both on Hume and Price. Cf. Mossner, op.cit., 393-4; Roland Thomas, Richard Price (Oxford 1924), 29-30; Carl Cone, Torchbearer of Freedom (Lexington 1952), 27. However Raymond Klibansky and E.C. Mossner in New letters of David Hume (Oxford 1954), 233 assign the meeting to 1767.
5. It is not quite clear when Andrew Millar retired. Most authorities, apparently on the authority of J. Nichols, Literary Anecdotes (London 1813), III, 388, state that Millar took Cadell into partnership in 1765 and handed the entire business over to him in 1767. Plomer in his Dictionary of Printers and Booksellers ... 1726 to 1775 (London 1932), 2-4, 171-3, questioned this assumption on the basis of a letter concerning business matters written by Millar to Cadell 'a few months before his death'. He states that the letter is in the British Library and gives no further reference, but he must mean MSS. Sloane 755 f.79 dated Bath, 7 February 1767, more than a year before Millar's death. However an earlier letter, Add MSS. 6858 f.34 addressed presumably to Sir Andrew Mitchell, dated Kew Green, 28 Aug. 1766, includes the following, 'Tho' I left ye Strand at Midsummer to Mr. Cadell, one every way deserving, yet I can with Truth say not one minuet (sic) have I regretted it nor one hour has lain heavy on my hands. I go there once or perhaps twice a week to see and be seen'. Earlier in the letter he refers to a dinner party with Hume and Franklin present, when Hume's entanglement with Rousseau was discussed. Millar expresses a hope that Hume's account of the affair will be published. By this time also Millar's letters to Hume are dated from Kew; hence *Millar was not living in London after mid 1766, which leaves the way free for Cadell.*
6. The first, but not the later editions, of the Review was printed by Bowyer. The print run is recorded in the Bowyer paper ledger (Bodleian Library, Oxford. MS Don b 4, f.150). It is possible that James Burgh, Price's neighbour at Newington, had some part in the publication

- of the Review. He had acted as a proof reader for Bowyer in the 1730's and his own Dignity of virtue was published in 1754 by a consortium that included Millar. (Nichols, *op.cit.*, II, 263 n.)
7. Reid's Inquiry reached a fourth edition in 1785. By 1782 Burke's Philosophical inquiry had reached a ninth edition, not counting Scottish or Irish piracies. Cf. W.B. Todd, A Bibliography of Edmund Burke (London 1964), 33 ff.
  8. Thomas Amory Twenty two Sermons (London, 1766), 30n. Amory became pastor of the Old Jewry Meeting House in 1766 having been afternoon preacher from 1759. From 1770 he was morning preacher at Newington Green. James Burgh, The dignity of human nature ... a new edition (London 1767), I, 259. When Boswell met Price on 21 Sept. 1769 in the company of Franklin, Rose, Burgh and others he identified him as 'Mr. Price who writes on morals'. (Boswell in search of a wife (London 1957), 319).
  9. Monboddo to Price, 11 June 1780; Price to Monboddo, 2 Aug. 1780. In this letter Price explains his intellectual debts, to Plato amongst the ancients and Cudworth and Clarke amongst the moderns. 'This', he adds, 'you may learn from my Review of the Principal Questions and Difficulties in morals which, tho' my first work and that which has been least read, is not in my opinion my worst'. Monboddo Papers on deposit at the National Library of Scotland: I am grateful to Mrs. Gladys Burnett for permission to consult these.
  10. The only such reference known to me is in Henry Goodricke, Observations on Dr. Price's theory and principles (York 1776), 64, but he fails to see any connection between the two works.
  11. Monthly Review, XVIII (1768), 513-527: this was written by William Rose (d. 1766), a dissenter. Cf. B.C. Nangle, The Monthly Review, 1st ser. 1749-1789; Index of contributors and articles (Oxford 1934), 37, 179; Critical Review (1758), 361-8, 461-8, citation from p. 463.
  12. David Hume to Adam Smith, 12 Apr. 1759. New Hume Letters, 51-5; E.C. Mossner and I.S. Ross, The Correspondence of Adam Smith (Oxford 1977), 33-6.
  13. Morgan *op.cit.*, 20.
  14. R. Price, 'An Essay towards solving a problem in the doctrine of chances', Philosophical Transactions, LIII, 370 .
  15. D.O. Thomas, The honest mind (Oxford 1977), 134-5 gives a list of sponsors. Others were Samuel Chandler, Minister of the Old Jewry; John Ellicot (d. 1772) a clockmaker and dissenter, living in Hackney; Matthew Raper, the head of a well known Newington Green family of dissenters (Cf. Carl Cone, 'Newington Green: a Study of a Dissenting Community', Catholic Historical Review, LIV (1968), 3). The last was Israel Mauduit (1708-1787) also a dissenter who was educated at the Taunton Academy.



16. For the Aberdeen Doctorate cf. D.O. Thomas, op. cit., 143n. and for Shelburne, Ibid., 145. Price met Shelburne in 1771.
17. Mossner, op. cit., 439-440.
18. S.A. Grave in The Scottish Philosophy of Common Sense (Oxford 1960), follows T. Segerstedt, The Problem of Knowledge in Scottish Philosophy (Lund 1935), 21-30, in suggesting that Price anticipated Reid in his criticisms of Hume, citing a sample passage on pp. 9-10. D.D. Raphael in his edition of the Review suggests that Reid influenced Price, to abandon a theory of representative perception. Review, ed. D.D. Raphael (Oxford, 1974), xvi., 29n. Whether these changes were more stylistic than substantial I do not propose to determine here.
19. Most notably on causation in Review, 25. Cf. also 63n. 'The virtue of an action, Mr. Hume says, is its pleasing us after a particular manner' referring to Hume, Treatise III, 103, i.e. paragraph 103 in the Selby Bigge edition revised by P.H. Nidditch (Oxford 1978). The sceptical argument of Treatise, 180 is dealt with at Review 96n. and Hume's derivation of moral good and evil from sensations of pleasure and pain (Treatise 546-7) is dealt with at Review 212n.
20. It was reviewed in the Monthly Review, XXXVI (February and March, 1767), 51-66, 81-93, by Rose and in the Critical Review, XXII (January 1767), 9-17.
21. On 20 Feb. 1767, Mossner, op. cit., 535.
22. New Hume Letters, 233-4. The text is taken from The Athenaeum (21 Oct. 1865) in default of the MS. which was then in the possession of one Henry Wreford.
23. Royal Society of Edinburgh, Hume MSS. vi, 85. Partly printed in J.Y.T. Greig and H. Beynon, Calendar of the Hume Manuscripts in the possession of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, 1932, and in New Hume Letters, xix.
- It might be opportune to exorcise one ghost Hume reference to Price. J.Y.T. Greig in his Letters of David Hume (Oxford 1932), II, 17, commenting on the letter from Hume to Rousseau, Feb. 1766 refers to a Mrs. Boscawen, an acquaintance of Hume as widow of the admiral and sister in law to Mr. Price, identified by Greig as Richard Price. In fact this is a Charles Price, whom Mrs. Boscawen's sister, Sarah Evelyn, married at St. George's Hanover Square in 1766. Cf. Aspinall Oglender, Admiral's Widow: being the life and letters of the Hon. Mrs. Boscawen from 1761 to 1805, (London, 1942), 131n.
- Price made the promised alterations in the second, 1768, edition of Four Dissertations. Most of the changes are detail: after itemising some additions Price states that 'every expression (in the first edition) ... which had any appearance of an undue severity with respect to unbelievers has been altered' (Advertisement, v). In the first edition Price felt far more able than subsequently to accuse unbelievers of a lack of candour.

For example, in one passage (p. 368) he refers to the chief objections to Christianity which he says are the result of 'partial views and wrong notions'. In the first edition this reads 'of either want of candour, or of wrong notions derived from ignorance and careless examination'. Most of the changes were similar. On p. 434 'arrogant scepticism' becomes 'vain scepticism' whilst the 'pretence' of those who dispute the possibility of miraculous events, equated with 'the most inexcusable folly and presumption' in the first edition (p. 424) becomes 'extremely unreasonable' in the second edition.

Price's description of Hume is similarly modified.

The somewhat muted expression of his disagreement with Hume's scepticism found in the Review here gives way to a frontal attack as in p. 456n, where he states that Hume says 'there is no reason to believe the reality of any thing we hear, see or feel in any other sense than as an idea or mode of perception in our minds'. In the second edition Price adds some praise of the Philosophical Essays and the Treatise not previously found.

24. J.Y.T. Greig The letters of David Hume (Oxford 1932), I, 298, and subsequent references.
25. James Boswell The life of Samuel Johnson, ed. Hill and Powell, (Oxford 1934), II, 441. This describes the visit to Oxford Boswell and Johnson made in March 1776, when they saw Adams, 'He told me he had once dined in company with Hume; that Hume shook hands with him and said 'You have treated me better than I deserve' and that they exchanged visits.
26. P.W. Clayden The early life of Samuel Rogers (London 1887), 303.

Oxford

RICHARD PRICE'S SHORTHAND

Beryl Thomas

Like many of his fellow ministers Richard Price made extensive use of shorthand, both in drafting replies to his correspondents and in making entries in his journal. It was his habit to scribble in shorthand on the back of a letter the first draft of his reply, to be worked up later, sometimes with considerable alterations, into the final version. It was his habit too to keep by him a small notebook in which from time to time he jotted down notes and observations on the events of the day. The system he used was based on that set forth by Jeremiah Rich in The pen's dexterity completed: or Mr. Rich's shorthand now perfectly taught (London, 1669). As shorthand was often taught in the Dissenting Academies it is quite likely that Price learnt his at Moorfields Academy, but it is also possible that he might have been encouraged to adopt Rich's system by the recommendation given in John Locke's Some thoughts concerning education. However he came by it, he found it extremely useful and continued to use it right up to the end of his life. The last entry in his journal is for 6 February 1791, a little over two months before he died.

The longest piece in his shorthand now known to be extant is the section of his journal which covers the period from 25 March 1787 to 6 February 1791. The manuscript of this document is now in the possession of the National Library of Wales, and is contained in a notebook of 76 leaves bound in contemporary roan or sheep, and measuring 7" by 3½". The journal occupies 64 pages of this notebook, the remaining leaves being blank. Some words are entered in long-hand, a feature which is of considerable help to the transcriber, but by far the greater part is written in shorthand. Transcribing, or rather deciphering this document presents a number of problems. These arise because, although the basic elements that Price uses can be identified as those in Rich's system, several symbols cannot be deciphered simply by breaking them down into these constituents. They are either idiosyncratic in Rich's system or variants that Price himself found it convenient to introduce. Identifying the words which these symbols represent was the result of a long and sometimes rather laborious process of establishing a meaning that made reasonable sense in all the different contexts in which it occurred. Fortunately, this process was made easier by several factors.

First, and perhaps most important, the journal contained enough shorthand in purely quantitative terms to make deciphering feasible: it provided a sufficiently large number of different instances of the use of the same



symbol to ensure that if a meaning fitted all of them it was reasonable to suppose that it was the correct interpretation. Secondly, the journal was reasonably free from the linings-through, scratchings-out, and super-imposed second thoughts that make the drafts of the letters frequently virtually impossible to decipher. Thirdly, it was sometimes possible to match the draft of a letter with the final draft actually sent to the recipient. In these cases it was possible to establish a one-to-one correspondence between the constituents in the shorthand and the words in the final draft, and this process served to establish the meanings of some symbols which could not be deciphered by reduction. But this procedure had to be followed with caution as Price frequently made substantial alterations in moving from the first to the last draft. Lastly, as I have already mentioned, the words written in longhand provided useful clues to the unravelling of the shorthand. For example, in the journal in one entry the words grasshopper and burden written in longhand but separated by some shorthand suggested a reference to Ecclesiastes 'and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden' and led to deciphering 'The truth is that I am fit for little and that the grasshopper is becoming a burden to me'.

I have found the job of deciphering Price, although frequently tantalising, very enjoyable and rewarding. There is something very challenging in seeing the name Burke written in longhand amid a sea of shorthand, especially in the draft of a letter to Joseph Priestley, and wondering whether deciphering the shorthand will yield something material to a fuller understanding of Price's response to his great adversary. There is still much of Price's correspondence still to be deciphered, but I have now completed a transcription of the journal and the result is being currently published in The National Library of Wales Journal. I believe that I have established a credible version of the greater part, but some passages proved intractable, and there are others which can be improved upon. I hope that publishing this section of his journal will lead to further sections being brought to light. It is highly unlikely that Price began keeping a journal in this way as late as 1787. Indeed it may well be that journal-keeping was a habit that he acquired in his student days and one that he maintained regularly thereafter. If that was the case then other sections of his journal may well have survived and be now gathering dust in some forgotten corner.

The question naturally arises as to whether deciphering these notes is worth the time and labour spent doing it, especially as there is a temptation to think that information which is retrieved with difficulty is necessarily more valuable than that which is readily accessible. Quite apart from the fact that the value of

the enterprise does not rest entirely in its results - for the work is fun to do - I believe that in Price's case the enterprise is worthwhile, if only because the journal reveals to us what kind of man Price was, and because it does so with a poignancy that we do not meet elsewhere in his writings. The last years of his life were saddened and darkened by the loss of his wife, by his grief for her, by poor health and frequent illnesses, and by an increasing awareness of declining powers. But the sadness is relieved by his piety, his sense of the goodness of God to him, and the courage with which he faced impending death.

Aberystwyth

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

The Rev'd John Ruskin Clark, 2485 Moonstone Drive, San Diego, CA 92123, would like to contact the possessor of a lock of Joseph Priestley's hair.

RICHARD PRICE AND THE POPULATION CONTROVERSY

D.O. Thomas

One of the ideals of conduct to which Richard Price subscribed throughout his career was that of candour. According to Price the man of candid disposition exhibits a complex of virtues: he is sceptical and eager to submit all received ideas to the tests of reason; he is devoted to the pursuit of knowledge and untiring in his efforts to uncover the truth; he refuses to take an unwarranted pride in his own untested convictions, he is sensitive to evidence, and he respects and responds to others as disinterested seekers after truth. Above all, he is content to seek to change the opinions of others solely by an appeal to reason.

It is now well known that Price believed that the population of Great Britain had been steadily declining since the Glorious Revolution. In his 'An essay containing an account of the progress from the Revolution and the present state of the population in England and Wales', which was published in 1779, (1) Price argued that the population of England had diminished since the Revolution by nearly a quarter, and that in the period 1767 to 1777 it had fallen by over 250,000. He also claimed that in 1690 the total population had been over six and a half million, that by 1777 it had fallen to less than five million, and that it was still declining. Right up to the time of his death in 1791 he still maintained that the population was declining. The weight of the authorities on this issue are now so heavily and decisively against him (2) that the question naturally arises as to whether in holding to his view so pertinaciously throughout his career he remained true to his own ideals. Though he exhorted others to candour, did he himself remain obstinately committed to his own prejudices even in the face of massive evidence to the contrary? Did he signally fail to realize in his own person the virtues he constantly preached to others? Did he fail to admit to the truth because he had come to have an emotional interest in beliefs that others recognized to be false?

To answer these questions it will be useful to show how Price came to accept the thesis that the population of Britain had been declining throughout the eighteenth century, to examine the arguments which he believed supported it, and to assess the weight of evidence available in his own lifetime for the contrary thesis. To do this in a fairminded way we must bear in mind that the evidence which showed conclusively that Price was wrong did not become available until the census of 1801, and that until that time there was some uncertainty as to who

would



would finally be shown to be in the right even among the foremost authorities upon the issues at stake.

Price's first publication on demographic problems was a paper submitted to the Royal Society in the form of a letter to Benjamin Franklin and entitled 'Observations on the expectations of lives, the increase of mankind, the influence of great towns on population, and particularly the state of London with respect to healthfulness and number of inhabitants'. (3) This paper was largely concerned with an attempt to determine the size of the population of London. Price's calculations were based on the Bills of Mortality: the number of inhabitants could be determined, he believed, by multiplying the expectation of life of an infant just born - this to be derived from the tables of mortality - by the number of births in a year. After making the adjustments necessary to bring those that came to live in London into account, Price concluded that the population of London in the year 1769 was probably less than 650,000, and he claimed that the estimates given by William Brakenridge for 1754 (751,000) (4) and Corbyn Morris for 1751 (5) (nearly a million) had been much too high. The population of London had declined, he maintained, in the period 1736 to 1769 by 84,260. Price did, however, appreciate that there were difficulties in using the Bills of Mortality. These did not record all the christenings; neither did they record births among the Jews, Quakers, Roman Catholics, and the three denominations of Dissenters. Furthermore, it was clear that not all deaths were recorded in the Bills, and it was difficult to estimate the number of those who emigrated and the number of those who enlisted in the army and in the navy. But he did not allow these difficulties to shake his conviction that the population of London had fallen.

After comparing the available statistics Price came to the conclusion that the expectation of life in cities and in large towns was less than it was in the countryside. London, particularly, suffered a much higher infant mortality rate. But this was not the only reason for believing that the countryside was more favourable to population growth. In urban areas, men and women married later in life, and their unions were much less fruitful. Although Price conceded that in recent years the decline in the population of London had been checked and reversed, (6) the countryside and moderate sized towns were much more favourable to growth. There were several reasons why this was so: cities and large towns suffered a higher incidence of disease, particularly of the plague; their inhabitants suffered more from atmospheric pollution (7) and poor sanitation; and the enjoyment of the luxuries that were available in the metropolis encouraged celibacy, postponed marriages, and resulted in those marriages being less fecund. (8) The countryside, where life was simpler, more

frugal, and much healthier, was much more favourable. This was particularly true of America:

In the back settlements, where the inhabitants apply themselves entirely to agriculture, and luxury is not known, they double their own number in 15 years; and all thro' the northern colonies, in 25 years. (9)

Price's sources for this information were (Benjamin Franklin), (10) The interest of Great Britain considered with regard to her colonies (11) and Ezra Stiles, A discourse on Christian union. (12) In the former, Franklin estimated that the population of America, when the people were not molested by an enemy, were doubling their number every twenty-five years, 'exclusive of the accession of foreigners'. (13) This repeated a claim that he had first made in an earlier work, Observations concerning the increase of mankind. (14) Ezra Stiles, who based his argument on the Rhode Island censuses of 1730 and 1755, maintained that while the doubling period of the population in the settled areas was over 25 years, inland it ranged from 15 to 20 years. (15) These statistics confirmed the puritanical dispositions of Price's mind. They fortified a settled conviction which was to endure to the end of his life that rural life was simpler, healthier, more virtuous and more conducive to population growth than life in the large towns and cities. This belief seemed to be validated not simply by comparing British and American statistics, but also by analysing the figures for different parts of America. Price seized upon Thomas Prince's statistics for the population of Boston which were published in the Gentleman's Magazine for 1753: (16)

In the four provinces of New England there is a very rapid increase of the inhabitants; but, notwithstanding this, at Boston, the capital, the inhabitants would decrease were there no supply from the country: for, if the account I have seen is just, from 1731 to 1762, the burials all along exceeded the births. So remarkably do towns, in consequence of their unfavourableness to health, and the luxury which generally prevails in them, check the increase of countries. (17)

Price accepted Stiles's prediction that New England would have 4,000,000 people within 70 years and his conjecture that by that time the population of all the colonies would be more than that of Great Britain. But these statistics were to do much more than confirm Price's belief that rural life is more favourable than urban life to population growth. They were to identify America in Price's mind as the land of rural simplicity, and as the home of the virtues, of wholesomeness, and of a rapidly

increasing

increasing population. Britain, by contrast, suffered from urban sophistication, luxury, vice, degeneration, and a continuous decline in numbers. The vision of America as a land of virtue became more deeply engraved on Price's mind when his sympathies were enlisted on behalf of the colonists who opposed the British Administration both before and during the War of American Independence. America became the 'asylum of liberty' not just in the sense that she could be expected to provide a refuge for the victims of oppression in Britain, but also because in her institutions she remained the defender of those civil rights which seemed to be increasingly threatened by developments in Britain. In America a rapid increase in population was both caused by and proof of the possession of the virtues; in Britain a decline in population was caused by and proof of an increase in vice. A demonstration that the population of Britain was not declining would have forced Price to abandon the thesis that Britain was not becoming more vicious, or the thesis that a growth in vice is correlated with a decline in population. Neither alternative was acceptable to Price whose puritanism, allied to a sympathy with the colonists, strongly disposed him in favour of the view that the population of America was increasing while that of Britain was declining.

Price first put forward the thesis that the population of Britain was declining in a supplement published in the second edition of Observations on reversionary payments:

In this kingdom, it appears that, amidst all our splendour, we are decreasing so fast, as to have lost, in about 70 years, near a QUARTER of our people. (18)

The main argument in defence of this thesis was based upon a comparison of the number of houses given in the returns made by the Surveyor of House and Window duties with the figure given ninety years earlier by Charles Davenant in his 'Essay on Ways and Means'. Davenant who derived the figure from Gregory King's Political observations on the state and condition of England held that the number of houses in England and Wales in 1690 was 1,319,215. (19) Price compared this figure with those given for the years 1759 and 1766 in a work entitled Considerations on the trade and finances of this kingdom which was published in 1766. In 1759 there were 986,482 houses in England and Wales, in 1766 there were 980,692.

Assuming that the number of occupants for each house was on average five, and that this figure was constant for the whole period under review, Price's contention that the population had been reduced by a quarter since the Glorious Revolution appeared to be borne out. This thesis, as presented in the second edition of Observations on reversionary payments, was attacked by Arthur Young in a

letter



letter to St. James's Chronicle, dated 28 March 1772. (20) Young thought that there was good reason to treat the figures that Price relied upon with considerable caution. Davenant's figure for the number of houses in England and Wales was not the result of an independent enumeration but the product of calculations based on the hearth tax, and it was at variance with Edmund Halley's calculations based on the same evidence. Further, Young complained, Price had done very little to reconcile his conclusion that the population was declining with other economic facts: that the produce of the customs had nearly doubled since the Revolution, that the product of the excise was now almost seven times what it then was, and that exports and imports had nearly trebled. Price was also mistaken in supposing that the returns of houses made for the Surveyor of House and Window duties were accurate, in assuming that the number of occupants per house was on average five throughout the period under review, and in failing to make allowances in his inference from the number of houses to the number of inhabitants for those who lived in colleges, poor houses and hospitals.

Price replied to Young in the third edition of Observations on reversionary payments, but only briefly. He contented himself with noting that Young and 'some other ingenious persons' (21) had disagreed with him, and with drawing attention to the evidence for his assertion that the number of occupants per house during the period under review did not on average exceed five. (22) His sources were wide-ranging, including: data given by Thomas Short in A comparative history of the increase and decrease of mankind; (23) an account given in the Gentleman's Magazine for 1752 of an enumeration at Oxford, and similar figures for Wolverhampton, Coventry and Birmingham; (24) Davenant's conjecture of  $4\frac{1}{3}$  derived from Gregory King's observations; J.P. Suessmilch's observations as recorded in Die gottliche ordnung; (25) and data from Leeds (provided by Joseph Priestley), (26) from Shrewsbury, from Ackworth in Yorkshire, from Newbury in Berkshire, from Aldwinckle in Northamptonshire, from Manchester and from Liverpool. It is clear that Price was adept in finding evidence to confirm a thesis.

Young developed his criticisms in Political arithmetic. In attacking Price's reliance upon Davenant's figures, he pointed out that Price was not entitled to assume that by the term house Davenant referred to a building or tenement. He suggested, and later criticism has borne him out, that Davenant used the term to refer to a family. Further, Young pointed out that it could not be assumed that there was a one-to-one relation between houses (families) and houses (tenements). Yet again, he argued that there was no warrant for assuming that the number of occupants per house remained constant: he was inclined to think that

the number per house had increased and was still increasing. Even more penetrating was his attack upon Price's list of the causes of the supposed depopulation. His main point was that Price had mistaken the true indices of a nation's prosperity, and, accordingly, of the factors that make for growth and those that make for a decline of population:

Whenever therefore we hear of other causes of depopulation such as engrossing farms, inclosures, laying arable to grass, high prices of provisions, great cities, luxury, celibacy, debauchery, wars, emigrations, etc. we may very safely resolve them into a string of vulgar errors, and rest assured that they can have no ill effect, while the five great causes (i.e. decrease of shipping, decline of manufactures, decline of agriculture, a general fall of prices, a fall in employment) ... do not subsist. (27)

Price's next contribution to the debate came in 1779 when he published 'An essay containing an account of the progress from the Revolution and the present state of population in England and Wales'. (28) In this work he repeated the claim that the population of England and Wales had been decreasing since the Glorious Revolution and that it was still continuing to do so. As I have already noted, Price claimed that the total population had been over six and a half millions in 1690; in this essay he maintains that by 1777 it had fallen to less than five million. In computing the figure for 1690 he had relied upon Davenant's figure for the number of houses, i.e. 1,319,215. In computing the figure for 1777 he relied upon the Surveyor's estimate, i.e. 952,734. The latter multiplied by the number of occupants for each house, which he still assumed to be on average five, gave a figure for the total population which seemed to confirm his main contention.

Price's other main argument in the 'Essay' derived from the Mortality Bills. He noted that the number of deaths recorded in the Bills for London continued to decrease. In 1779 there appeared to be nearly 6,000 fewer deaths in the year than there had been some fifty years earlier. (29) Price assumed that the death rate (that is, the proportion of the population that dies each year) was constant throughout the period, and that, therefore, he was justified in inferring a decrease in population from a decrease in the number of deaths. In an appendix to the 'Essay', (30) he argued that in London 'the principal causes which shorten life in great towns, (namely, the irregular mode of living and the foulness of the air) having continued much the same, the law according to which life wastes, and the values of lives in London, have not sensibly varied'. (31) As Gonner points out, (32) Price does not seem to have borne in mind that he had in an

earlier

earlier paper maintained that the decline in the population had been arrested and reversed in the years preceding 1771. He also seems to have assumed that what was true for London was true for the rest of the country.

Price linked the decrease in the number of deaths each year in London with the increase in the amount of building in the metropolis in an extraordinarily curious way. Rather than allow the increase in the number of houses built to suggest to him that the population was increasing, he took advantage of what he supposed to be parallel developments - a decline in numbers and an increase in accommodation - to indulge in a denunciation of luxury:

The increase of buildings in London has for several years been the object of general observation. It deserves particular notice that it is derived entirely from the increase of luxury; an evil which, while it flatters, never fails to destroy. It has been shewn from authentic accounts, that the decrease of the lower people in LONDON and MIDDLESEX has kept pace with the increase of buildings ... The just account of this must be, that those who cannot now satisfy themselves without whole houses, or, perhaps, two or three houses, to live in, used formerly to be satisfied with lodgings, or with parts of houses. (33)

The arguments based upon the Mortality Bills were confirmed, Price believed, by the decrease in the produce of the hereditary and temporary excise which had declined, he maintained, from an average of £740,147 for the three years ending 1689 to an average of £527,991 for the four years ending 1768. (34) Price also held that his claim that there had been a decrease in the consumption of beer was confirmed by a decrease in the number of victuallers: he seems to have assumed without argument that a decrease in the amount of beer consumed and a decrease in the number of those selling it was firm evidence for a decrease in the number of consumers.

For the decline in population Price assigned several causes: the increase in the army and navy, the fact that London was too large a capital for the country to sustain, three destructive continental wars, the migrations to the East and to the West Indies, the 'engrossing' of farms, enclosures, the high price of provision, but 'above all, the increase of luxury, and of our public taxes and debts'. (35)

These gloomy conclusions were re-emphasized in the fourth edition of Observations on Reversionary Payments:

The greatest enemies of population are the artificial wants, the accumulation of property, and the luxury and vices which are the constant attendants of opulence, and which prevent a regular and early



union between the sexes. The inhabitants of poor countries are more simple, more healthy, and more virtuous; and, wanting little besides food, families are no burdens, and the prolific powers of nature have free scope to display themselves. (36)

A further reason for the decline in population which Price adduced in the fourth edition of Observations on reversionary payments was the growing distress among the poor. (37) This was due to a continuous fall in the real wages of the labouring classes. Thus it would appear that extremes of both kinds, indigence as well as opulence, threatened the maintenance of numbers: it was only where external conditions both favoured virtue and left the people 'at their ease', as in the American colonies, that they would increase.

Price's 'Essay' was criticized by William Eden, later Lord Auckland, who to the third edition of his Four letters to the Earl of Carlisle added a fifth letter devoted entirely to the population controversy. (38) Eden presented two types of argument: the first were designed to show that the evidence upon which Price relied could be interpreted differently; and the second were designed to show that Price had neglected data that supported conclusions dramatically different from those he believed he had established. An example of the former was his elaboration of the argument presented earlier by Arthur Young that Price had misinterpreted Davenant's figures when he understood Davenant to be asserting that there were 1,319,215 tenements in 1690. It was much more plausible to assume that by houses Davenant meant families. Eden also repeated Young's criticism that Price was not entitled to assume that the number of each family was the same as the number to each house. (39)

An instance of the latter type of argument is Eden's claim that Price was unduly selective in the data he used to support the thesis that mortality in London was declining. Price had compared the average of annual burials for the period 1774 to 1778 (20,835) with the average for the five years prior to 1690 (20,733). But he could have compared the average for the seventeen years preceding 1690 (21,371) with the average for the seventeen years preceding 1778 (22,765), or with the average for the eleven years ending in 1766 (23,743), or with the average for the five years ending in 1766 (24,562). (40) Similar considerations applied to Price's arguments from the product of the excise, the quantity of beer brewed, and the number of victuallers. Comparisons of different periods from those chosen by Price yielded conclusions contrary to those he advanced. (41)

When the Essay was published independently in 1780, Price attached an appendix in which he replied briefly to

Eden's arguments. He refused to be impressed by the claim that by house Davenant meant family. But even if Davenant had meant family and not tenement, there would have been little significant change in the figures as it could not be supposed that the number of tenements having more than one family was very large. Neither was Price prepared to accept that the returns for the House and Window duty were misleadingly inaccurate. What he was most concerned to draw attention to was the fact that the returns over a number of years continued to show a decrease in the number of houses. To Eden's protest that he had been unduly selective in his argument from the returns for the excise, Price replied rather obliquely, and perhaps rather desperately, that no confidence should be placed as Eden had done in averages for long terms.

The independent publication of the Essay was followed by two impressive pieces of destructive criticism: William Wales, An inquiry into the present state of population in England and Wales, and the proportion which the present number of inhabitants bears to the number at former periods which was published in London in 1781, and John Howlett, An examination of Dr. Price's essay on the population of England and Wales; and the doctrine of an increased population established by facts, which was published at Maidstone in the same year. Wales, who was Master of the Royal Mathematical School in Christ's Hospital and who had accompanied Captain Cook in his voyages in the Resolution, cited enumerations of houses in various counties for the years 1750 and 1780 that showed that there had been a significant increase in the number of houses in Yorkshire, Derbyshire, Suffolk and Sussex, and in Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Leeds, Nottingham, Norwich, and Farnham. (42) He buttressed these considerations with evidence to show that the returns prepared for the Surveyor of the House and Window duties were very misleading. Independent enumerations of houses in various districts showed that the numbers given in the returns for the various categories were much too low. In addition, Wales produced evidence for an increase in population from comparisons of the births and burials at different periods. His neat summaries of the conclusions drawn from this evidence included the following: (a) the number of inhabitants in 38 parishes is now (i.e. in 1781) greater than it was at the Revolution in the proportion of 8 to 3 approximately; (b) the present number of inhabitants of 142 parishes is now greater than it was in the period 1740-5 in the proportion of 10 to 7 approximately; and (c) the mean number of inhabitants in the diocese of St. David's between the years 1700 and 1730 was less than the mean number in the period 1730-1760 in the proportion of 2 to 3, and less than the mean number in the period 1760 and 1763-4 in the proportion of 5 to 8. (43)

Price replied to these arguments in the fourth edition

of Observations on reversionary payments in a postscript to the supplement on demography that he had first published in the second edition. His aim throughout was to show either that Wales's arguments were inconclusive or that his figures were not to be relied upon. Price admitted that the population had increased in those districts which Wales had referred to, but still insisted that no generalization could be made that the population of the country as a whole was increasing. Particular care was needed in estimating the effects of the alterations made in the window tax for the years 1761 and 1766. The changes in the tax had led to a nominal increase in the number of houses in many places. When houses having eight windows were made subject to the duty, many owners of houses previously excused were thereby encouraged to divide their houses into two or more. Price thought that the fact that a large part of the increase in the number of houses occurred in the years 1761 to 1767 suggested that most of the increase could be accounted for in this way.

Of the first two of Wales's arguments based on the increases in the births and deaths recorded in the registers, Price commented that the figures were not impressive. If the figures for the towns in which no one denied that there had been increases were subtracted from the totals, there remained no significant evidence that a general increase had occurred. (44) To the third of Wales's arguments (c) above, based on the figures for the diocese of St. David's, Price replied rather obstinately that the figures were suspect because they did not show proportionate increases in the births and the deaths. In commenting on the following figures for the average annual births and deaths in the five deaneries of the diocese,

	<u>Births</u>	<u>Deaths</u>
From 1700 to 1730	341	325
1730 to 1760	715	587
1760 to 1763	727	580

Price wrote:

It deserves notice farther, that they represent the increase which took place in the first period as changed into a decrease in the second and third periods. This will appear upon considering, that had the increase in the first period been continued to the end of the second, the annual averages at the end of this second period, (or which is nearly the same) the annual averages from 1760 to 1763, must have been much greater than they are; for they must have borne the same proportion to the averages of the second period that the mean between these averages and the averages of the first period bear to these last averages. That is, in the five

deaneries,



deaneries, the average of burials about 1760 should have been to 587 as the mean between 587 and 325 (or as 456) is to 325. It should have been therefore 823 (or some number not very distant from this) instead of 580; which last number is so much too little as to be nearly equal to the annual burials about the middle of the second period; and, therefore, if not very wrong, proves a decrease must have taken place. (45)

Price seems to have assumed that the increase in the births and deaths in successive periods must be proportionate, that the death rate is constant, and that all tables that do not conform to these regularities should be treated as suspect; if however, we question, as Wales did, the assumption that the death rate is constant for different periods, Price's argument collapses.

As Young, William Eden, and Wales had done, Howlett questioned the accuracy of the returns for the House and Window duties, and gave convincing reasons for suspecting their validity. The decline in the number of houses returned over the years was much more likely to be due to widespread attempts to evade taxation than to a fall in the population. Using the same official statistics as Price had done but with much greater circumspection, he compared the figures given in the returns with those produced by independent enumerations of houses in various places. He found that the proportion of houses entered in the returns (there was no reason to enter houses that were not liable to duty, though many surveyors did include them) was  $17225/29261$ . He was thus able to determine a factor of correction for the official returns, and applying it to the total number of houses given there (947,493), estimated that the total number of houses in England and Wales in 1780 was 1,609,535. (46)

Howlett also disagreed with Price's estimate of the number of occupants per house: whereas Price thought it to be somewhat less than five (although in the fourth edition he altered this to  $5\frac{1}{2}$ ), Howlett argued that the number was  $5\frac{2}{3}$ , a figure that<sup>8</sup> was eventually confirmed by the Census Return of 1801 (5.64). Given that the number of houses was 1,609,535, assuming that each house had on average  $5\frac{2}{3}$  occupants, and making allowances for those who lived in prisons, colleges, and hospitals, and for those in the armed services, Howlett estimated that the total population in 1780 was not far short of nine million.

Turning to Price's other main argument, namely, that a decrease in the number of deaths recorded in the Bills of Mortality for the city, entailed a decrease in population, Howlett claimed that it was invalid because Price had paid no attention to the fact that in the period he had been considering there had been significant changes in the number of inhabitants of the counties surrounding

the city. A decrease in the number of deaths in London could not be taken as evidence for a decrease in the population of the metropolis and the surrounding counties, if during the period under review, there had been a continuous migration from the city to the outlying villages.

Price, who thought less highly of Howlett's contributions to the debate than he did of Wales's, complained that Howlett was inaccurate in his use of figures, and that in making his estimate of the total number of houses in England and Wales had confused 'the numbers in his list (being in reality only the number of houses taxed given very inaccurately) for the whole of the numbers ... returned, included uninhabited and excused houses'. (47) But I doubt whether Price was correct in claiming that Howlett was mistaken at this point. What Howlett had attempted to do was to establish a factor of correction for the number of houses entered into the returns. Provided only that he had applied this factor to the total number of items which he had used to establish it, it would not have mattered whether these items and the total of them, did or did not include houses subject to duty. He was not in error if he had compared the figures given for each district in the returns with the number established by an independent survey, and then applied the factor of correction to the total given in the returns. Price's criticisms would only have been valid if he had shown that Howlett was inconsistent: if, for example, he had shown that in establishing his factor of correction, Howlett had compared the number in the returns for charged and chargeable houses in particular districts with the total number of houses actually in existence in those districts, and then applied the factor of correction thus derived not to the total of charged and chargeable houses in the returns, but to a total that included houses that were exempt from duty. Price does not seem to me to have succeeded in showing that Howlett was inconsistent in this way. (48)

Howlett's technique would seem to have been superior to Price's, for whereas Price had realized the need to establish a proportion between the charged and the chargeable houses and the total number of houses in the returns, he did not appreciate the need to establish a factor of correction for these figures. Price assumed that the lists were accurate, and thought that all that was needed was to determine the number of houses that were exempt from duty. Howlett realized both needs: the need to find the number of houses that were exempt, and the need to find the proportion in which the lists and the totals in the returns were deficient.

Price wrote very little on population problems after the publication of the fourth edition of Observations on reversionary payments in 1783. Preparing the enlarged two volume edition of the work, including constructing the tables it incorporated, had meant much labour, and he was

glad to leave demography and actuarial problems and turn to other things. Perhaps the onslaught upon his views by Wales and Howlett had shaken his confidence in his own thesis for there is some evidence that he did not maintain his own views with the same boldness thereafter. Whereas formerly he had thought that the comparison of the figures given by the returns of the Surveyor for the House and Window duties with that given by Davenant produced 'an evidence which as far as it can be trusted is full and decisive', he was now much more tentative. In the postscript which he added in the fourth edition of Observations on reversionary payments to the supplement he had written for the second, (49) he writes:

I beg it may be remembered, that my opinion in this instance is by no means a clear and decided conviction. I may probably be influenced too much by a desire to maintain an assertion once delivered. Some time or other, perhaps, the Legislature will think this a point worth its attention. Much light may be thrown upon it, and the state of our population kept constantly in view, by only ordering exact registers to be kept of the births, burials, and marriages in the kingdom. This is done in other kingdoms. It has lately been done in France; and the result has been a discovery that the population of FRANCE exceeds all that had been conjectured concerning it. Should a like discovery be the consequence of carrying such an order into execution here, it will give the kingdom an encouragement which at present it greatly wants; and I shall rejoice in my own confutation. (50)

In the preface to the fourth edition Price writes:

In the Postscript just mentioned, I have entered a little farther into this controversy; and it will appear that though I still retain my former opinion, yet I wish to be considered as far from being decided in it, and therefore as open to receive any evidence which can be produced to overthrow it. (51)

It is clear that Price was aware of the strength of his reluctance to contradict an earlier opinion, particularly a conviction that he had expressed with so much passion. That he was also conscious of his own fallibility is evidenced by his constantly repeated plea for the collection of the relevant statistical information that would determine the number of the population with precision and show which party to the controversy was nearer to the truth. In Annuities on lives de Moivre had advocated periodic enumerations of the population: in his first paper on demography, 'Observations on the expectation of lives' Price had elaborated this suggestion and recommended that the use of



parish registers be extended to provide a comprehensive and accurate register of all births, marriages and deaths (including a record of the causes of death). With this information it would be possible to count the population, determine whether it was increasing or diminishing, evaluate with precision the expectations of lives at all ages, and estimate the comparative healthfulness of different regions in the country. Price re-iterated this plea in the successive editions of Observations on reversionary payments, and in Observation on the importance of the American Revolution he extended this idea even further: information should be collected periodically on a whole range of topics including vital statistics as well as data that would show,

what laws govern mortality, and what situations, employments, and civil institutions, are most favourable to the health and happiness of mankind. (52)

It is rather ironical that had the Bill that was introduced in 1753 for Taking and registering an annual account of the total number of people and the total number of marriages, births and deaths, etc. become law, or had Price's pleas for an adequate register of the relevant information been heeded, the dispute of 1780 would not have occurred, and if the superstition against 'numbering the people' (53) had been dissipated earlier his reputation would not have been so adversely affected.

On at least two counts, it seems to me, Price satisfied the ideals of candour: he was willing to countenance the possibility that he was mistaken, and he was eager that steps should be taken to provide the information that would decide whether or not he was mistaken. He also lived up to his ideal in another respect - he did what he could to remedy the deficiencies in existing information. The successive editions of Observations on reversionary payments and the work he and his nephew William Morgan did for the Society for Equitable Assurances in improving actuarial techniques and collecting data for the construction of the Northampton Tables bear eloquent testimony to his enormous labours in this field. No one who has surveyed the extent of his work on these topics would find it easy to accuse Price of lack of zeal in the search for truth.

But all this does not remove the accusation that Price was stubborn in the defence of his own preconceived ideas, and that he hung on to his own interpretation of the evidence when the data available pointed to contrary conclusions. In considering this point it is worth remembering that few of his contemporaries at the time of the dispute were certain that Price was in the wrong. There were exceptions, among them John Wesley who believed that he had in the course of his extensive travels accumulated enough first-hand evidence to show that Price's belief that the population was declining was absurd:

I know

I know the contrary, having an opportunity of seeing ten times more of England every year than most men in the nation. All our manufacturing towns, as Birmingham, Sheffield, Manchester, Liverpool increase daily. So do very many villages all over the Kingdom, even in the mountains of Derbyshire. And, in the meantime, exceeding few, either towns or villages, decrease. (54)

But this attitude was not shared by all of those who had familiarized themselves with the issues at stake. Malthus, although he found it difficult to believe that the population of Britain had been declining since the Glorious Revolution, did not think that Price's view was absurd. On the contrary, on the evidence available to the different parties in the dispute Malthus thought that Price seemed to have had the better of the argument:

In the controversy which the question has occasioned, Dr. Price undoubtedly appears to be much more completely master of his subject, and to possess more accurate information, than his opponents. Judging simply from this controversy, I think one should say that Dr. Price's point is nearer being proved than Mr. Howlett's. Truth, probably, lies between the two statements, but this supposition makes the increase of population since the Revolution to have been very slow in comparison with the increase of wealth. (55)

Malthus was critical of Price's work, but his criticism centred not so much on Price's contribution to the controversy of 1780 as on his failure to perceive that an unchecked increase in population would outstrip the increase in the supply of food. Price's failure was all the more remarkable because it had been a meditation on the demographic information supplied by Price in Observations on reversionary payments that had raised Malthus's 'vague opinion' that increases in population and in the supply of food could only be kept equally proportionate by 'some species of misery or vice' to a firm conviction. Price's failure to understand that 'an unchecked population would increase, beyond comparison, faster than the earth, by the best directed exertions of man, could produce food for its support' was as astonishing 'as if he had resisted the conclusion of one of the plainest propositions of Euclid'. (56)

Most of Price's opponents, including Howlett, Wales and Young, had considerable respect for his abilities and did not accuse him of a lack of good faith in propounding his argument. The tentativeness that many of the leading authorities felt before the Census of 1801 was perhaps best expressed by Sir F.M. Eden:

Moral certainty cannot in inquiries of this nature be

expected

expected to result from investigations into the number of baptisms, burials, taxed houses, cottages and inhabitants in particular districts. (57)

It was after, not before, the results of the Census were known that Price's critics felt sufficiently confident to dismiss his opinions as Lecky did, as eccentricities, (58) and to dismiss his Essay, as Coleridge did, as a 'blundering book' and as a 'pompous cenotaph, in which the effigy of the still living and bustling English prosperity lay interred'. (59) Undoubtedly the fact that the Census had shown that, according to John Rickman's calculations, the population of England and Wales in 1801 was 9.168 millions (60) enabled Price's critics to dismiss his thesis with much greater confidence than his earlier critics had done. But that they were able to dismiss him with such ease testifies to their lack of appreciation of the formidable difficulties he faced and of the time and labour that he had devoted to overcoming them.

But although we may acquit Price of some of the accusations implicit in the charge that he lacked candour, although we can acknowledge that he was aware of his own fallibility and of his reluctance to revise opinions that he had held earlier in his career, although we can point to the immense labours he undertook to improve the quantity and the quality of information available on demographic matters, and although he pleaded time and time again that the Government should do more to meet the need for information, a doubt still remains as to whether Price was able to take an impartial and dispassionate viewpoint in the assessment of evidence. His work yields some striking examples of how very much easier it is to be influenced by evidence that confirms a prejudice than by evidence that disturbs it, and how ingenuity is much more easily pressed into service in defence of a pre-conceived idea than into upsetting it. It is, for example, noteworthy that Price found it easier to explain the increase in the number of houses built in London not by supposing that there had been an increase in those that needed houses (which would have been contrary to his thesis), but by supposing that there had been an increase in 'luxury' i.e. an increase in the demand for houses among a diminishing population. It is remarkable, too, that Price was either unable or unwilling to face the possibility that the death rate was not constant, and that rather than admit this possibility he preferred to suppose that a disproportionate number of deaths in the statistics was a strong reason to suspect the accuracy of the returns. Again it is remarkable that while on the one hand Price was slow to question the reliability of the returns made by the Surveyor of House and Window duties and slow to suspect that there were many who had an interest in falsifying the returns, on the other hand he showed alacrity and ingenuity in explaining away



what he took to be the nominal increases in the number of houses by claiming that as a response to an increase in window duty houseowners had divided their houses in such a way as to reduce their liability to tax. It is then difficult to acquit Price of the charge that he was much more likely to be impressed by evidence that supported his thesis than by evidence that told against it, and that his puritanical dispositions together with his sympathy for the American colonists and what he took to be their way of life blinded him to the weakness of his own position.

#### NOTES

1. This essay was first published as a postscript to William Morgan, The doctrine of annuities and assurances, which was published in 1779, and it was published independently under the title An essay on the population of England in the following year.
2. Contrary to Price's belief and according to the authorities cited in the following list which has been derived from B.R. Mitchell and P. Deane, Abstract of British historical statistics (Cambridge, 1962), 5, the population in the period 1700 to 1800 increased by more than 35% (taking the mean figures) in the period from 1700 to 1780.

#### Estimates of the population of England and Wales.

Authority	Date on which estimate was published	1700/1 (No. of population: thousands)	1780/1
Rickman	1802	5,475	7,953
Finlaison	1831	5,135	7,815
Farr	1861	6,122	7,574
Brownlee	1916	5,826	7,531
Griffith	1926	5,835	7,581

3. Phil. Trans., LIX (London, 1770), 89-125. This paper was republished in the first and subsequent editions of Price's Observations on reversionary payments. Unless otherwise stated quotations are from the first edition. See also The papers of Benjamin Franklin, 16 (Yale U.P., 1972), 81-107.

4. 'A letter from the Reverend William Brakenridge', Phil. Trans., XLVIII, part 2 (1754), 788-800. Brakenridge himself argued that the population of London had declined in the period 1743 to 1753. For a detailed discussion of his views and much else that is essential to the student of eighteenth century demography see D.V. Glass, Numbering the people (D.C. Heath, 1973), 47ff.
5. See Corbyn Morris, Observations on the past growth and present state of the city of London... (London, 1751).
6. This was due primarily, Price believed, to a fall in the infant mortality rate brought about by sending more children into the country to be nursed, and to measures which had checked 'the destructive use of spirituous liquors among the poor'.
7. On the dangers of atmospheric pollution Price had been anticipated by Thomas Short, A comparative history of the increase and decrease of mankind, (London, 1767).
8. The thesis that the enjoyment of luxury inhibits the growth of population had already been maintained before Price wrote his paper by among others Thomas Short, New observations on city, town and country bills of mortality (London, 1750), 247-8; Robert Wallace, A dissertation on the numbers of men (Edinburgh, 1809), 116; and John Brown, An estimate of the manners and principles of the times, 2nd edn. (London, 1757), 186-7.
9. O.R.P., 203.
10. Price shared with, and perhaps derived from, Franklin several other theses concerning population: that the true wealth of a nation lies in the number of its inhabitants; that rural life is favourable, and urban life detrimental, to population growth; that in the countryside marriages are more prolific than they are in the towns, and the towns can only maintain their numbers by emigration from the countryside. See the works cited and Alfred Aldridge, 'Franklin as demographer', Journal of Economic History, IX (1949-50), 25-44. In The honest mind (p. 137) I mistakenly attributed the authorship of The interest of Great Britain considered, which was published anonymously, to Stiles.
11. 2nd edn. (London, 1761).
12. Boston, 1761.
13. See The papers of Benjamin Franklin, IX (1960-61), 77.
14. Ibid. IV (1950-53), 228, 233.
15. See James A. Cassedy, Demography in early America: beginnings of the statistical mind (Camb. Mass., 1969), 176.
16. Op. cit., XXIII (1753), 413; see also Cassedy, 185.
17. O.R.P., 1st edn., 197-9. The reference to 1762 is probably a slip on Price's part: it should have read 1752.

18. Op. cit., vi.
19. Works (London, 1771), I, 33.
20. This article was later reprinted in Arthur Young, Political arithmetic, containing observations on the present state of Great Britain and the principles of her policy in the encouragement of agriculture (London, 1774).
21. O.R.P., 3rd edn., xix.
22. Ibid., 183n.
23. Op. cit., 58.
24. Gent. Mag., XXII (1752), 347.
25. Berlin, 1765.
26. Joseph Priestley to Richard Price, 3 Oct. 1771. Robert E. Schofield, A scientific autobiography of Joseph Priestley (M.I.T. Press, 1966), 86-7.
27. Op. cit., 93.
28. See N.1 above.
29. 'Essay', 280.
30. This appendix was first published when the 'Essay' was published independently in 1780 under the title, An essay on the population of England.
31. Essay, 60.
32. E.C.K. Gonner, 'The population of England in the eighteenth century', Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, LXXVI (1913), 267.
33. Essay, 3-4.
34. Ibid., 18ff.
35. Ibid., 29.
36. O.R.P., 4th edn., II, 318-9.
37. Ibid., 323.
38. 3rd edn. (London, 1780).
39. Op. cit., appendix, xxii-xxiv.
40. Ibid., xxvi.
41. Ibid., xxx-xxxiii. These criticisms were confirmed by Sir F.M. Eden in The state of the poor, 3 vols., (London, 1797), I, 540.
42. Op. cit., 48, 67.
43. Op. cit., 68-9.
44. O.R.P., 4th edn., II, 301.
45. Ibid., 301-2.
46. Howlett, op.cit., 143-4; see also G. Talbot Griffith, Population problems from the age of Malthus, 2nd edn. (London, 1967), 19.
47. O.R.P., 4th edn., II, 287.
48. For a more critical interpretation of Howlett than the one given here on this point see Gonner, 278-9, and an anonymous pamphlet published in 1781 entitled The uncertainty of the present population of this kingdom.
49. In Numbering the people Glass claims that Price made his final comments on the debate on population in the fifth edition of Observations on reversionary payments which was published after his death in 1792. But these comments were included in the fourth edition published in 1783.



50. Op. cit., II, 324.  
 51. Ibid., I, xxxii-xxxiii.  
 52. Op. cit., (1785 edn.), 19.  
 53. William Wales notes that when he wrote to a friend, a Dissenting minister, for assistance in his enquiries, his attention was directed to 1 Chron. xxi,i. 'And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel'.

The incident had a happy sequel, for Wales was able to convince his friend that he should rather be compared with David's representative preparing to stop the sword of the destroying Angel, than with Satan, and so was able to get the assistance he wanted. (Op. cit., 8.) It should be noted, however, that Wales thought it inadvisable to take a Census, as the knowledge of the number of the population might be a dangerous incitement to an enemy contemplating the chance of success in war (ibid., 77).

54. Works, XVI, 406. In the entry in his journal for 9 Sept. 1776 Wesley disputes Price's assertion that the number of occupants to each house was on average 4 or 4½, 'Now, if at four in a house, we are four millions, must we not, at seven in a house, be seven millions'. Wesley supposes that Price wrote as he did 'doubtless to encourage our good friends the French and Spaniards'. See The journal of the Rev. John Wesley (London, n.d.), IV, 88.  
 55. An essay on the principle of population ed. Antony Flew, (Penguin Books, 1970), 187.  
 56. Ibid., 196-7.  
 57. Sir F.M. Eden, An estimate of the number of inhabitants in Great Britain and Ireland (London, 1800), 3.  
 58. W.E.H. Lecky, The history of England in the eighteenth century, 2nd edn. (London, 1879), VI, 198.  
 59. The friend, ed. Barbara E. Rooke (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), I, 240. (Vol. IV in The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge).  
 60. Glass, 93.

The University College of Wales,  
 Aberystwyth.

THE DISSENTING SCHOOL AT FIELDHEAD, BIRSTALL.

C.S. Briggs

The background to Joseph Priestley's early education and domestic circumstances is not well documented. What is known derives largely from his Autobiography. (1) His birthplace at Fieldhead, Birstall, W.R. Yorks., was demolished and entirely re-built during the nineteenth century; there is doubt about the identity of the schools he attended, and the formative influences of his religious tolerance are but imperfectly understood.

Any information which throws light on such matters is obviously of interest, even possibly of importance. Whilst combing eighteenth century numbers of the Leeds Mercury and the Leeds Intelligencer at the Central Reference Library Leeds, in 1963, I came across the following advertisement in the Leeds Mercury of Tuesday 29 June 1779:

Mrs. Amelia Priestley returns her most grateful thanks for Favours, already received; and begs leave to acquaint her friends and the Public that Young Ladies are Boarded and Educated at Fieldhead near Birstall on the following terms:

	£.	s.	d.
Board and Needlework per Ann	12.	12.	0.
Entrance		10.	6.
English per Quarter		6.	0.
English, Writing and Arithmetic, ditto,		10.	6.
Entrance		10.	6.
Washing per Quarter		10.	6.
Day Scholars taught plain Work etc.		8.	0.
Entrance		5.	0.
Dinners per Week		2.	6.
Dancing per Quarter		15.	0.
Entrance		5.	0.
Music per Quarter	1.	5.	0.
Entrance		10.	6.
Seat in Church or Chapel, Soap, Candles, Shoescleaning and Teacher, per Quarter		5.	0.
Use of Cold Bath per Quarter		2.	6.

Each Young Lady to bring with her, one Pair of Sheets, Two Napkins, Four Towels, One Large Spoon, One Teaspoon, or to pay One Guinea per Annum for the use of them. Also to find her own tea and sugar ....

Contemporary school costing lists are not particularly uncommon, and in itself the advert would have little more than local significance were it not for the fact that at this Academy 'Young Ladies' were allowed seats either at Church or Chapel. This is a most interesting instance, and although we will not know whether or not this is unique until more such adverts have been published, its connection with the Priestley family and with Fieldhead make it quite remarkable. Similarly, in the absence of other contemporary accounts it would be imprudent to suggest that an offer of alternative pewing should be taken as an indication of a particularly advanced state of tolerance. This possibility must be weighed against the probability that such a small school may not have afforded to turn down any likely candidates.

I have not established the precise identity of Mrs. Amelia Priestley. Was she perhaps Joseph's step-mother, the wife of one of his brothers, or his ageing paternal aunt? Might she even have been an unmarried sister or cousin using 'Mrs' in a way that was quite common for one of her station?

It is also difficult to be sure of the location of the school. On the one hand it might have been at the family home, on the site of the 'Birthplace', or, if at an uncle's, somewhere reasonably close to hand.

Clearly further local information could be useful in determining these facts and the writer would appreciate any help in establishing them.

#### Note

1. J. Lindsay, Autobiography of Joseph Priestley (London, Adams and Dart, 1970), 69-75.

#### Acknowledgments

I thank my wife, Caroline Kerkham, for useful discussion of this topic.

ABERYSTWYTH



AN UNRECORDED LETTER FROM THEOPHILUS LINDSEY TO WILLIAM TAYLEUR

John Stephens

Lindsey and Tayleur exchanged letters for twenty one years from 4 August 1775 until Tayleur's death on 6 May 1796. The bulk of these letters were collected together early on and these volumes are preserved in John Rylands University Library: they were used by Herbert McLachlan in his Letters of Theophilus Lindsey (Manchester 1920). The present letter is reproduced from the Manuscript in my possession: it is of particular interest for the light it sheds on the attitude of Richard Price and John Jebb to the Dissenter's Relief Act of 1779.

London. 3 June 1779 (1)

Dear Sir,

I am glad at last to get a little leisure to write to you. The last week I was in the country with a friend not far from Town. The fortnight before, my wife's mother, a most worthy person, who had never before been in London, having a call within a 100 miles of it, came to see us. She, of all my wife's relations, did not oppose our resolution when taken, of leaving Catterick, though she was the greatest loser. (2)

I rejoice to hear you go on well in the congregation, who have so nobly joined you in owning the worship of the One living and true God the Father. (3) I was afraid of what might be done, by some who I learned sought and endeavoured to disturb you, to make some uneasy in the part they had taken; but I trust their designs will be abortive. Unitarians do indeed every where want being awakened to open profession of their principles and acting up to them: those amongst the laity as they are called in particular, who in general have little to fear from such an avowal in their wordly concerns. I have long wished with you that some bold Philippic were addressed to them. But of my friends, all are either too much otherwise engaged, or reluctant. As you mention Mr. Temple, I have taken the liberty to make you pay for a sight of his letter, because I thought it would give you pleasure. A friend of his that is well acquainted with him, thinks he is coming off his Arianism. Concerning the Worship of God alone he appears to be wholly with us. At your full leisure the letter may be sent back ... (4)

Your explanation of John xvi.28, and illustration of ver. 29,30, &c. is so happy and so just, that I cannot but thank you greatly for it, and shall treasure it up. Assuredly had I known it before, I should have been desirous to have inserted as a note of a friend in its place in the

Dissertations, and it would have been acceptable to all that love scripture-truth. I see every day, that the books of the N.T. and especially the words of Christ, will reward the diligent student of them with fresh light and useful discoveries for ages to come. (5)

Two days ago I was surprized to learn from Mr. Joseph Johnson of St. Paul's churchyard our bookseller, that he had within these three months purchased 500 of Dr. Robertson's (6) attempt to explain the words, Reason &c at the sale of Mr. Wm. Johnston of Ludgate -street. How there came to be so many copies in hand, I do not understand. For I understood by the worthy author, and think I had heard positively asserted a few years ago by others in Town, that it was out of print. However I shall this post write to Wolverhampton to apprise the Doctor of it. I have been agreeably disappointed and much pleased with a pamphlet called "The importance of truth, and danger of moderation, particularly with respect to the doctrine of the Trinity &c in three Conferences, dedicated to Sr H. Trelawney." (7) I trust, it will contribute, as it is calculated, to save that most commendable young Baronet, who is not ashamed of being a Dissenting Minister, out of the Hands of the Methodists and of their Intolerant Spirit. I am glad, that in about six weeks time there is to be an Ordination at or near Exeter, where I think he is to bear some part, and Dr. Priestley is invited along with Dr. Kippis to take a part in the same.

I really think with you that the late Bill in favour of Dissenters, even with the declaration, is a great step gained in respect of religious liberty. It strikes me, that it is no small matter, that Christianity is tolerated as such, in this country of our's. And I think, or I am mistaken, I foresee great and happy consequences flowing from it. One unequivocal indication of it, may be looked upon, the displeasure that the bill gives to all High-churchmen and Bigots of all churches.

But I am grieved that such excellent, super-excellent persons, as Dr. Price and our friend Jebb, with a few, and but a very [few] other, see this bill in such a light, as to think it a betraying of the cause of the gospel and of christian liberty to submit to it. Now I am in train I hope soon to write again to my most worthy Friend. We have very few seats in our chapel untaken: tho we shall soon begin to look somewhat thin in the body of the chapel by the number of Absentees in the country, as we do too com (m) only in an afternoon for want of zeal and Xtn courage to order their meals at a definite hour that day from others. Nothing more has yet been undertaken on another point in which you have done so much, and for which You do kindly interest yourself. My wife desires I would present you with her best respects. I remain, ever Sir, Your most truly obliged & affectionate Servt,

T. LINDSEY

## Notes

1. The letter is written on a single sheet folded once to make up two leaves: the letter takes three pages, the fourth is addressed 'To/ William Tayleur Esqr/ Shrewsbury/ Shropshire/ 3 June 79'. The letter is sealed with Lindsey's 'shield of arms' seal. Cf. McLachlan, op. cit., 5.
2. Lindsey married Hannah Elsworth, the step-daughter of Archdeacon Blackburne on 29 Sept. 1760. T. Belsham, Memoirs of ... Theophilus Lindsey, 2nd edn. (London, 1820), 8. Blackburne had married the widow of Joshua Elsworth in 1744.
3. The congregation at Shrewsbury started using an amended form of Lindsey's liturgy in 1779. MacLachlan, op. cit., 8.
4. Presumably Anthony Temple (1724-95), Master of Richmond School (1750-95) and Vicar of Easby, Yorks., from 1770 to 1795. He published inter alia The book of common prayer ... reformed upon Unitarian principles (Newcastle, 1790). Temple had graduated from Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge in 1745/6. Cf. J. and J.A. Venn, Alumni Cantabrigienses ... to 1751 (Cambridge, 1927), IV, 212: A. Elliot Pearson, The prayer book reform movement in the XVIIIth century (Oxford, 1940), 62-3; and the same author's 'The Unitarian liturgical tradition', TUHS, XVI (1976), 63ff., No. 12 in his table.
5. Lindsey's Two dissertations (London, 1779) had dealt with this text on pp. 35-6.
6. William Robertson (1705-83), An attempt to explain the words, reason, substance (London, W. Johnstone, 1766). This was an anti-subscription work. Johnson published many Unitarian works, notably those of Priestley.
7. The authorship of this pamphlet cannot be traced. Sir Harry Trelawney, the 7th baronet, was a descendant of Sir Jonathan Trelawney, Bishop of Winchester. Educated at Christ Church, Oxford, he surprised many by entering the ranks of the Dissenters, when, in April 1777, he was ordained at Southampton by Independent Calvinistic Ministers. By the time Lindsey wrote this letter, Trelawney was associated with the Rational Dissenters and did indeed take part in an ordination at Exeter along with Priestley, Kippis and John Hogg, minister of the Mint Meeting, Exeter. But he did not remain in the ranks of the Rational Dissenters for long: he soon conformed, and, it appears, became a prebendary at Exeter Cathedral.



One of his last sermons as a Dissenter, if not the last, was preached at Lindsey's chapel at Essex Street. J.T. Rutt, who was present, later recalled that Trelawney chose to controvert 'the Calvinistic views of the Christian salvation, from the declaration of the Apostle James that "by works a man is justified, and not by faith only"'. J.T. Rutt, ed. The theological and miscellaneous works of Joseph Priestley (London, 1831), I, pt. 1, 320.

8. Cf. MacLachlan, op.cit., 56ff. for Lindsey's account of the debates in the Commons on this Bill.
9. This appears to be the best contemporary documentation for Price's attitude. D.O. Thomas in 'Proposed protest concerning Dissenters: Richard Price and the Earl of Chatham', TUHS, XVI (1976), 51, cites the Cyclopedia to the effect that when Price found that relief from subscription 'could not be obtained without a declaration of faith in the holy scriptures ... he divided with a small minority of the Committee ...' adding that he could find no record of any such disagreement in the minutes of the General Body of Protestant Dissenting Ministers. This letter establishes that, certainly in 1779, Price disagreed with his colleagues over subscription.

OXFORD.

RICHARD PRICE AND CARMARTHEN ACADEMY

Mr. Gwyn Walters sends the following extract from The Cambrian Magazine; or Useful Repository, of Science and Entertainment for June, 1773. (1)

Gentlemen,

As your undertaking is truly praise-worthy, I shall ever contribute my mite towards the support of it; and I hope the following, will be acceptable to many of your readers:

That the desire of knowledge, is become every day more prevalent, is so self evident that none but a fool, or, a mad-man would attempt to deny it. The avidity with which the various publications of every different kind, (not only in the Metropolis, but) in every Country Town are read, is a most flagrant instance of it. And I hope Yours will be conducted upon so generous a plan: that the Public will receive it, with the warmest affections due to it's merit. To convey instruction thro' any channel, has always been my endeavour: and where I could not be as useful, as I often ardently wished to be: it has been my practice to recommend those who pursued it: where they certainly would find it. I was lead to these reflections, on lately examining a new acquisition of the most curious Philosophical, Optical, and Mathematical Instruments and Machines presented to Carmarthen Academy. The Telescope and Microscopes are good. The Air-pump, Quadrants, etc. are of the best but the Orery, which consists of Planetarium. Tellurian, and Lenarium - The new constructed Electrical Machine, with the insulated Cushion and Electrometer - The set of Magnets - The concave and convex Mirrors, with the universal Dial, are certainly the most curious things of art - they exceed description - their elegance can scarcely be conceived - and their usefulness are too well known to be descanted upon - and I have the pleasure to inform you they were all made under the direction of the judicious, and learned Dr. Price, author of the Treatise on Reversionary Payments, etc. These added to a most valuable, and voluminous library, are advantages not to be met with every where: and I am proud to congratulate my Countryman, upon having so useful a Seminary in our native Country; where, Gentlemen's sons of small fortunes may be educated with all the advantages of our Universities.

A.B.C.

1. Vol. I, pp. 29-30. This magazine was produced 'By a Society of British Gentlemen' and printed by Daniel Thomas at Llandovery.

REVIEW

Bernard Peach (editor), Richard Price and the Ethical Foundations of the American Revolution. 350 pp. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1979. Price \$19.75.

The main content of this volume is a scholarly edition of the three political pamphlets of Richard Price which were occasioned by the American War of Independence. They are: Two Tracts on Civil Liberty (Observations and Additional Observations on Civil Liberty and the War with America) and Observations on the Importance of the American Revolution. The economic supplement to the general introduction of Two Tracts, the economic sections of the second tract, an unimportant appendix to the first, and a couple of unimportant appendices to the third, are omitted. In other respects, however, the pamphlets are not only printed in full but are furnished with an apparatus of editorial footnotes showing variant readings of the different editions and adding explanatory information about persons, writings, and events mentioned in the text. All this is followed by substantial appendices containing selections from other relevant documents: writings by Burke, John Lind, Wesley, Adam Ferguson, and Archbishop Markham, criticizing Price's views; a politically minded sermon delivered by Price in 1779; and a selection from the correspondence between Price and leading figures in America (Charles Chauncy, John Winthrop, Franklin, James Bowdoin, Arthur Lee, Francis Dana, Benjamin Rush, Jefferson, and John Adams), together with one relevant letter to Price from Lord Shelburne. The editor has also written an introduction showing how much Price's political ideas depend upon his theory of ethics.

Scholars with an interest in Richard Price will be grateful to Professor Peach for having made the political pamphlets available in a modern edition carefully annotated. The appendices are also most helpful. Price's correspondence with leading Americans was published in the Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society for 1903. This work can be consulted by British scholars, but not easily, and I am sure that others will join me in welcoming the simpler access afforded by Professor Peach's volume.

His notes, too, are mostly very useful. In a work of this character it is inevitable that other scholars will have a little grouse about one or two aspects of the editing. But before giving my ha'porth of complaint, I would like to emphasize that the lapses are relatively trivial and that the great mass of the editorial work is thoroughly sound.

To the exceptions, then. In the correction of proofs one needs to take special care with matter in foreign languages. There are two misprints in the Latin quotation on the title page (p.63) of Observations on Civil Liberty

although



(although it is correctly shown in the facsimile included as an end-paper). What is more, the editor has evidently not realized that the arrangement of the lines and of long dashes in the original title-page are deliberate, because the lines are lines of poetry and because two words have been omitted. He should look at the source of the quotation, Virgil, Aeneid, V. 670-2. There is a misprint again in a Greek quotation in one of Price's footnotes (p.140, note j). On p.80 an editorial addition to a footnote includes a misprint of French. There is also a more intelligible slip on p.142, where an editorial note repeats the spelling 'Priestly' which has just been given in one of Price's footnotes.

Editorial footnotes identifying persons are inconsistent in rendering titles (e.g. 'Earl', 'Professor') sometimes with a capital initial, sometimes with lower case. The principle of selection for identifying footnotes seems odd. Professor Peach evidently thinks that some of his readers will need such a note for Samuel Johnson but not for Voltaire, for Locke but not for Descartes or Hume.

So far as Descartes is concerned, a note of more substance was in fact required. Price mentions Descartes when discussing education in the third tract. He says (p.202) that Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding was at first appreciated only by people who had not been trained in the regular universities; to the professors of the time it seemed 'a dangerous novelty'. He then continues: 'The like happened when Sir Isaac Newton's discoveries were first published. A romance (that is, the philosophy of Descartes) was then in possession of the philosophical world'. Will not many readers be puzzled by that last sentence? If the word 'philosophy' is taken in its modern sense, why should Richard Price call the philosophy of Descartes a romance? And why should he write as if he thought Locke's theory of knowledge superior to it? Price's own rationalistic intuitionism is in the same tradition as that of Descartes, even perhaps influenced by it, albeit indirectly. I suppose that Price's reference to Descartes in the immediate context of 'Newton's discoveries' is intended as a reference to Descartes's theory of physics ('natural philosophy'), i.e. to his theory of vortices, and not to his 'philosophy' in the modern sense of the term. I should have been glad to find a footnote by Professor Peach either confirming my surmise or giving an alternative explanation. Some other readers (at least those who need to have Samuel Johnson identified) will simply obtain a misleading impression.

Price's footnote on p.210 about 'the love of our country', evidently dating from 1784, could usefully have been supplemented by a brief editorial note comparing it with Price's later celebrated sermon of 1789, A Discourse on the Love of our Country. Better still would have been a further reference to the sermon on the same subject delivered by Price's friend William Adams in 1774 (see D.O. Thomas, The Honest Mind, p.297), but that is asking for more than can reasonably be

expected; no doubt Professor Peach completed his editorial work before Dr. Thomas's book became available.

Let me now turn to Professor Peach's introduction. It gives a clear, succinct, and sound account of Price's ethical theory. In relating Price's general philosophy to his political principles, Professor Peach has some interesting arguments for giving a broader interpretation to Price's rationalism than it usually receives. His point is that Price does not rely simply on the intuition of allegedly self-evident principles; there is also a good deal of appeal to deduction, and deduction which leads to practical consequences. I am a little puzzled, however, by Professor Peach's early remark on p.14 that Price's rationalism, 'according to which the understanding is a source of new simple ideas', is 'not a refutation' of the empiricist view 'that any simple idea must originate in some manner of sensory experience' but is 'an alternative' to it. If Price were successful in his aim of showing that some simple ideas 'cannot originate in any manner of sensory experience', surely he would have refuted the empiricist theory.

I am also not convinced by the whole of Professor Peach's attempt to link Price's emphasis on liberty in political theory with the 'heads of virtue' given in his ethical theory. If liberty has this central place, Professor Peach asks, why is it not included in the 'heads' or main categories of virtue listed in the Review of Morals? He gives two alternative answers. (1) Price did not claim that his list of the heads of virtue was complete, and so he could have added liberty to it. (2) 'Or, he could have held that the duty, obligation, virtue, or value of liberty is contained in or derivative from' one or more of the listed heads of virtue; specifically from benevolence and prudence (p.34). I quite agree that Price could and would have derived the duty to respect liberty from the primary duties or virtues of beneficence (not benevolence, strictly speaking) and prudence, but I think that Professor Peach's first alternative is a mistake, as is his form of words, in the second alternative, 'the duty, obligation, virtue, or value of liberty'. Price's 'heads of virtue' are classes of duties, and liberty is not a class of duties. It is a 'value' but not a 'duty, obligation, virtue'. Respect for liberty is a duty, but not liberty itself. Liberty is a right, not a duty.

This is not just a matter of words. If Price had talked less of liberty itself and more of respect for liberty, and if he had included respect for liberty among the heads of virtue in his Review of Morals, that would not have done justice to his political doctrine. The political doctrine makes liberty as such the centre of attention. As in Rousseau, liberty is virtually the essence of human nature, at least in political relationship. The fact is that Price's ethical theory is defective in saying so little about rights in comparison with so much about duty. When he first wrote the Review he thought about ethics in relation to epistemology and metaphysics, in relation to theology, in relation to aesthetics, but not in relation to politics. After he had written the political tracts, his ethical theory needed some recasting if it was to accommodate his political doctrine,

but

but he evidently failed to see this. In the Review of Morals the idea of rights is mentioned briefly in the pages where Price talks about justice as one of the heads of virtue. The trouble is that his notion of justice also is far too narrow. He connects justice and rights with 'property and commerce' (Review, my edition, p.157). He thinks it is sufficient to recognize (no doubt following Locke) that the idea of property can be used in a wide sense so as to include life and limb (p.158), and in one place (p.159) he just mentions the right to liberty alongside the right to life. But if he had thought about it, Price would surely not have followed Locke to the extent of trying to make out that the right to liberty is a property right. I think we must acknowledge that on this question of liberty and of rights generally Richard Price's ethical theory is lame. It does not make room enough for his own political theory and, on at least this aspect of ethics, it is inferior to the Kantian theory which in other ways it presages.

D.D. Raphael



THE PRIESTLEY CHAPEL ASSOCIATES

John Romberger

In about 1796 Joseph Priestley established a Unitarian fellowship in Northumberland. This grew and prospered and by 1834 was able to build a chapel. Regular Unitarian services were held there for about 60 years - then times changed and the congregation dwindled. In 1910 the chapel was deeded to the American Unitarian Association with the understanding that the building would be refurbished and then perpetually maintained as a memorial to Priestley. Thus in 1910 the old Unitarian chapel in Northumberland was rededicated as the Joseph Priestley Memorial Chapel. No regular services have been held in the chapel since 1917, but the local people have protected it and it has not been vandalized. The American Unitarian Association was able to finance substantial maintenance work in the 1930's and again in about 1950. In recent decades, though, the Chapel has fallen into disrepair and now needs extensive restoration work. The organ, a rare 18th century cabinet pipe organ, has been silent since 1934. Restricted funds available to the Unitarian Universalist Association are not adequate to finance the work. There are no surviving members of the Unitarian congregation of Northumberland, and so to meet the need for the restoration of the chapel leading citizens of Northumberland joined forces with members of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Silver Spring (Maryland) and of the Northumberland County Historical Society to found the Priestley Chapel Associates. The plan is to complete the restoration and improvement work by March of 1983 in time for observances of the 250th anniversary of the birth of Joseph Priestley. The cost is expected to be at least \$25,000. Of that amount \$6,000 has already been raised and spent on emergency replacement of the roof and ceiling. The Unitarian Universalist Association has been able to contribute \$3,800. The Priestley Chapel Associates will assume responsibility for financing the remaining work. It is a nonprofit corporation and, on completion of restoration work, it will serve as a local steward for the Chapel, regulating its compatible use for services, musical events, weddings, etc. Membership of the Associates is open to interested persons; application forms may be obtained from:

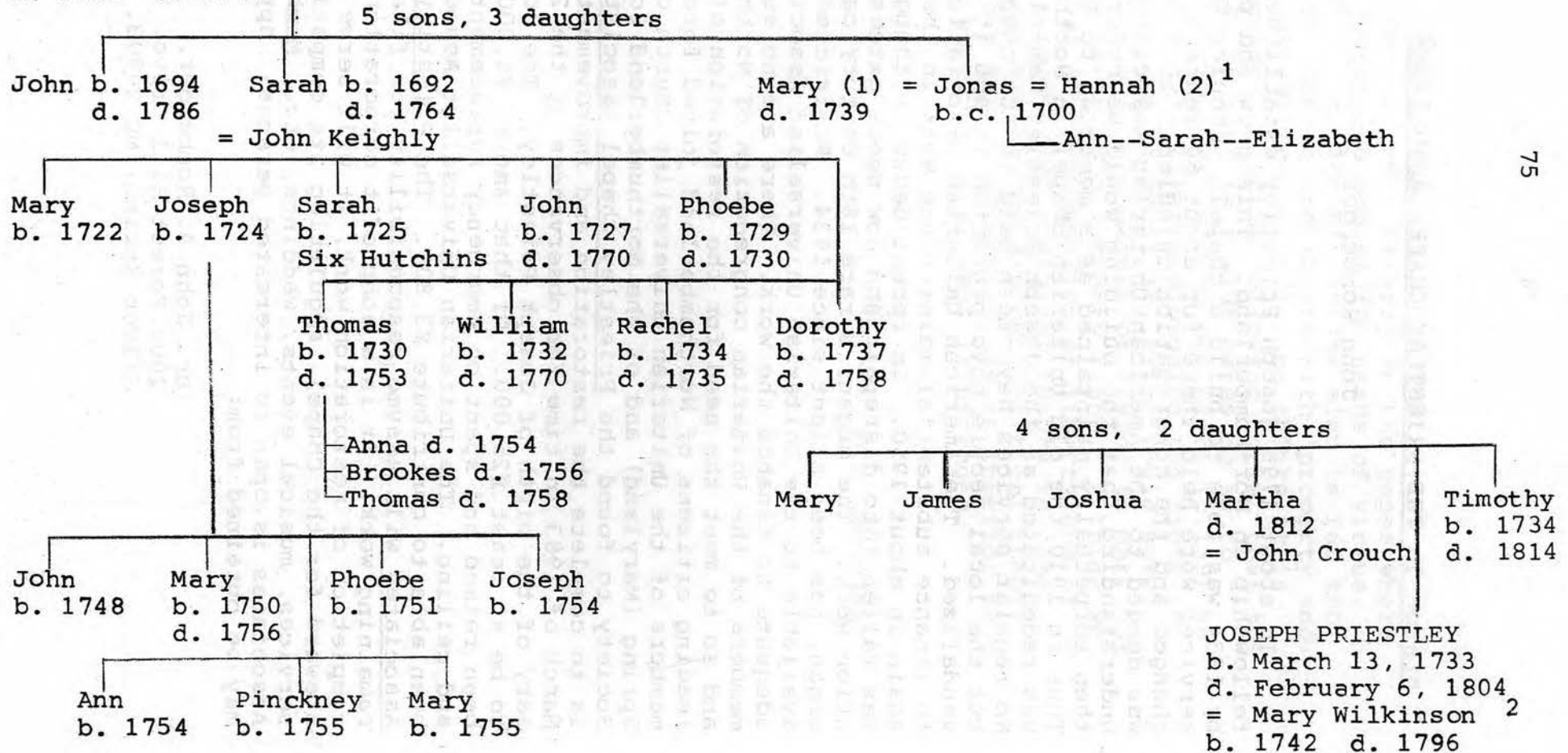
Dr. John A. Romberger,  
2005 Forest Hill Drive,  
Silver Spring, MD 20903.

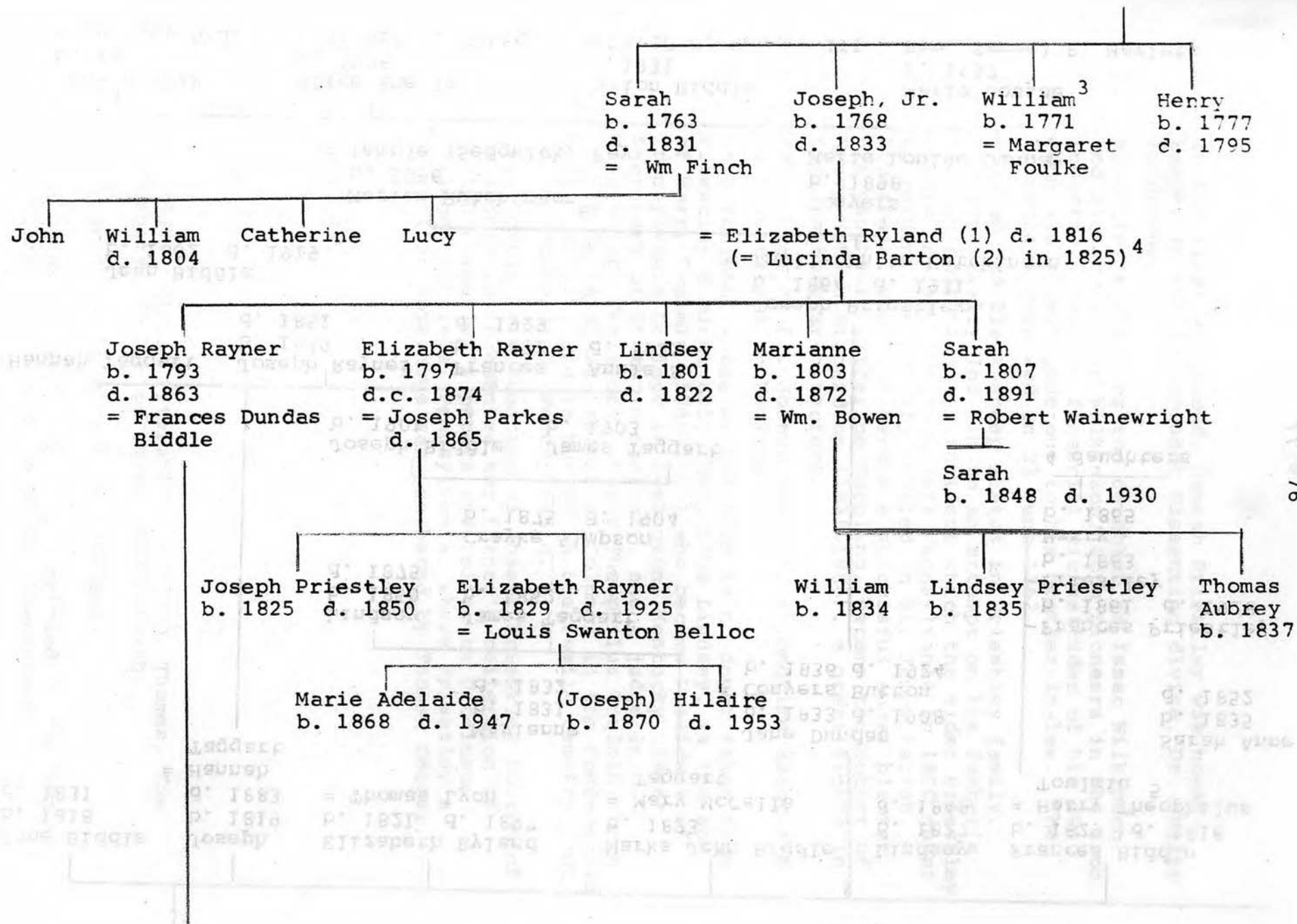
PRIESTLEY PEDIGREE

James J. Hoecker

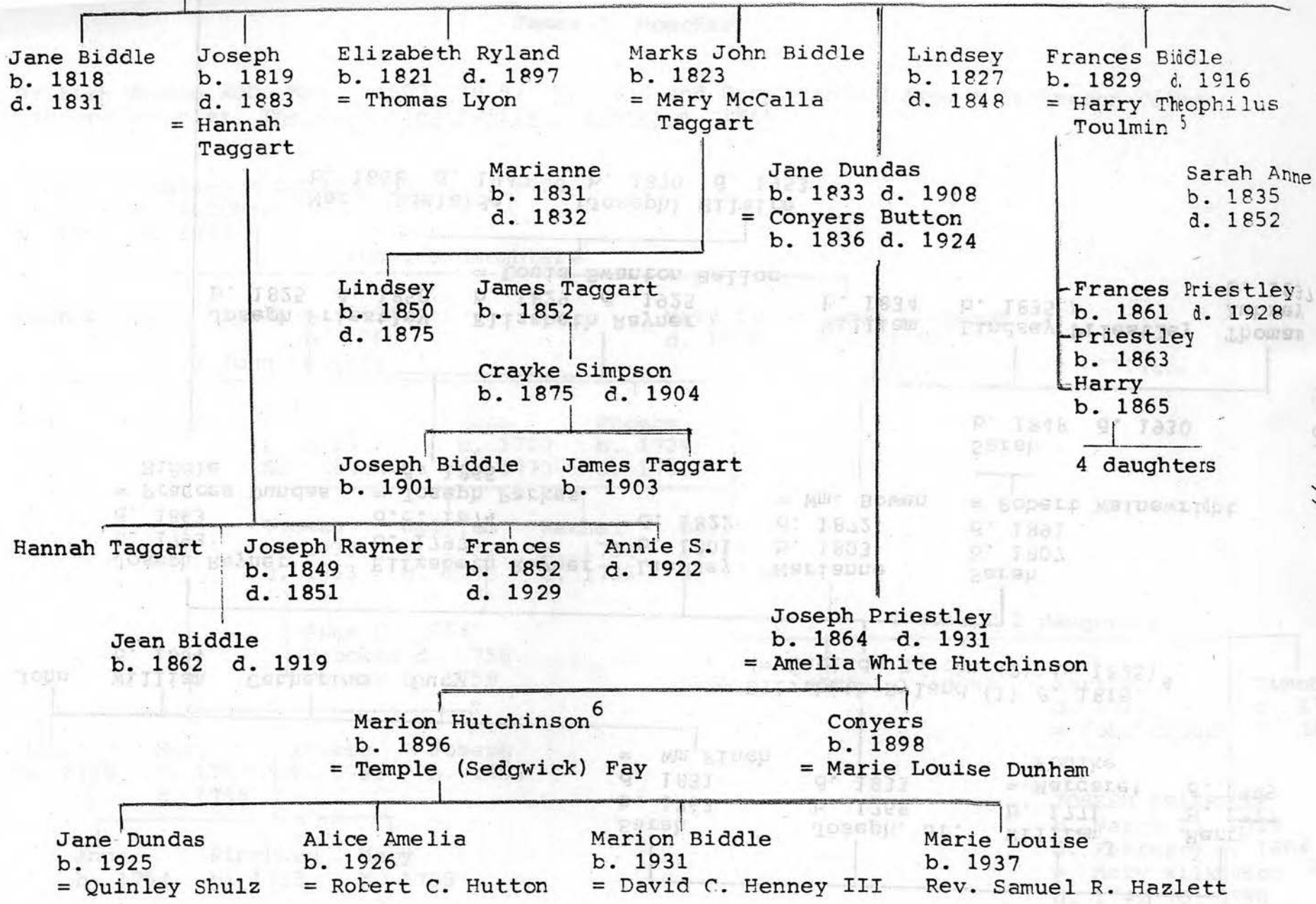
British Museum ADD. MSS. 24607, 38-9; Updated and Supplemented from a Dickenson College Library Pamphlet, The Priestley Family Collection, 1965.

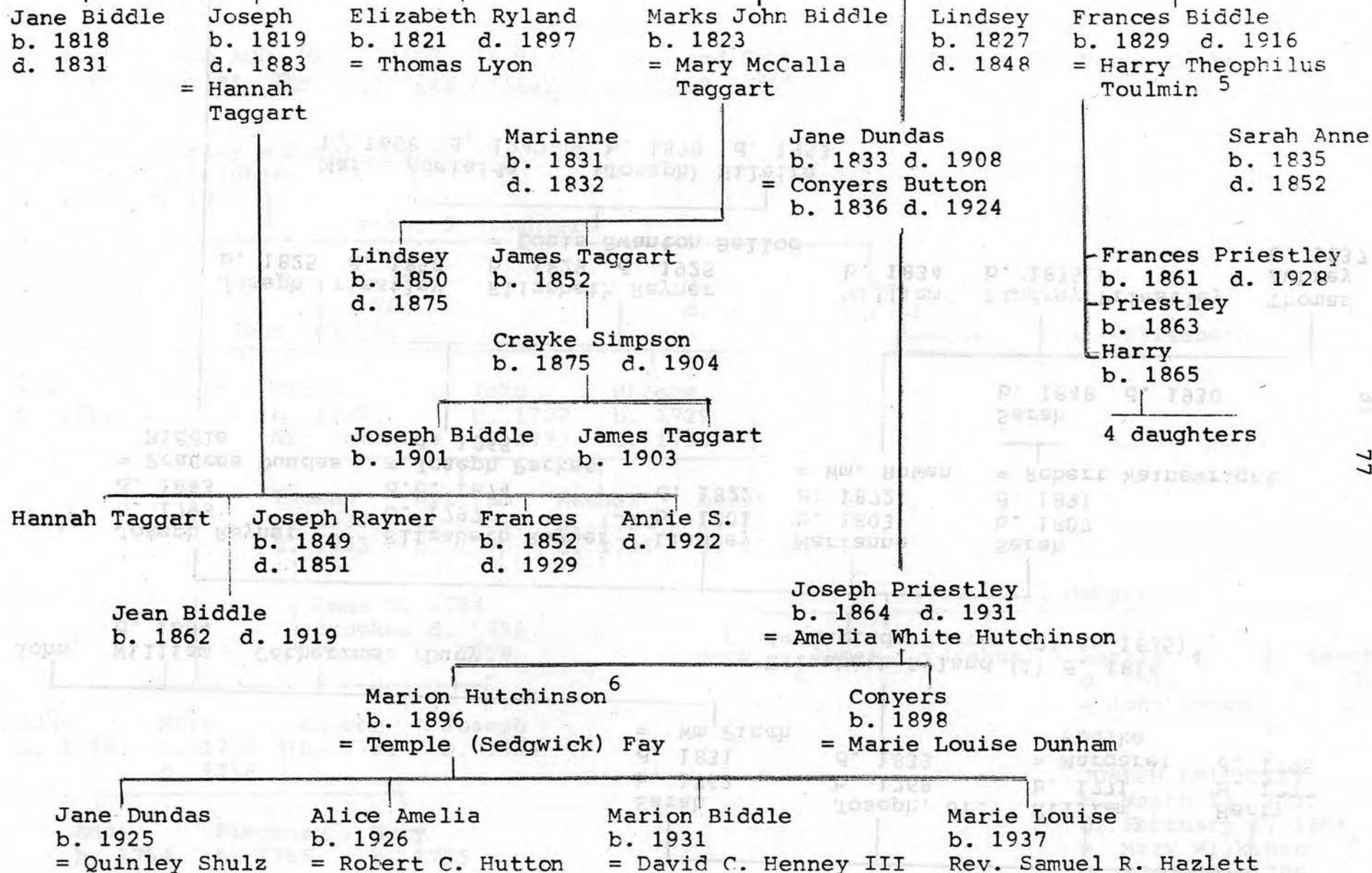
Joseph Priestley = Sarah Healey d. 1729  
of Birstallfieldhead  
b. 1660 d. 1745











1. In her first widowhood, Hannah Priestley was house-keeper to the pre-eminent Dissenting divine, Dr. Philip Doddridge.
2. Priestley's wife was the daughter of Issac Wilkinson and sister of John Wilkinson, both pioneers in the iron industry. Despite financial vicissitudes of his own, John was always generous to his brother-in-law. The Priestleys were wed on 23 June 1762.
3. William had black-sheep status in Priestley family. Sibling rivalry led him to an attempt on his father's life by poisoning, an incident which the elder Priestley always denied. William left Pennsylvania in 1800 never to return. He finally settled in St. James Parish, Louisiana, where he became a successful sugar planter. His daughter, Catherine Caroline, became the mother of Henry Hobson Richardson (1838-1886), a great figure in 19th century architecture.
4. A daughter of Dr. Joshua Toulmin, a longtime associate of Priestley's in England.
5. This Toulmin, whose middle name is no doubt taken from Priestley's close ally Theophilus Lindsey, is the son of Harry Toulmin (1766-1823) who became President of Transylvania College in Lexington, Kentucky, later Secretary of State in Kentucky, and a judge in Mississippi Territory. Harry Theophilus Toulmin, born in Mobile, Alabama, served as Colonel in the Confederate army, 1861-65, and is buried in the family cemetery plot in Northumberland, Pennsylvania.
6. Mrs. Temple Fay, daughter of Joseph Priestley Button of Philadelphia, presented her father's collection of Joseph Priestley's papers and relics to Dickinson College, Carlisle, Pennsylvania, where Priestley's scientific apparatus was gathered by Thomas Cooper.

ARLINGTON. VA.

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Cover designed by Miss Alison Thomas.

Typed by Mrs. Gina Randall, and printed in the Registry, The University College of Wales, Aberystwyth.