



Enlightenment and Dissent

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EDITORIAL

This issue includes the papers from the symposium of 5 November 2010 hosted by the Dr. Williams's Centre in the journal's honour. Without false modesty, we think we can say that the journal has made a useful contribution to Enlightenment studies, exploring notably the relationship between religious and secular ideas predominantly though by no means exclusively in the late eighteenth-century. It has cast new light on neglected figures and has, through special issues, explored major figures and key themes – Isaac Newton, Samuel Clarke, Religion Science and Popular Culture, and Women and Dissent. It has also provided a guide to current literature through in-depth reviews and substantial review articles – very much in evidence in this number. A particular feature of the journal has been its publication of valuable documents, some substantial enough to dominate an issue or to be published in supplement form. The steady requests for such numbers from non-subscribers is indicative of their appreciation in the scholarly world.

It may seem odd but even at the time of the foundation of the journal, D O Thomas talked about a time when it would be difficult to continue. He took the unsentimental view that nothing is eternal and that the journal would have probably fulfilled its function by then. That time has now arrived. Even as we celebrated the journal, it was noted that its future was uncertain. Increasing costs and the difficulty of maintaining annual production has led us to the conclusion that this will probably be the last number to be produced in hard copy. Our intention is to re-appear as an electronic journal, and if we succeed all subscribers will be sent details of its web site. We are grateful for the loyalty and support of subscribers and of the editorial board over many years, and we hope that we shall be in touch with them quite soon.

MHF
JD

**IN MEMORIAM
EMERITUS PROFESSOR R K WEBB**

Anthony Page

It is with sadness that we note the passing of Emeritus Professor R K 'Bob' Webb, who died at home in Washington on 15 Feb. 2012 at the age of 89. He lived a long, full and happy life as one of America's most distinguished historians of Britain. Rising to be a professor at Columbia University and editor of the *American Historical Review*, Bob became chair of the history department at University of Maryland Baltimore County in 1975, where he taught until retirement in 1992.

Bob's publications are characterised by impressive scholarship communicated through clear and elegant prose. His first book, *The British working class reader: 1790-1848* (1955), was followed by a biography of the Unitarian *Harriet Martineau, a radical Victorian* (1960) and many enlightening essays on intellectual history.

As we all use the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, readers of *E&D* will be interested in some comments that well reflect the nature of the man and his scholarship. During one email exchange about Rational Dissent, he told me:

Don't feel called on to read all 73 of my ODNB entries: you surely have better things to do with your time than to bone up on Unitarian ministers. But some are amusing or somewhat surprising. To select a few, Jacob Brettell, Sir Charles Abraham Elton, Edmund Martin Geldart (a very sad story), Philip Harwood (the most difficult of them all to write because of source problems, but very rewarding to me), John Page Hopps. I think that my best entries may be on subjects about which I knew least, and which fall right into your area of interest; I undertook them on editorial urging, more or less under protest, since there didn't seem to be anyone else: George Benson, Francis Stone, and Francis Webb (no relation). All of which

comes to an exercise of tooting my own horn (email: 4 Oct 2004).

Some years later I complimented him for the ODNB entry on the Liverpool minister John Yates (1755-1826), in which we are told: 'A fluent pulpit style belied the great pains he took with composition – he reportedly never preached an old sermon – although some thought he strained for novelty: one story has it that during a sermon on the wonders of nature, he cried "Behold the camel!", awaking a sleeping lady who exclaimed "Where? where?"'. Bob responded: 'I tried to write entries that would please me and, into the bargain, a few friends who have a similar kind of response to such things.' He went on to reveal he had been told that,

as OUP had destroyed the plates of the old DNB and as they intended to keep it in print, it had to be reset. They made the very sensible decision to use it as a training exercise for the typesetters in Bangalore, or whatever Indian computer center. When the setting of the ODNB was well advanced, the typesetters and proofreaders lodged a formal complaint--that the old DNB was much more fun than the ODNB because the entries in the former had many more anecdotes than those in the ODNB. This has always seemed to me a wonderful comment on the sobersidedness of modern scholarship. And it is one of the elements of the pride I take in what I did: that I instinctively included good stories (email: 8 Sept 2009).

Outside the field of British religious and intellectual history, Bob is best known for his textbook on *Modern England: from the 18th century to the present* (1968; 2nd ed. 1980), which was very widely used down to the 1990s. Allowing for advances in cultural history and the rise of the 'new British history', *Modern England* can still be read as an excellent introductory text for students. In contrast to this, the textbook history of *Modern Europe* (1973) that he wrote with Peter Gay, his colleague at Columbia, is a neglected gem. Bob greatly admired his friend as a stylist and it was a particular point of pride that readers were unable to tell his own contributions apart from Gay's.

Bob was a model of geniality and fine scholarship. Those of us working on Rational Dissent and Unitarianism are fortunate to have had this grand old man of the American historical profession make a substantial contribution to our field.

There is an obituary in the *Washington Post*, February 19, 2012: 'Robert K. Webb, historian and UMBC professor, dies at 89'

http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/obituaries/robert-k-webb-historian-and-umbc-professor-dies-at-89/2012/02/18/gIQA5FzEMR_story.html

UMBC have a lecture series named in his honour, and in 2010 Bob delivered the 'Annual Webb Lecture' himself. Through the marvels of our wired world, Bob's lecture on 'The Very Long Eighteenth Century: An Experiment in the History of Religion?' can be viewed via YouTube:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k5xUAxRZypk>

University of Tasmania

**‘THE RIGHT OF PRIVATE JUDGEMENT, WITH THE CARE
OF THE PUBLIC SAFETY’: THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND’S PERCEPTIONS
OF PROTESTANT DISSENT IN THE LATER EIGHTEENTH CENTURY**

G M Ditchfield

Much of the significance of Michaijah’s *A dissent from the Church of England fully justified*, first published in 1753, is the manner in which it defined Dissent against the Church of England – setting out what Dissent was not, as well as what it was.¹ And in a symposium dedicated to Enlightenment, Dissent and Toleration, it is not difficult to explain the presence of a paper concerned with an established Church. For as Towgood recognized, fundamental to the emergence, identity and institutionalization of Dissent were its responses to the doctrine, the form, the ceremonies, and the government of the established Church. In a state which defined itself not only in terms of the Protestant religion but in terms of Protestantism as interpreted by the Church of England, Anglican attitudes towards Dissent were of all-pervading importance. Those attitudes were regularly expressed through the preaching of the Church of England clergy, an Anglican-dominated Parliament, county magistracies which in this period included an increasing proportion of Anglican

¹ The full title of Towgood’s work is *A dissent from the Church of England fully justified: and proved the genuine and just consequence of the allegiance due to Christ, the only lawgiver in the Church. Being the Dissenting gentleman’s three letters and postscripts, in answer to Mr. John White’s on that subject*. It was first published in that form in London in 1753 and, according to the title page, sold also at Exeter, where Towgood (1700-92) was minister to the James (and from 1760 the George) Presbyterian congregation. It is cited in this article as Towgood, *A Dissent*, and the quotations are taken from the fifth edition, published in London in 1779). Towgood’s work originated as three separate letters, published in 1746-48, to John White, perpetual curate of Nayland, Suffolk, who had levelled the familiar charge of schism against Dissenters. The consolidation of the letters into a single volume enhanced their availability and helped to turn *A dissent* into a nonconformist classic. See David L Wykes, ‘Towgood, Matthew’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 55, 105-107.

clergymen,² and largely (although not exclusively) Anglican-dominated town corporations. Evidence is amply available through the sermon, the episcopal and archidiaconal charge, the parliamentary debate, the charge to the grand jury, and the patterns of local prosecutions. Of those attitudes, and the practical consequences of their expression, this paper focuses mainly upon those of the established clergy, although it carries implications for all those other dimensions. And while it takes up the familiar assumption that attitudes in the Church of England towards Dissenters in the latter years of the eighteenth century became more hostile, it also seeks to place those attitudes within a broader context, and suggests that there existed very different patterns between public attitudes and national legislation.

There was a widespread contemporary perception in the post-1760 period that the Church of England, especially in its preaching, laid an increasing emphasis upon authority and upon the enforcement of its creeds and articles, evincing thereby a heightened suspicion of its critics, than had been the case in mid-century. Confronted by rebellion in America and by Wilkite and other disorders in Britain itself, the argument goes, Anglican preaching drew increasingly upon those biblical texts which stressed obedience to the civil power and excoriated resistance and rebellion as the extremities of sin.³ This sense of danger, heightened by rebellion in America, led to comparisons with the sufferings of the clergy during the 1640s, and to a temporary revival in the cult of Charles I as a martyr for the Church of England, exemplified by his commemoration in

² For the increase during this period in the proportion of magistrates who were also Anglican clergymen, see Peter Virgin, *The Church in an age of negligence* (Cambridge, 1989), 115-19. Dr Virgin points out that, although the proportion of clerical magistrates varied considerably from county to county, there was a tendency for clergymen to be heavily represented among the most active magistrates.

³ See, in particular, two articles by Henry Ippel, 'Blow the Trumpet, Sanctify the Fast', *Huntington Library Bulletin*, 44 (1980), 43-60; and 'British Sermons and the American Revolution', *Journal of Religious History*, 12 (1982-3), 43-60. The theme is taken further by James E Bradley, 'The Anglican pulpit, the social order and the resurgence of Toryism during the American Revolution', *Albion*, 21 (1989), 361-88, and James J Sack, *From Jacobite to conservative: reaction and orthodoxy in Britain c.1760-1832* (Cambridge, 1993), ch. 4.

30 January sermons.⁴ High church Anglicanism, with its powerful emphases upon the apostolicity of the Church's orders, the authority of the church fathers, sacramentalism, and perhaps most significantly the conception of the divine, as distinct from the contractual or popular, basis of political allegiance, gradually increased its influence in the later eighteenth century.⁵ Implicit in the values of high churchmanship was the view that separation from the Church amounted to schism, and that, accordingly, the Church had much to fear from the increase in the numbers of Dissenters. In the fourth edition of his *Dictionary of the English language*, published in 1773, Samuel Johnson drew more heavily than in its three predecessors upon the authority of high church and non-juring writers in many of his key definitions. His purpose was to buttress the Church of England against the heterodoxy, the Dissenting disaffection and the threats to order which he detected in the popular protests of the 1760s and campaigns for reform of the system of subscription to the Thirty-nine articles in the early 1770s.⁶

And just as there was exaggerated talk in some Anglican circles of a return to the 1640s and a caricaturing of Dissenters as regicides, there was equally exaggerated talk from some Dissenters of a return to the attitudes and the policies of the type of high Toryism which had exercised power in that last years of Queen Anne's reign, and even of a revival of the authoritarianism of Archbishop Laud. Unsurprisingly, there were many more expressions of anxiety of that kind in the immediate aftermath of the French Revolution. As early as February 1790 Theophilus Lindsey noted that some of his friends 'say the nation, or rather the members of the established church are not more liberal than in the days of Sacheverel, in matters of religion.'⁷ Lindsey himself, although not sharing that opinion

⁴ Andrew Lacey, *The cult of King Charles the Martyr* (Woodbridge, 2003), 237-40.

⁵ F C Mather, *High Church prophet: Bishop Samuel Horsley (1733-1806), and the Caroline tradition in the later Georgian Church* (Oxford, 1992); Nigel Aston, 'Horne and Heterodoxy: the defence of Anglican beliefs in the late Enlightenment', *English Historical Review*, CVIII (1993); Peter Benedict Nockles, *The Oxford Movement in context. Anglican High Churchmanship, 1760-1857* (Cambridge, 1994).

⁶ See Allen Reddick, *The making of Johnson's dictionary 1746-1773* (Cambridge, 1990), ch. 7.

⁷ John Rylands University Library of Manchester, Unitarian College MSS, Lindsey Letters, Vol. II, nos. 29-30, Lindsey to William Tayleur, 10 Feb. 1790.

at that time, quickly came to do so after the overwhelming defeat in the Commons of the motion for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts in the following month, and even more so after the Priestley riots in July 1791. It is clear that many Dissenters were convinced of a hardening of attitudes towards them in the Church of England during this period. Prominent among those who expressed this view in public was Samuel Heywood, in his *High Church politics*, published in 1792:

The religious fanaticism which has thus disgraced Birmingham and the County of Warwick, is but a *symptom* of the general disorder which High Churchmen have insinuated into every part of the kingdom, and into the vitals of government itself. The eruption has discharged itself with volcanic force on one devoted spot, but the mountain is still convulsed, and threatens general destruction.⁸

In the aftermath of the Priestley riots, this was an understandable conclusion. But Heywood claimed to detect the existence of a longer-term tendency, from at least the 1770s, towards Anglican hostility towards Dissent, of which the attacks on Priestley were merely the most recent manifestation. It was characteristic of such Dissenting critics that they attributed this tendency to a growth of High Church influence within the established Church and believed that such influence also pervaded the policy of the state. Heywood, or course, wrote with openly partisan purposes; a Dissenter educated at Warrington academy and the author of a tract denouncing the test laws,⁹ he was hardly an impartial observer. For a fuller appreciation of attitudes in the Church of England towards Dissenters, a more nuanced approach is appropriate, and it is necessary to consider several contextual factors.

Fundamental to Anglican attitudes towards Dissent were the types of justification which were deployed in defence of the principle of an

⁸ Heywood, *High Church politics: being a seasonable appeal to the friends of the British Constitution, against the practices and principles of high churchmen; as exemplified in the late opposition to the repeal of the test laws, and in the riots at Birmingham* (London, 1792), 59.

⁹ Samuel Heywood, *The right of Dissenters to a compleat toleration asserted* (London, 1787; 2nd edn, 1789).

established church. Did the balance between different justifications change in the later eighteenth century? William Warburton in 1736, and later, had envisaged the Church of England and the state as allied in a utilitarian partnership, a 'league' based on a voluntary compact between two mutually supportive but separate and independent entities. To Warburton, public order and the reformation of manners were of greater importance than any claim that the Church possessed a monopoly of theological truth, although he also defended the principle and practice of a test law. If, however, as Stephen Taylor has demonstrated, Warburton was less than fully representative of Anglican clerical opinion in mid-century, he was far less representative at its end.¹⁰ Even William Paley, the source of the quotation in the title of this paper,¹¹ writing from Whig Cambridge in 1785, and while following Warburton in justifying church establishments by the criteria of utility and the public good, nonetheless laid greater stress upon doctrine. Rejecting concurrent endowment as practised in North America,¹² Paley argued that central to the role of the civil magistrate was the protection of the type of religion most conducive to human salvation – the state should endow the religion which was 'true'; his conclusion was that 'of different systems of faith, that is best which is the truest'.¹³ 'True' signified 'true' in the sense of doctrine, and one fundamental aspect of this doctrinal truth was, of course, Trinitarianism.

Of all the implications for Dissenters of any High Church revival, the most important was to be found in the increasingly vocal Anglican rejection of erastianism and of contractarianism. That rejection is evident in assertions that government was natural, not contractual, and that civil authority was derived from the will of God. From such a premise it was not difficult to envisage ecclesiastical and civil authority as indivisible and to deduce that, far from being an alliance of separate partners, Church

¹⁰ See Stephen Taylor, 'William Warburton and the Alliance of Church and State', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 43 (1992), 271-86.

¹¹ *The works of William Paley*, DD (5 vols., London, 1819), II, 59. All references to Paley in this article are from his *Principles of moral and political philosophy*, first published in 1785.

¹² Paley, *Works*, II, 39-40.

¹³ Paley, *Works*, II, 49.

and state formed a single, inseparable, organic unity. In May 1792, Edmund Burke, in the course of his successful attempt to persuade the House of Commons to reject the Unitarian petition, poured scorn upon the concept of the 'alliance' as 'an idle and a fanciful speculation'. Instead, he insisted, 'in a Christian commonwealth, the Church and the State are one and the same thing, being different integral parts of the same whole'.¹⁴ Jonathan Clark, Robert Hole and other scholars have drawn attention to the ways in which Anglican preaching stressed that while specific forms of government may be of human devising for particular temporal and geographical circumstances, government itself was divinely ordained.¹⁵ Sure enough, in Anglican sermons of this period we find a heightened emphasis on those well-known biblical texts which stressed obedience to civil authority and which exhorted their listeners not to meddle with those given to change. From the 1770s, moreover, this was a message powerfully reinforced by the works and the experience of dispossessed, exiled and embittered American Episcopalian clergymen such as Jonathan Boucher, Henry Caner and East Apthorpe. They attributed the British loss of America to a lack of assertion of authority, ecclesiastical as well as civil, on the part of the British government in the early stages of the disputes, including its failure to establish a resident Anglican bishopric in the thirteen colonies.¹⁶

However, this emphasis upon obedience and submission was not new, nor was it confined to high churchmen or to the heirs to early eighteenth-century Toryism. In 1756, Frederick Cornwallis, then bishop of Lichfield and from 1768 archbishop of Canterbury, and no high churchman (he was a client and one of the most loyal supporters of the duke of Newcastle) declared:

¹⁴ W Cobbett, *The Parliamentary History of England* (36 vols, London, 1806-20), XXIX, 1383 n.

¹⁵ J C D Clark, *English society 1660-1832. Religion, ideology and politics during the ancient regime* (Cambridge, 2000), especially ch. 3; Robert Hole, *Pulpits, politics and public order in England, 1760-1832* (Cambridge, 1989), especially 50-59.

¹⁶ See, in particular, Jonathan Boucher, *A view of the causes and consequences of the American Revolution in thirteen discourses, preached in North America between 1763 and 1775* (London, 1797), 495-560.

The Apostles had no instruction from Christ to cause any Innovation in Government, or to unsettle the Laws of the People they were to preach to. On the contrary, whoever embraced their Doctrine were to *render to Caesar the Things that were Caesars's*, and to pay Obedience to the Powers that were established in the World.¹⁷

In other words, Church Whigs, in common with their counterparts in government, as well as Church Tories, wanted to be obeyed. A series of episcopal sermons to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel throughout the War of American Independence, repeatedly stressed the point. So, too, did episcopal fast sermons during the war, of which prime examples are that of the Cambridge-educated courtier Richard Hurd in 1776 and that of John Moore, bishop of Bangor (and from 1783 archbishop of Canterbury) in 1781.¹⁸ Even the Cambridge Latitudinarian, John Hey, while deploying utilitarian rather than ideological arguments for the existing system of subscription to articles of religion, nonetheless wanted outward conformity. In his Norrisian lectures Hey asked 'how it seems possible, that any *mutual concessions* should take place between our Church and those who dissent from it, tending to an union':

The *general end* and design of such concessions (it must always be remembered), is not to produce perfect unity of *private opinions*, but only *unity of Doctrine* and *worship*.¹⁹

He compared the need for such unity to that desirable in the conclusions of a parliamentary committee on a canal scheme or a river navigation

¹⁷ Frederick Cornwallis, *A sermon preached before the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts; at their Anniversary Meeting ... on Friday February 20, 1756* (London, 1756), 7. For Cornwallis's Whig background, see G M Ditchfield, 'A neglected Archbishop of Canterbury? Frederick Cornwallis (1768-1783)', *Archæologia Cantiana*, CXXXII (2012), 215-34.

¹⁸ Richard Hurd, *A sermon preached before the right honourable the House of Lords ... on Friday, December 13, 1776, being the day appointed ... for a general fast* (London, 1777); John Moore, *A sermon preached before the Lords spiritual and temporal ... on Wednesday, February 21, 1781, being the day appointed ... for a general fast* (London, 1781).

¹⁹ John Hey, *Lectures in divinity, delivered in the University of Cambridge* (4 vols, Cambridge, 1796), II, 359.

scheme. And in the process of defending the retention of the Athanasian creed, Hey warned, ominously:

Those who suffer fortifications to fall in ruin in a time of Peace, tempt their enemies to attack them; and then in vain do they endeavour, in the midst of confusion, to form a new Bulwark equal in strength to the old'.²⁰

Thomas Balguy, archdeacon of Winchester, who owed his preferments to the celebrated (or notorious) Latitudinarian Benjamin Hoadly, strongly opposed relaxations of subscription to the Thirty-nine articles in the early 1770s and engaged in controversy with Joseph Priestley over the nature of ecclesiastical authority.²¹ Hoadly himself, in his later years, as bishop of Winchester (1734-61), 'accepted that he operated within the ecclesiastical structure and that there were national standards to observe' and insisted on subscription to the Thirty-nine articles.²² Samuel Johnson, in *The false alarm* (1770) neatly encapsulated the conjunction of earlier Anglican suspicions with those of the 1760s when denouncing 'The sectaries, the constant fomenters of sedition, and never-failing confederates of the rabble, of whose religion little now remains but hatred of establishments, and who are angry to find separation now only tolerated, which was once rewarded.'²³

Fundamental to opinion within the Church were changes in the definitions of what Paley in 1785 called the 'public safety', with which an established Church was by its very nature, identified. In this respect, two important contextual factors influenced attitudes in the Church. Both factors concern the ways in which Anglican perceptions of Dissent changed in the later eighteenth century. The first of them was doctrinal,

²⁰ Hey, *Thoughts on the Athanasian creed* (Cambridge, 1790), 21.

²¹ Thomas Balguy, *A sermon preached at Lambeth Chapel, on the consecration of the Right Rev. Jonathan Shipley, D.D., Lord Bishop of Landaff* (London, 1769); Joseph Priestley, *Considerations on Church-authority; occasioned by Dr Balguy's sermon, on that subject* (London, 1769).

²² William Gibson, "'A happy fertile soil which bringeth forth abundantly": the diocese of Winchester, 1689-1800', in *The national church in local perspective. The Church of England and the regions, 1660-1800*, ed. Jeremy Gregory & Jeffrey S Chamberlain (Woodbridge, 2003), 110, 112.

²³ Samuel Johnson, *The false alarm* (2nd edn., London, 1770), 52.

and took the form of anxiety over Socinianism; the second was organizational and pastoral, and took the form of anxiety over itinerant Dissenting preaching.

II

The perception that Dissent as a whole was becoming increasingly heterodox may be found in a variety of sources. Moreover, Socinian heterodoxy, with its denial of the divinity of Christ, of the atonement and of original sin, was far more frightening than the coded Arianism, within the Church as well as among the English Presbyterians and General Baptists, of mid-century. It had even been possible for a handful of Latitudinarian writers, following the publication of Samuel Clarke's *Scripture doctrine of the Trinity* in 1712, to claim that it was permissible for Arians to subscribe the Thirty-nine Articles. So pernicious did such an interpretation of the Articles appear that the Church Whig Daniel Waterland devoted a great deal of energy and ink to its rebuttal.²⁴ But no such argument could be advanced in respect of Socinianism. Anxiety over the possible opening of the Dissenting ministry to avowed or covert Socinians had helped to bring about the rejection of Dissenting petitions for relaxation of subscription to the doctrinal articles in 1772-3.²⁵ A short pamphlet, now known to have been the work of the archdeacon of Surrey and from 1777 bishop of Oxford John Butler, *A Letter to the Protestant Dissenting ministers* (1772), raised precisely this fear. The Dissenting campaigns for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts in 1787-90 heightened the nervousness, raising the spectre of the heterodox gaining access to public office. Already, in 1786, William Jones of Nayland had issued his *Preservative against the publications dispersed by modern Socinians*; it reached a fifth edition in 1799.²⁶ In 1787 the high churchman

²⁴ For this controversy, see B W Young, *Religion and enlightenment in eighteenth-century England. Theological debate from Locke to Burke* (Oxford, 1998), 35-8, 102-106.

²⁵ G.M. Ditchfield, "How Narrow will the limits of this Toleration appear?" Dissenting petitions to Parliament, 1772-1773', in *Parliament and Dissent*, ed. Stephen Taylor and David L Wykes (Edinburgh, 2005), 91-106.

²⁶ A sympathiser subsequently claimed that 'the very name of "Nayland Jones" makes all the Unitarians and Methodists tremble'; *Historical Manuscripts Commission, Kenyon MSS*, 563.

George Berkeley, vice-dean of Canterbury, urged watchfulness against Socinians who, conspiratorially, 'insinuate themselves into every company and commonly make their attacks upon the ignorant and the half-learned'.²⁷ Spencer Madan, rector of St Philip's, Birmingham, declared on 14 February 1790 that 'The principles of the Socinian doctrine in this place are evidently gaining ground among the Presbyterians, and certainly those principles are not more consistent with the doctrine of the Established Church, and no less dangerous to the state, than any of the tenets of popery'.²⁸ Samuel Horsley, bishop of Rochester, while rejoicing at the emigration of Priestley, nonetheless denounced Socinianism as an 'enemy' whose 'stratagem' required effective counter-action.²⁹

Critiques of this nature from high churchmen were, of course, only to be expected, but they were by no means confined to that element of the established Church. The widely-reported public attacks upon Socinianism and the widespread belief that Socinian numbers were increasing allowed Anglican defenders of the Test and Corporation Acts to use the argument that repeal of the Test laws would open the door to infidelity and atheism. There was a declining ability (or willingness) within the Church of England to distinguish between heterodox and orthodox Dissenters. It was easy to lampoon heterodoxy as a staging-post on the road to atheism, and to the subversion of moral obligation. A meeting of Lancashire clergy at Bolton-le-Moors on 18 February 1790 resolved that 'A repeal of these Acts would certainly open a door for men of all descriptions inimical to the Christian religion – Jews, Turks, Infidels and Hereticks – to come into places of power and profit'.³⁰ George Pretyman, bishop of Lincoln and

²⁷ George Berkeley, *A caution against Socinianism, given in a discourse preached at the Cathedral and metropolitical church of Christ, Canterbury; on Good Friday, 1787* (Canterbury, 1787), 7.

²⁸ Spencer Madan, *The principal claims of the Dissenters, considered, in a sermon preached at St. Philip's church, in Birmingham, on Sunday the 14th of February, 1790* (Birmingham, 1790), 9-10.

²⁹ Samuel Horsley, *Charge to the clergy of the diocese of Rochester, delivered at his second general visitation, in the year 1800* (London, 1800), 18.

³⁰ *A collection of the resolutions passed at the meetings of the clergy of the Church of England ... assembled to take into consideration the late application of the dissenters to Parliament* (London, 1790), 32.

close ecclesiastical adviser of Pitt, used his *Charge* to his diocesan clergy in 1794 to castigate Socinians as republicans:

Such is the connexion between licentious opinions upon Religion and upon Government, that those, who have been most eager to rob Christianity of all its valuable and discriminating sanctions, have been the most active in their endeavours to destroy those distinctions, which are the basis of civil authority. Our ancestors of the last century had frequent opportunities of observing the close alliance between Popery and Despotism; and we, who live at the end of the eighteenth century, have seen the Disciples of Socinus amongst the most zealous abettors of Republican Principles'.³¹

Pretyma, moreover, was no high churchman; his 30 January sermon of 1789 had described Charles I as an 'unfortunate and misguided Prince' who 'had in his early youth imbibed notions of civil government totally inconsistent with the spirit of a limited monarchy'.³² More dispassionately, John Hey acknowledged in 1796 that by comparison with the time of the Toleration Act of 1689, from the benefits of which anti-trinitarians remained excluded, 'Socinians are now considerable, in numbers and literature'.³³

The connection between heterodoxy and disaffection was given plausibility because by the 1790s Socinianism amounted not only to a series of heterodox beliefs, but also to a series of networks, of societies and of publishers, in London and throughout the country. When on 10 February 1790 the *Public Advertiser* referred to a 'meeting of the Delegates from the Presbyterian, Independent, Baptist, Anabaptist, Socinian, Armenian, Unitarian, Trinitarian ... Congregations throughout the kingdom', it effectively located Socinians firmly within the Dissenting nexus. A satirical verse published in the same newspaper later in the same year, deriding Abraham Rees's eulogy of the Cambridge Baptist Robert

³¹ George Pretyma, *A charge delivered to the clergy of the diocese of Lincoln, at the triennial visitation of that diocese in May and June 1794* (London, 1794), 14.

³² Pretyma, *A sermon preached before the Lords spiritual and temporal, in the abbey church of Westminster, on Friday, January 30, 1789* (London, 1789), 13.

³³ Hey, *Lectures in divinity*, II, 153-4.

Robinson, went further:

Pride, spite and pharisaic leaven
Do all prepare the mind for heaven;
And, at the Church to rail and rave,
Sufficient is the soul to save;
For thus the prize was lately won
By Unitarian Robinson;
Who, as his learned friends agree,
Through schisms, went to heresy;
Ran the career of wild opinion
Fanatic first, and then Socinian;
And dwelleth now in Angel Row,
For cursing Bishops here below.³⁴

It was not heterodox Dissenters alone who criticized the state connection, denounced the system of tithes and threatened the Church's endowments. Moving the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts on 8 May 1789, Henry Beaufoy found it necessary to insist – not altogether plausibly – that Dissenters as a whole 'belonged not to the landed interest of the kingdom, which bears the principal burden of the tythes, but to the commercial interest, on which the weight is comparatively light'. Accordingly, he claimed, they posed no threat to clerical tithes in the countryside.³⁵ One of the most vehement attacks on the principle of a state church was that launched by the Calvinist Baptist Andrew Fuller, one of the strongest Dissenting critics of Socinianism. In *The Gospel its own witness* (1799), Fuller asserted that when 'interwoven with national establishments', the Church, 'from being the bride of Christ, gradually degenerated to a harlot, and in the end became the mother of harlots, and abominations of the earth.'³⁶

It is a measure of the effectiveness of allegations that Socinianism led directly to infidelity and – bizarrely – to the popular deism of Thomas

³⁴ *Public Advertiser*, 25 Dec. 1790.

³⁵ Cobbett, *Parl. Hist.*, XXVIII, 8.

³⁶ Andrew Fuller, *The gospel its own witness: or the holy nature, and divine harmony of the Christian religion, contrasted with the immorality and absurdity of Deism* (Clipstone, 1799), 9-10.

Paine, that Rational Dissenters in particular found it necessary to go to considerable lengths in seeking to refute such allegations and to defend revealed religion. Even Paley, who advocated a wide measure of Protestant toleration, favoured the placing of restraint upon what he called ‘mockery, upon religious subjects’ – and Paine’s *Age of reason* subjected the Bible to continual derision. Gilbert Wakefield published his *Examination of Paine’s Age of reason* in 1794; and Priestley his *Answer to the Age of reason* the following year; in 1797 Joshua Toulmin insisted upon *The injustice of classing Unitarians with deists and infidels*. We would not be surprised, either, at orthodox Dissenting attacks on Socinianism – partly, of course, from principle, but partly also to avoid any hint of contamination. The Independent John Clayton, minister of the King’s Weigh House, London, lamented in 1791 that ‘It is a mournful fact, that a large body of modern Dissenters, under the sanction of reason and science, falsely so called, have apostasized from the *doctrines* of the *Reformation*; and some can vilify, in very opprobrious language, the *truths* which their ancestors contended for’.³⁷ Other examples include Andrew Fuller’s works in controversy with Joshua Toulmin, and the less-known Independent minister George Townsend of Ramsgate, who in 1789 published *A word of caution and advice against the Socinian poison of William Frend*.³⁸ This post-1783 elevation of the profile of Socinianism helps to explain why, although Dissenters suffered minimal physical harassment in the period of the American War, they experienced a great deal, at local level, during the 1790s.

III

We refer, secondly, to the increase of popular, allegedly unlettered, evangelical preaching. Paley in 1785, while defending a paid and educated clergy, was guided by the maxim that it was ‘barely *possible*, that a person who was never educated for the office should acquit himself

³⁷ John Clayton, *The duty of Christians to magistrates: a sermon* (London, 1791), iv.

³⁸ See Alan P F Sell, ‘Andrew Fuller and the Socinians’, *Enlightenment and Dissent*, no. 19 (2000), 91-115. George Townsend (1755-1837) was minister to the Ebenezer congregation, Ramsgate. Frend responded to his strictures in the *Kentish Gazette*, 15-19 May 1789.

with decency as a public teacher of religion'.³⁹ The key word is 'decency', signifying respect for ecclesiastical authority as well as a concern for moral propriety. And Paley dismissed the counter-example of the Quakers who, although they did not have a separate order of clergy, 'every where subsist in conjunction with a regular establishment' and could benefit from the learning and the published scholarship of the established clergy.⁴⁰ Even in the 1780s, there is evidence of concern at popular Dissenting preaching. Shute Barrington, bishop of Salisbury, used his primary visitation *Charge* in 1783 to describe itinerants as 'repugnant to the genius and the precepts of the Gospel, as they are to that reason which they vilify and despise'. They 'excite groundless fears and groundless hopes, indispose the people to listen to the instructions of their minister, and teach them to undervalue his ordinances'.⁴¹ By the 1790s the anxiety was fuelled by the ways in which Methodist itinerancy inspired widespread itinerant preaching also among those of the older Dissenting denominations which were most affected by the Evangelical Revival. Congregational, Baptist, and from the 1790s 'New Connexion' Methodist preaching all drew numbers away from attendance at parish churches. In 1800 Bishop Pretyman, who was worried about his (large) diocese of Lincoln, complained of

These Fanatics [who] by pretending to an extraordinary degree of sanctity, to a species of faith not to be found in the Gospel, to an especial call or gift of grace, which supersedes the necessity of education seduce the People from their appointed Ministers, separate them from the communion of the Church, gain a compleat ascendancy over them, and instill into their minds the most dangerous opinions, with the most active enthusiasm. The effect of this mis-called Evangelical Preaching, too often appears in the despondence of religious melancholy, or in the licentiousness of shameless profligacy, and in principles and

³⁹ Paley, *Works*, II, 33.

⁴⁰ Paley, *Works*, II, 33.

⁴¹ Shute Barrington, *A charge delivered to the clergy of the diocese of Sarum at the primary visitation of that diocese* (Oxford, 1783), 11.

conduct, which the precepts of the Gospel, and the whole history of mankind, declare to be absolutely inconsistent with true Religion and the well-being of Society.⁴²

Pretymen placed such preaching in the same category as 'schism' and what he called 'the open and insidious attacks of infidels and sectarists'. He devoted these years to major published attacks on Calvinism, and especially its more demotic manifestations.⁴³ For the preaching of justification by faith alone carried dangerous implications for the role of an established, educated parochial clergy, and had connotations not only of anti-clericalism but also of seventeenth-century rebellion. Richard Mant, at that time a curate in Southampton and a future bishop in the Church of Ireland, published in 1808 a work significantly entitled *Puritanism revived; or Methodism as old as the Great Rebellion*. The high churchman Charles Daubeney attacked evangelical preaching partly because of what he saw as its subversion of the Church of England's doctrinal basis and partly because of its challenge to parochial order.⁴⁴ As late as 1827, in one of his last works, he compared popular Calvinist preaching to seventeenth-century Puritan fanaticism, with its 'professing saints, with Bibles in their hands and treason in their hearts'.⁴⁵

It was no coincidence that such popular village preaching, with its potentially subversive implications, provided a renewed stimulus to church reform, with more stipulations for clerical residence and a proposal by the Marquis of Buckingham, for example, for suffragan bishops. A letter to the moderately Evangelical *Christian Observer* of 1805 attributed the rise in Dissenting numbers to the success of extemporary preaching and asked plaintively why the Church of England clergy apparently could not compete:

⁴² George Pretymen, *A charge delivered to the clergy of the diocese of Lincoln, at the triennial visitation of that diocese in June and July 1800* (London, 1800), 18-19.

⁴³ Notably in his *Refutation of Calvinism* (Oxford, 1811).

⁴⁴ Peter Benedict Nockles, 'The waning of Protestant unity and waxing of Anti-Catholicism? Archdeacon Daubeney and the reconstruction of "Anglican" identity in the later Georgian Church', in *Religious identities in Britain, 1660-1832*, ed. William Gibson and Robert G. Ingram (Aldershot and Burlington, VT, 2005), 194-202, 222-23.

⁴⁵ Charles Daubeney, *A vindication of the character of the pious and learned Bishop Bull* (London, 1827), 33.

While every illiterate declaimer can mount into a Dissenting pulpit and deliver his harangue, it is no credit, either to our zeal, our learning, our piety, or our talents, to confess that the majority among ourselves are unable to preach extempore It is the duty of every minister seriously to enquire whether he may not, by following this mode of preaching, increase his influence, and thus be an instrument of rendering the Church more prosperous.⁴⁶

In addition to renewed calls for church reform, these anxieties led, in the words of Michael Watts, to 'a swelling chorus of Anglican clerics demanding restrictions on Dissenters' freedom to preach'.⁴⁷ William Cleaver, bishop of Chester, writing to Lord Grenville in November 1799, demanded 'the subjecting by Act of Parliament all *tolerated* teachers or ministers, upon the number of which there is not any restraint by law, to those restrictions to which the Established clergy are now by law actually subjected'. They should 'bring a certificate of their moral lives, to certify what doctrines they profess to teach', and 'be confined in their function to *certain* districts, and in buildings *distinct*, and appropriated to divine worship only'. He added,

At present they hurt the community by immoral lives, by indefinite doctrines, by itinerant functions, and in *secret* conventicles, in buildings not separated from dwelling houses. Their congregations are indefinite, they often have *none*, when they begin to profess dissent.⁴⁸

The key words here are '*secret* conventicles', with their insinuation of stealth, conspiracy and disloyalty; for it was under the Conventicle Act of 1670 that much of the prosecution, or threat of prosecution, for the use of unlicensed buildings for Dissenting worship, was conducted. Samuel Horsley, bishop of Rochester, execrated such preaching as a cunning Jacobinal evasion of the Sedition and Treasonable Practices Acts of

⁴⁶ *Christian Observer*, IV (1805), 592-93.

⁴⁷ Michael Watts, *The Dissenters. Volume II: The expansion of evangelical nonconformity* (Oxford, 1995), 368.

⁴⁸ *Historical Manuscripts Commission: Fortescue MSS*, VI, 20 (William Cleaver to Lord Grenville, 13 Nov. 1799).

1795.⁴⁹ The *Anti-Jacobin Review* made similar complaints.⁵⁰ In 1800, Michael Angelo Taylor, MP for Durham City, prepared a bill to curtail the granting of licences under the Toleration Act for Dissenting preachers; Wilberforce claimed to have dissuaded Pitt from encouraging such a curtailment, for which Bishop Pretyman as well as Cleaver had pressed.⁵¹ And even Wilberforce was prepared to concede one point – that no one should be allowed to exercise the office of teacher or preacher without having received a testimonial from the sect to which he belonged;⁵² he quoted William Jay, Dissenting minister at Bath, as a witness to ‘a number of raw, ignorant lads going out on preaching parties every Sunday’.⁵³ Many Anglican Evangelicals were thoroughly alarmed by the imputation of Methodism to their beliefs or works.

As a result of these two contextual factors, many Church of England clergy believed that Dissent as a whole at the turn of the century was a far more disturbing phenomenon from that which had pertained in the age of Isaac Watts and Philip Doddridge. In each case there was the perception of an immediate threat – to Trinitarian orthodoxy, to morality and to obligation on the one hand, to the authority and pastoral leadership of the clergy on the other. Admittedly, these two perceived enemies of the Church were hardly likely to join forces. There was a curious irony in that ‘unlettered’ preachers (some of them, according to a disapproving Richard Price, ‘in the way of the Methodists’)⁵⁴ who had petitioned against reform of the system of subscription in 1773 lest such reform open the Dissenting ministry to heterodoxy. On returning from a visit to York in September 1798, Theophilus Lindsey attributed the disappointingly thin attendance at the St Saviourgate Unitarian chapel to ‘the prevalence

⁴⁹ Samuel Horsley, *Charge to the clergy of the diocese of Rochester ... 1800*, 19-20.

⁵⁰ For example, *Anti-Jacobin Review*, III, 319-22, 359; IV, 345-9, 352-63.

⁵¹ Robert Isaac and Samuel Wilberforce, *The life of William Wilberforce. By his sons* (5 vols, London, 1838), II, 361-2. For the provisions of Taylor’s intended bill, see BL Add. MS 59307, ff 47-52 and *Monthly Repository*, IX (1814), 165. For the background, see Watts, *Expansion of evangelical nonconformity*, 369-70.

⁵² *Life of William Wilberforce*, II, 361.

⁵³ William Jay (1769-1853) was minister to the Argyle Independent chapel at Bath from 1791 to 1853.

⁵⁴ *The correspondence of Richard Price*, ed. W Bernard Peach and D O Thomas (3 vols., Durham, NC, and Cardiff, 1983-94), I, 159.

of M^r Wilberforces methodism in several of the churches and the prejudices against Dissenters in general and those that are liberal in particular'.⁵⁵ But in both instances, the Church aligned its own interests with what Paley had called the 'public safety' – a concept increasingly identified with morality, 'decency' (Paley's term), subordination and the reassertion of clerical authority.

IV

One might raise, however, the conjecture that two considerations perhaps mitigated the hostility to Dissenters which has been the theme of this paper. Were there new opportunities for co-operation, as well as hostility, between Church and Dissent? Here are two possibilities.

By the 1790s it was no longer plausible to conceive of Dissenters as allies of the Church of England in a common Protestant front against the external and internal threat of Popery. There were two principal reasons for this development. Firstly, the dramatic decline of an external Catholic threat was underlined by the spoliation of the Gallican Church in the early 1790s and the French assault on the papacy itself at the end of the decade. Secondly, in Britain itself, there was a revival of the traditional Dissenting anxiety over 'Anglican popery'.⁵⁶ In this application of the term, 'Popery' signified ecclesiastical authoritarianism and repression of non-established religious worship, as well as a body of doctrine. As James E Bradley has shown, much anti-Catholic rhetoric from the spokesmen of Dissent operated as a more or less coded anti-Anglicanism, with attacks on the principle of an established Church and an insistence upon the need for a complete separation of religion from the temporal power.⁵⁷ Michaijah reiterated in the various editions of *A dissent from the Church of England fully justified* that the bishops and clergy of the Church of England had

⁵⁵ Dr. Williams's Library, MS 12.57 (13), Lindsey to Thomas Belsham, 10 Sept. 1798. Lindsey added that 'the no small spread of the disciples of M^r Paine and Godwin' were also contributory factors.

⁵⁶ Among many examples, see John Disney, *A dialogue between a clergyman of the Church of England and a lay-gentleman* (London, 1792), especially 22-24.

⁵⁷ James E Bradley, 'Anti-Catholicism as Anglican Anticlericalism: Nonconformity and the ideological origins of radical disaffection', in *Anticlericalism in Britain c.1500-1914*, ed. Nigel Aston & Matthew Cragoe (Stroud, 2000), 67-92.

‘strenuously opposed the Reformation from Popery’ and that ‘Popery [was] not to be encountered or refuted but upon the *Principles* of Protestant Dissent’.⁵⁸ The implication was that the Church of England’s hierarchy could not be trusted with the preservation of the Protestant religion in all its purity.

One might ask, however, whether this aspiration towards an underlying unity could have been re-created in an alliance in humanitarian and philanthropic causes? From the 1780s, if not earlier, the slave trade roused far more nation-wide revulsion than the Pope or the Pretender. After all, the Unitarian MP William Smith worked closely with the members of the Evangelical Clapham Sect in the abolitionist campaign, and D C Stange even suggested that Unitarians’ support for antislavery in the early nineteenth century helped to moderate prejudice against them – ‘the solvent of heresy’s stain’.⁵⁹ Dissenters took the lead in prison reform; moving the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts on 28 March 1787 Henry Beaufoy shrewdly invoked the international reputation of John Howard, ‘whom the proudest nation would be happy to call her own’, to point out that Howard as a Dissenter could fall foul of the penalties of the test law on the word of any ‘desperate informer’ since he had not met their requirements when nominated as high sheriff of Bedfordshire.⁶⁰ There is some evidence of collaboration in moves for the reformation of manners.⁶¹ Helen Plant, in her Borthwick paper on the philanthropic efforts of Catharine Cappe at York, has identified ‘a powerful influence across the denominations of evangelical teaching which stressed the performance of good works as the mark of a true Christian’.⁶² By 1788 Manchester’s inter-denominational Sunday school was teaching more than 5,000 pupils; and there were inter-denominational, as well as

⁵⁸ Towgood, *Dissent from the Church of England*, x, 141.

⁵⁹ D C Stange, *British Unitarians against American slavery, 1833-65* (London and Toronto, 1984), ch. 1.

⁶⁰ Cobbett, *Parl. Hist.*, XXVI, 810.

⁶¹ Joanna Innes, ‘Politics and morals. The reformation of manners in later eighteenth-century England’, in *The transformation of political culture. England and Germany in the late eighteenth century*, E Hellmuth ed., (Oxford, 1990), 80-84.

⁶² Helen Plant, *Unitarianism, philanthropy and feminism in York, 1782-1821: the career of Catharine Cappe* (Borthwick paper, no. 113, York, 2003), 19-20.

denominational, missionary societies. But I have suggested elsewhere that even among Dissenters, philanthropic enterprise was as much a function of a sharpening denominationalism, as of a proto-ecumenicalism – particularly between Rational Dissent and its evangelical counterparts.⁶³ And while anti-slavery and prison reform involved collaboration between Church men and women and Dissenters, the point cannot be taken too far. Granville Sharp, than whom few did more to raise public awareness of the slave trade, was withering in his denunciation of Socinianism, while the controversy over Wilberforce's *Practical view* in 1797 reinforced rather than soothed differences between the Church of England and those outside it. And Dr Plant's researches for York indicate far more philanthropic co-operation between the Dissenting denominations than between Dissenters and the established church.

A second suggestion is that as the pressures of war and the expansion of empire drew a vastly expanded personnel into military and naval, colonial and revenue, service and administration, and as the state made unprecedented demands upon the nation's manpower, and as the country was threatened by invasion – the argument was raised that the state should not deprive itself of the services of some of its best-educated and talented citizens. Paley had accepted that in principle public service should be open to all sects of Christians, making the exception only for the exclusion of Quakers from the armed forces.⁶⁴ This consideration applied more powerfully when, despite the involvement of many Dissenters in moves for peace, and despite the hero-worship which others, such as William Hazlitt, accorded to Napoleon, many other Dissenters who had welcomed the early stages of the French Revolution now inveighed against Napoleon as a tyrant, and deployed patriotic arguments to urge that his expansionist ambitions must be resisted. In his sermon *The Situation*, preached at Hackney in 1803, Thomas Belsham proclaimed:

⁶³ See G M Ditchfield, 'English Rational Dissent and philanthropy, c.1760-c.1810', in *Charity, philanthropy and reform. From the 1690s to 1850*, Hugh Cunningham & Joanna Innes ed. (Basingstoke and London, 1998), 193-207.

⁶⁴ Paley, *Works*, II, 54-5.

Britons are apprised that the constitution of their government, under which the nation has risen to such an unparalleled height of prosperity and glory, is worth supporting and defending at every hazard Those, perhaps mistaken, friends of liberty, whom the frantic malignity of a ruling party branded with the unmeaning but odious epithet of Jacobins, joining with those who were once their most virulent enemies, and who gloried in the opposite distinction, we see Whig and Tory, Churchman and Dissenter, Protestant and Catholic, Peer and Commoner, Rich and Poor, all joining hand and heart, agreeing to forget all invidious distinctions, and to bury all former animosities, and uniting in a firm invincible phalanx to save the country.⁶⁵

Belsham of course had a tactical purpose. Writing to his friend Benjamin Hobhouse MP, who had just taken an office at the Board of Control in the Addington ministry, he proposed that Hobhouse take up with 'your friend the Premier' the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, pointing out that 'The zeal of the Dissenters upon the present occasion has been, and is, very great'.⁶⁶ Christopher Wyvill, still in Anglican orders, used this argument in his campaigns for 'universal toleration', between 1806 and 1817, claiming that the removal of all penal legislation in religion would strengthen national unity (and augment manpower) at a time of serious external threats.⁶⁷ Samuel Heywood similarly appealed to the principle of 'universal toleration' when assuring Charles Grey of the support of most Dissenters for the (abortive) pro-Catholic Militia Bill introduced by the 'Talents' administration in 1807.⁶⁸ However, one cannot pretend that this was a representative attitude among the Anglican clergy. The Talents ministry fell upon this very issue in 1807, and there remained a substantial gap between legal toleration and anything approaching full civil equality. Not for nothing did Micaiah Towgood's *A dissent from the*

⁶⁵ Thomas Belsham, *The situation, the prospects, and the duties of Britons, in the present crisis of alarm and danger* (London, 1803), 9, 11.

⁶⁶ John Williams, *Memoirs of Thomas Belsham*, 521-2.

⁶⁷ Christopher Wyvill, *Papers on toleration* (3rd edn., London, 1810), 156-66.

⁶⁸ G M Ditchfield, 'A Unitarian view of English Dissent in 1807', *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society*, XVIII, no. 2 (Apr. 1784), 1-16.

Church of England fully justified reach a ninth edition in 1808, a twelfth edition in 1811, and a fifteenth in 1816.

V

In the short term, then, these two mitigating factors, especially the second, did little to mitigate the increasingly negative Anglican depiction of Dissenters in the French Revolutionary period. However, it should always be remembered that even with the legal suppression of the radical societies in the late 1790s, the legal position of Dissenters themselves was not narrowed. Under any repressive regime it is always necessary to make allowances for self-censorship. But self-censorship is precisely what did not happen to heterodox theology in the 1790s, with the explicit formulation of Socinian doctrine on the part of the Unitarian society in 1791 and its regional offshoots later in the decade. For all Burke's denunciation of the Society in 1792, it was not one of the societies suppressed by Act of Parliament in 1799. Nor is there much evidence of self-censorship among the preachers of Calvinist Dissent or New Connexion Methodism – either in their doctrines or their methods of propagating those doctrines. Local examples of persecution and harassment do not amount to changes in government policy; hardly any Dissenters – even Gilbert Wakefield, Joseph Johnson and Benjamin Flower – were prosecuted on the specific grounds of religious doctrine. Michael Angelo Taylor's bill – and Taylor was a Foxite Whig, not a Pittite – never even got off the ground and Lord Sidmouth's bill of 1811 came nowhere near to success. Pitt's defence of the Church was pragmatic and utilitarian, not ideological, and still less the result of doctrinal conviction, or a Burkean sense of an organic unity of church and state.⁶⁹ Pitt, moreover, was prepared to risk a breach with his principal church adviser, the vehemently anti-Catholic George Pretyman, when bringing forward

⁶⁹ As I have argued in 'Ecclesiastical legislation during the ministry of the Younger Pitt, 1783-1801', in *Parliament and the Church 1529-1960*, ed. J P Parry and Stephen Taylor (Edinburgh, 2000), 64-80.

Catholic Emancipation in 1800-01. The Five Mile and Conventicle Acts, the latter measure the main source of irritation and harassment of Dissenters at local level, were both repealed in 1812. Far from persuading successive ministries to narrow the legal limits of toleration, the Church of England took on even more the character of a voluntary society – albeit a highly privileged one - and while frequently adopting a very critical attitude towards Dissenters, it found – not for the first or last time – that there was advantage to be obtained from emulating them.

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PRICE'S ON PATRIOTISM AND UNIVERSAL BENEVOLENCE

Rémy Duthille

A Discourse on the Love of Our Country is the title of a slightly edited version of the sermon Richard Price preached to the Revolution Society in the Old Jewry Chapel on 4 November 1789, to commemorate the Glorious Revolution. The sermon, based on 7 verses of Psalm 122, is divided into two parts. The first, which expounds the nature of the 'love of our country' and the duties attached to it, is often overlooked by historians, who concentrate on passages of the second, shorter, part, which provides an interpretation of the meaning and significance of the Glorious Revolution, moves on to a comparison with the French Revolution and ends with an impassioned peroration that foretells the downfall of despotic governments and the triumph of peace and liberty throughout the world. Price's *Discourse* is usually considered as the earliest British pamphlet on the French Revolution. The last part of the sermon has thus attained the status of a classic and the peroration, a purple passage of oratory, has been republished in many anthologies. Focusing on those passages, and understandably so, historians have paid much less attention to Price's arguments on universal benevolence and the foundation of true patriotism which are prominent in the first half of the sermon.

Price's theory of patriotism in the *Discourse* has been discussed, however, in the context of celebrations of the Glorious Revolution; Price himself drew attention to this link arguing that 'the nature, foundation, and proper use of [love of country]' were 'a subject particularly suitable' to a 4 November service.¹ Indeed, this official day of commemoration was a natural occasion for discussing the Hanoverian polity and delineating the rights and duties of the subject; thus the numerous sermons preached on 4 November throughout the eighteenth century provide a rich context to understand the originality of Price's contribution.²

¹ R Price, 'A discourse on the love of our country' (1789), in D O Thomas ed., *Price: political writings* (Cambridge, 1991), 177.

² M Fitzpatrick, 'Patriots and patriotisms: Richard Price and the early reception of the French Revolution in England', *Nations and nationalisms: France, Britain, Ireland and the eighteenth-century context*, ed. M O'Dea & K Whelan (Oxford, 1995), 211-230; R Duthille, 'Célébrer 1688 après 1789 : le discours de la *Revolution Society* et sa réception en France et en Angleterre', *Lumières et histoire / Enlightenment and history*, ed. T Coignard, P Davis & A C Montoya (Paris, 2010), 245-62. On 4 November

Martin Fitzpatrick has studied Price's theory of patriotism from yet another angle, locating it within the wider context of enlightenment attitudes towards patriotism and cosmopolitanism, and hinting at links between Price's *Discourse* and his earlier treatise of moral philosophy, *A Review on the Principal Questions and Difficulties in Morals*.³ By breaking from the immediate context of 1789, and the celebrations of the Glorious Revolution, this approach can bring out the philosophical core of Price's thesis.

The present article will pursue that line of inquiry: rather than interpreting Price's *Discourse* as the first episode of the French Revolution debate in Britain, it proposes to treat it as a contribution to a debate already established in Britain concerning the respective value of 'love of country' and universal benevolence, and on the compatibility of patriotism and Christian ethics. Evan Radcliffe has retraced the evolution of those philosophical debates from Shaftesbury to Jonathan Edwards, Joseph Butler, Francis Hutcheson, David Hume, Lord Kames, Richard Price and William Godwin, and explained how they foreshadowed divisions in the 1790s. Radcliffe's account, however, focuses on Godwin at the expense of Price, and leaves the impression that the issue of patriotism and benevolence had never been politicized before the French Revolution.⁴ This article's contention is that, not only are those philosophical debates relevant to understand Price's position, but they already fuelled political discussion during the American War. Far from being confined to a few divines or moral philosophers, they spilled over into pamphlets, and were discussed in the pulpit and in debating societies, and as such provide a background to Price's argument in the *Discourse*.

celebrations up to the 1788, see K Wilson, 'Inventing revolution: 1688 and eighteenth-century popular politics', *Journal of British Studies*, 28 (1989), 349-86.

³ M Fitzpatrick, 'The patriotism of a *philosophe*: the case of Richard Price', *Richard Price and the Atlantic Revolution*, ed. C Williams (Cardiff, 1991), 36-57. First published in 1758, Price's *Review* was updated in 1769 and 1787. The edition used here is: R Price, *A review of the principal questions and difficulties in morals...* (London, 1758).

⁴ E Radcliffe, 'Revolutionary writing, moral philosophy, and universal benevolence in the eighteenth century', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 54 (1993), 221-40.

Love of country and universal benevolence in Price's *Discourse on the love of our country*

Price's *Discourse* offers a defence of universal benevolence; and the choice of the sermon form and the nature of the discussion suggest that the *Discourse* must be placed in two discursive contexts: that of moral philosophy and that of sermons dealing with patriotism and benevolence.

As Radcliffe, and more recently, Fonna Forman Barzilai,⁵ have shown, the topic was central to discussions of moral philosophy, and major British thinkers have examined the subject, from Shaftesbury to Hutcheson, Hume, Smith, Kames and Godwin. Sermons were the other genre addressing those questions. From 1700 to 1800, indeed, 70 published books had titles containing the phrase 'love of country' (or very close variants), and of those no fewer than 54 were sermons,⁶ a very high proportion that suggests the sermon was a potent vehicle for discussing patriotism, especially given the immense number of sermons that went unpublished and unrecorded. The sermon form of the *Discourse* was therefore appropriate to engage in debates over the biblical injunction of loving one's neighbour. Price's choice of sermon text is traditional, as Psalm 122 is a prayer for the peace and prosperity of Jerusalem, and expresses the psalmist's love of his country. Psalm 122 seems to have been a frequent choice for sermons on charity, benevolence and patriotism in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England,⁷ and D O Thomas drew parallels between Price's conception of 'true love of country' and that expounded in a friend of his, William Adams, in a sermon 'on the love of our country' based on Psalm 122 as well. Thomas's suggestion that Price's *Discourse* might be a homage to Adams, who was lately deceased,⁸ is an invitation to compare Price's *Discourse* with other sermons on the same topic.

⁵ F F Barzilai, *Adam Smith and the circles of sympathy* (Cambridge, 2010).

⁶ The figure is based on the *English Short Title Catalogue (ESTC)*, available online at: <http://estc.bl.uk>. This indicator, however, is very partial, leaving out numerous articles in the press discussing those issues for example.

⁷ *ESTC* shows that before Price, 5 other clergymen had chosen Psalm 122 for a sermon on love of country; conversely, 6 out of 52 sermons preached on Psalm 122 bore the words 'love of country' in their titles.

⁸ D O Thomas, *The honest mind: the thought and work of Richard Price* (Oxford, 1977), 297.

The discussion can start with Price's definition of 'country', which will account for his distinction between true and 'spurious' patriotism, and his defence of universal benevolence:

First, That by our country is meant, in this case, not the soil, or the spot of earth on which we happen to have been born; not the forests and fields, but that community of which we are members; or that body of companions and friends and kindred who are associated with us under the same constitution of government, protected by the same laws, and bound together by the same civil polity.⁹

Price gives an inclusive and primarily political definition of 'country', as can be seen from comparisons with conservative or High-church Anglican sermons that limited the concept within the boundaries of the established church and defined the defence of Jerusalem as the defence of the Church of England against schisms. Price's definition paves the way for his plea for religious liberty and is in keeping with his political philosophy as expounded in the *Observations on the nature of civil liberty* in 1776.¹⁰

This definition of country echoes that given by Shaftesbury, who argued, in *Characteristics*, that love of country was not 'a Relation of mere Clay and Dust' but a relation that 'must imply something moral and social and presupposes a naturally civil and political state of mankind'.¹¹ Price, however, departs from Shaftesbury's civic humanistic insistence on landed property and contends that men engaged in trade can express their love of their country in a very specific way, by shielding it from bankruptcy, giving a rather literal interpretation of one of the verses of Psalm 122: 'They shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces.'¹² Price therefore assigns a patriotic duty to the merchants and tradesmen who formed a sizeable proportion of the Revolution Society. Interestingly, Price abandoned the notion that private interest should be sacrificed to the public good, arguing on the contrary that both may be reconciled.

⁹ 'A discourse on the love of our country' (1789), in D O Thomas ed., *Price: political writings* (Cambridge, 1991), 178.

¹⁰ Thomas, *The honest mind*, 298.

¹¹ Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks of men, manners, opinions, times*, ed. D den Uyl (1711; Indianapolis, 2001), vol.3, 89.

¹² *Price: political writings*, 195.

Price's defence of universal benevolence has a double foundation, religious and moral. It is based on the injunction to love our enemies and illustrated by the parable of the Good Samaritan, which Price interprets as an exhortation to practice 'universal benevolence', a phrase he equates with charity.¹³ In terms of moral philosophy, the superiority of universal benevolence over patriotism is a consequence of the principle that reason should prevail over inferior passions or instincts. Price's contention that patriotic feeling, though 'a noble passion', must be purified and ruled by reason, directly derives from his rationalist-intuitionist ethics. In his *Review on the principal questions and difficulties in morals*, Price argued that moral judgment is a perception of truth, not an act of the will or a manifestation of any moral sense. He insisted that knowledge is a precondition for the exercise of a true, informed moral judgment. It is therefore natural that Price, in the *Discourse*, should lay stress on reason and education, exhort his audience to scrutinize, 'correct and purify' their country, and engage them to 'enlighten' and 'liberalize' it, so that love of country should be directed to a worthwhile object.¹⁴

In the *Review*, however, Price did not discuss patriotism as such, except, as Martin Fitzpatrick pointed out, for a footnote in which Price agrees with Cicero that 'there are some acts so foul, that a good man would not do them to save his country.'¹⁵ The recurrence of phrases enumerating what man owes to kindred, friends, neighbours, country and fellow-creatures in general suggest that Price did not conceive of patriotism as a specific kind of duty, different in nature from others. It is, therefore, not the *Review*, but the *Discourse* which spells out Price's position on patriotism.

¹³ 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' (Price: *political writings*, 180). Price quotes from the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke, 10:27). In another sermon he conflates love, charity and benevolence (R Price, *Sermons on various subjects* [London, 1816], 31). In this Price is very close to Joseph Butler: J Butler, Sermon XII 'Upon the love of our neighbour', Rom. xiii.9, *Fifteen sermons preached at the Rolls Chapel upon the following subjects...* (London, 1726), 228.

¹⁴ Price: *political writings*, 179.

¹⁵ Fitzpatrick, 'The patriotism of a *philosophe*', *Richard Price and the Atlantic Revolution*, 48-49, and p.57 note 57. See phrases such as 'the prosperity of your nearest kindred, your friends, or your country'; 'to promote the happiness of his fellow-creatures, or to serve his neighbours or his country'; 'his relations, friends, neighbours, country and species' in Price: *political writings*, 128, 214, 265.

In the *Discourse*, Price distinguishes between ‘the love of our country and that spirit of rivalship and ambition which has been common among nations’.¹⁶ Far from rejecting patriotism, he offers a plea for a rightly understood love of country. The ‘spurious’ kind of patriotism, amounting to a ‘love of domination, a desire for conquest, and a thirst for grandeur and glory’ is condemned on the grounds of its passionate, irrational nature, whereas universal benevolence proceeds from a rational perception. ‘Spurious’ patriotism is therefore an extreme, collective, instance of a common source of errors in morals, whereby, in D O Thomas’s paraphrase of a passage from the *Review*, ‘our judgment may be darkened by passion and perverted by our concern for our own interest’.¹⁷ Price associates ‘spurious’ patriotism to warfare, and more generally, discord; he has a tendency, in the *Discourse* and elsewhere,¹⁸ to call this degraded form ‘patriotism’, and to reserve the phrase ‘love of country’ for the true sentiment he wishes to inculcate. It is a telling sign of Price’s dislike of party strife, and of the pejorative overtones of the word ‘patriot’, a term of abuse that was hurled at Price and his friends; Price’s sermon contained a pointed attack on Charles James Fox’s immorality, which appears to have been toned down in the published version.¹⁹ Price is concerned to establish that virtuous love of country proceeds from knowledge and the cultivation of reason, and his distinction between true and spurious love of country is reminiscent of his distinction of two kinds of benevolence drawn in chapter 8 of the *Review*. Rational benevolence, which ‘entirely coincides with rectitude’ and is therefore a source of virtue, is opposed to ‘instinctive benevolence’, which is ‘no principle of virtue’. Price goes further and asserts that any amount of instinct or passion in the motives for a virtuous action detracts from the moral worth of that action. Thus, the fondness of parents for their offspring has little value, derived as it is from mere instinct, and ‘actions proceeding from universal, calm, dispassionate benevolence, are, by all esteemed more virtuous and amiable’ than actions benefiting those nearest us and motivated by instinct or urgency, even if the latter produce

¹⁶ Price: *political writings*, 178-179.

¹⁷ Thomas, *The honest mind*, 64.

¹⁸ Price: *political writings*, 100.

¹⁹ Price: *political writings*, 193, and note ‘r’; on patriotism as a badge of the opposition throughout the eighteenth century, see Cunningham, ‘The language of patriotism’.

‘equal or greater moments of good’.²⁰ This devaluation of parental love is more discreet, yet present in the *Discourse*. Here, Price does affirm that we owe our first duties to kin and friends, but criticizes any preference for our family, kindred, neighbours or countrymen as a ‘delusion’, an unjustified ‘fondness’, ‘a partial affection’ that ‘blinds the understanding’.²¹ Here as in other writings, including the *Review*, Price is reluctant to ascribe any positive function to instinct, or passions, and always present them as weaknesses of human nature and as obstacles to moral judgment.²²

Price’s treatment of love of country in the *Discourse* thus contributes to debates on universal benevolence and partial affections originating with Shaftesbury in Britain and looking back to the Stoic concept of *oikeiosis*, the natural affection for those close to us, which constitutes a ‘foundation in nature for an objective ordering of preferences’.²³ Price acknowledges that ‘our affections are more drawn to some among mankind than to others, in proportion to their degree of nearness to us’, and asserts that ‘according to the order of nature’, an agent’s benevolence should begin with himself, and then reach out to ‘our families, and benefactors, and friends; and after them, our country’, and finally ‘mankind at large’. In this Price agrees with Shaftesbury, Hutcheson and Smith but differs sharply from them in refusing to assign a moral value to sympathy, or our propensity to love those closest to us:

We can do little for the interest of mankind at large. To this interest, however, all other interests are subordinate. The noblest principle in our nature is the regard to general justice, and that good-will which embraces all the world. I have already observed this,; but it cannot be too often repeated. Though our immediate attention must be employed in promoting our own interest and that of our nearest connexions, yet we must remember, that a narrower interest ought always to give way to a more extensive interest. In pursuing particularly the interest of our country, we ought to carry our views beyond it. We should love it ardently,

²⁰ Price, *Review*, 332, 333, 334.

²¹ Price: *political writings*, 178.

²² See Isabel Rivers’s interpretation of ch.8 of Price’s *Review* in *Reason, grace, and sentiment: a study of the language of religion and ethics in England, 1660-1780* (2 vols., Cambridge, 1991 & 2000), vol.2, 229.

²³ R Bett, ‘Stoic Ethics’, *A companion to ancient philosophy*, ed. Mary Louise Gill & Pierre Pellegrin (Malden, MA, 2006), 536-7.

but not exclusively. We ought to seek its good, by all the means that our different circumstances and abilities will allow, but, at the same time, we ought to consider ourselves as citizens of the world, and take care to maintain a just regard to the rights of other countries.²⁴

The British moral philosophers, and the Stoics before them, illustrated *oikeiosis* by the image of man at the center of a number of concentric circles of affinity, an image which was popularized in literary works such as Pope's *Essay on Man*. This image is absent from Price's text yet informs it. Price's position that 'a narrower interest ought always to give way to a more extensive interest', was that adopted by Greek Stoic philosopher Hierocles, who contended that the interests of a smaller circle should be subordinate to those of a larger one.²⁵

There was no agreement on the question of how far benevolence should be carried, and especially whether it should stop within the limits of the nation or extend to the whole of mankind.²⁶ In the spectrum of opinions on the topic, Price's position is extreme. Hutcheson argued that universal benevolence could motivate human action, if strengthened by other impulses, and Jonathan Edwards even maintained that virtue resided in universal benevolence. Other philosophers, though, insisted on the limitations of human agency. While Hume was on the opposite extreme, going as far as denying the existence of universal benevolence, Joseph Butler and Adam Smith considered that universal benevolence was too weak a motive to have any practical effect. Adam Smith's chapter on 'universal benevolence' in the *Theory of moral sentiments* (Part VI, Section II, ch.3) provides a good example of a praise of universal benevolence accompanied by a denial of its validity as a source of moral action:

Though our effectual good offices can very seldom be extended to any wider society than that of our own country ; our good-will is circumscribed by no boundary, but may embrace the immensity of the universe. [...]

²⁴ Price: *political writings*, 180-181.

²⁵ M Fitzpatrick, 'Patriots and patriotisms : Richard Price and the early reception of the French Revolution in England', *Nations and nationalisms*, 224.

²⁶ Radcliffe, 'Revolutionary writing, moral philosophy, and universal benevolence in the eighteenth century', 223-7.

The administration of the great system of the universe, however, the care of the universal happiness of all rational and sensible beings, is the business of God and not of man. To man is allotted a much humbler department, but one much more suitable to the weakness of his powers, and to the narrowness of his comprehension; the care of his own happiness, of that of his family, his friends, his country [...]. The most sublime speculation of the contemplative philosopher can scarce compensate the neglect of the smallest active duty.²⁷

Smith pointed out the limitations of human agency; as the real scope of human action was confined to family, neighbours and country, love of country was the highest motive of exertion. Smith recognized the natural force of *oikeiosis*, but unlike Price, he did not accept the Stoic argument that man should resist this natural affection and adopted an anti-cosmopolitan stance.²⁸ Whereas Price praised universal benevolence as a normative ideal and a rule for action, in Smith's theory it became the unintended consequence of individual actions and ultimately an effect of God's providence.

The first pages of Price's *Discourse* may therefore be read as a contribution to a longstanding debate in British moral philosophy around the value of local affections and universal benevolence. But the importance of the debate did not rest so much in the intellectual argument *per se* perhaps, as in its practical implications. As is well known, Burke was quick to grasp that Price's emphasis on universal benevolence opened the door to radical, even revolutionary change, since Price welcomed the French Revolution as a triumph of liberty that would contribute to 'enlighten' Britain and other countries and bring down despots throughout the world. In *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), Burke countered this perceived threat by asserting the primacy of family ties and local and national attachments:

To be attached to the subdivision, to love the little platoon we belong to in society, is the first principle (the first germ as it were) of public affections. It is the first link in the series by

²⁷ A Smith, *The theory of moral sentiments*, ed. D D Raphael & A L Macfie (1759, Oxford, 1991), 235, 237.

²⁸ Barzilai, *Adam Smith and the circles of sympathy*, 8.

which we proceed towards a love to our country and to mankind.²⁹

It is well established in the 1790s ‘universal benevolence’ became a political catchword signaling adhesion to the principles of the French Revolution, and radicals and loyalists fought to control the definitions of universalism and the contours of patriotism.³⁰

This was not, however, the first time that love of country and universal benevolence had become politicized. While ‘patriotism’ had long been controversial, serving as a standard for the opposition as early as the 1730s, it is the American War that prompted debates around universal benevolence, and more specifically around the compatibility of patriotism with the Christian ethics of benevolence. Those debates surrounding the American War foreshadowed some of the positions adopted in the *Discourse* and expanded or contested in the 1790s.

The debate on patriotism and universal benevolence during the American War

Many of Price’s contentions in the *Discourse* were already present in his 1776 *Observations on the nature of civil liberty*. His political theory, founded on contract, popular sovereignty and allowing for the right of resistance, is recognizably the same. Several flights of oratory in the *Discourse*, denouncing the ravages of war and spurious patriotism, echo passages from the *Observations*.³¹

Price’s argument, in the *Discourse*, on the need to ‘purify’ and rationalize love of country, retrospectively justifies his attitude in 1776. In the *Observations*, he exhorted his fellow-countrymen to a soul-

²⁹ L G Mitchell & W B Todd, ed., *The writings and speeches of Edmund Burke. Volume VIII. The French Revolution 1790-1794* (Oxford, 1989), 97-8.

³⁰ Apart from Radcliffe’s article, see H Cunningham, ‘The language of patriotism’, and L Colley, ‘Radical patriotism in eighteenth-century Britain’, *The making and unmaking of British national identity. Volume I: History and politics*, ed. R Samuel (London, 1989), 57-90, 169-87 respectively, and more recently, M Rapport, “‘Deux nations malheureusement rivales’: les Français en Grande-Bretagne, les Britanniques en France, et la construction des identités nationales pendant la Révolution française”, *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, 342 (2005), 2-46. On the continuation of the kind of patriotism inculcated by Price, see J E Cookson, *The friends of peace: anti-war liberalism in England 1793-1815* (Cambridge, 1982).

³¹ Price: *political writings*, 178-79; compare with attacks on the pretended ‘right of conquest’, the ‘spirit of domination’ and ambition in *Observations*; Price: *political writings*, 33, 47-48.

searching examination of the grounds of the war in America. That war was certainly a turning point in Price's position on patriotism: in 1759, in a thanksgiving sermon, aptly entitled *Britain's happiness, and the proper improvement of it*, Price did not feel the need to urge his audience to restrain their patriotic enthusiasm, in part because he thought the Seven Years' War was a just war. Price's proposition, in the *Discourse*, that we should not promote the interests of our own country at the expense of those of another political community, underpins much of his defence of the colonists in the 1776 *Observations*. Price had drawn a practical consequence: the proposition that a senate should arbitrate disputes between European powers to avoid any recourse to war.³²

Rejection of cosmopolitanism formed a basis for attacks on Price, who was repeatedly accused of betraying his country. At times defenders of the government resorted to a famous passage from Cicero's *De Officiis* stating that, of all the bonds of union connecting man to family, friends and countrymen, none is stronger than patriotic feeling: 'Parents are dear; dear are children, relatives, friends; but one native land embraces all our loves; and who that is true would hesitate to give his life for her, if by his death he could render her a service?'³³ The exaltation to die for one's country came in handy for the defenders of the war, but, more profoundly, some critics, such as Thomas Blacklock, used Cicero's hierarchy of duties to emphasize that 'local prepossessions, indeed, are far from being useless; they are the original hints of nature to awaken our tenderness'. The argument served to brand Price's theory as unnatural, and Price himself, as a traitor to his country.³⁴

Government supporters praised true 'love of country' while castigating treacherous 'patriotism'. Among them, Soame Jenyns, a placeman who supported the American War and attacked parliamentary reform, sparked

³² *Observations on the nature of civil liberty* (1776), sect. 2, in Price: *political writings*, 24-25. *Britain's happiness...* is reprinted in Price: *political writings*, 1-13.

³³ Cicero, *De officiis*, I, XVII, 57 (London; Cambridge, MA, 1913), 60-61.

³⁴ T Blacklock, *Remarks on the nature and extent of liberty, as compatible with the genius of civil societies; on the principles of government and the proper limits of its powers in free states; and, on the justice and policy of the American War. Occasioned by perusing the observations of Dr. Price on these subjects. In a letter to a friend* (Edinburgh; London, 1776), 15. Cicero's text is quoted in the epigraph of J Prince, *True Christian patriotism...* (London, 1781); see also e.g. R Markham, *The wisdom of appointing and supporting the civil magistrate: in a sermon preached at the Chapel Royal, St James's, on Sunday, June 25, 1780* (London, 1780), 12.

off a controversy in 1776 with his successful treatise *A view of the internal evidence of the Christian religion*. Jenyns argued that patriotism was no genuine moral value since ‘it not only falls short of, but directly counteracts the extensive Benevolence of’ Christianity.³⁵ Jenyns’s stark opposition between the patriot and the citizen of the world was rejected by many pamphleteers. In the course of the controversy there appeared several propositions that foreshadowed elements of Price’s *Discourse*. Particularly significant is an answer to Jenyns written by Archibald Maclaine, a student of Francis Hutcheson in Glasgow and minister of the Scots Presbyterian church in The Hague.³⁶ Maclaine contended that patriotism is compatible with love of mankind, and is an authentic virtue only insofar as its practice is ruled by universal benevolence. Quoting from Luke 13:34 he proceeded to explain why Christ did not recommend patriotism to the Jews in terms that are very close to a passage in Price’s *Discourse*. This is not to suggest that Maclaine influenced Price (though this cannot be ruled out either, as Maclaine’s name appears in Price’s correspondence).³⁷ Nevertheless, it is worth noticing that a defence of Price’s idea that patriotism should be ruled by universal benevolence was elaborated at an early stage of the American War.

The controversy launched by Jenyns took a political, and presumably a partisan, turn when it was taken up by debating societies, Coachmaker’s Hall and the Robin Hood Society, the second of which had radical leanings and could attract as many as 1200 spectators in the 1770s. In October 1777, and again in February 1778, the Robin Hood Society discussed whether ‘the character of a rigid patriot [was] consistent with that of a good Christian’ and coupled the query with overtly political questions about the necessity of prolonging the war. The audience declared unanimously against the war, against Jenyns and for the compatibility of Christianity and patriotism.³⁸

Those radicals and Dissenters who addressed the issue during the war

³⁵ S Jenyns, *A view of the internal evidence of the Christian religion* (London, 1776), 58.

³⁶ A Maclaine, *A series of letters, addressed to Soame Jenyns, Esq; on occasion of his ‘View of the internal evidence of Christianity’* (London, 1777), 183-84, 187-88.

³⁷ W Bernard Peach & D O Thomas ed., *The correspondence of Richard Price* (3 vols., Durham, NC & Cardiff, 1983-1994), vol.3, 92.

³⁸ Donna T Andrew ed., ‘London debates: 1777’, *London debating societies 1776-1799* (London, 1994), 14-29, at: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=38841>.

almost always defended positions compatible with those Price was to expound in 1789. Thus, Granville Sharp wrote that Galatians 5:14 ('Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself') is the root of both patriotism and universal benevolence and that the latter should predominate and restrain the former within the bounds of justice.³⁹ John Cartwright attacked Jenyns in the second edition of *Take your choice*, and then again in 1784: 'so far from there being any incompatibility between the characters of the patriot, the citizen of the world, and the Christian, they each respectively imply the other two.' Though Cartwright concedes that most men cannot extend their actions beyond the narrow boundaries of family, parish or country, he asserts that universal benevolence is an ideal that should be cherished, and tries to shed the elitist associations of cosmopolitanism and present it as achievable even by an 'honest ploughman'.⁴⁰ When allowance is made for rhetorical effect, it remains true that Cartwright tried to democratize cosmopolitanism, in keeping with his defence of universal suffrage and his affirmation of the active political role of the common people. Those passages make it difficult to classify Cartwright as an English nationalist and suggest that the contrast between patriotic Major Cartwright and cosmopolitan Dr Price should not be exaggerated (however much they might differ in other respects).

More directly relevant to the *Discourse* are sermons preached during the American War. For the first time, universal benevolence became highly politicized in sermons devoted to love of country and/or based on Psalm 122.⁴¹ Partisans of the government's policy of coercion tended to criticize cosmopolitanism and universal benevolence and affirm that Christianity enjoined patriotism understood as an exclusive preference for one's countrymen. A prime example of this attitude is a sermon preached by Isaac Hunt to the Laudable Association of Antigallicans.⁴² The case of Alexander Carlyle, an eminent member of the moderate party

³⁹ G Sharp, *The law of liberty, or royal law, by which all mankind will certainly be judged* (London, 1776), 16.

⁴⁰ J Cartwright, *Take your choice!* (2nd edn., London, 1777), 25; *Internal evidence; or an inquiry how far truth and the Christian religion have been consulted by the author of 'Thoughts on a parliamentary reform'* (London, 1784), 7.

⁴¹ Earlier sermons were not overtly political: see e.g. Isaac Maddox, *The love of our country recommended...* (London, 1737); Percival Stockdale, *Three discourses: two against luxury and dissipation. One on universal benevolence* (London, 1773).

⁴² Isaac Hunt, *A sermon, preached before the Laudable Association of Antigallicans, at the parish church of St. George's, Middlesex, on their general annual meeting, on Thursday, the 23d of April, 1778* (London, 1778). Hunt quoted Rousseau's criticism of cosmopolites (p.20).

of the kirk of Scotland, illustrates the continuity in debates from the American War to the wars against Revolutionary France. Carlyle attacked Price's *Observations* in 1777, and repeatedly denounced the *Discourse* (without quoting it) in the 1790s.⁴³ All of Carlyle's fast sermons, preached every year from 1779 to 1782, and again in 1793 and 1797, defend the idea that love of mankind and patriotism originate in the same principle of benevolence, but unlike Price, who gives little value to 'the spot of earth on which we happen to have been born', Carlyle points out that man's birthplace is assigned by Providence. For Carlyle there is a duty of 'general benevolence', but it cannot go beyond the boundaries of the nation (and here Carlyle follows Adam Smith) and it should consist in protecting the established constitution against factious reformers like Price, and defending the country against enemies in war.

A Dissenting position, on the other hand, clearly emerged, especially in fast sermons. In the provinces Jenyns's contentions were attacked by several Dissenting ministers, who gravitated in Price's or Priestley's circles and whose political outlook was largely shaped by Price's *Observations on civil liberty*.⁴⁴ Those ministers praised universal benevolence and criticized the war as a breach of that virtue and as an assault on constitutional liberties. In 1776, Joshua Toulmin, who was minister at the Mary Street General Baptist Chapel in Taunton and was later to join the Revolution Society, defended universal benevolence in a sermon aptly entitled *The American war lamented*.⁴⁵ He thundered against the thirst for power and riches that actuated the British government and exhorted his audience to imitate the Americans and pray for peace,

⁴³ M Brown, 'Alexander Carlyle and the shadows of enlightenment', *Scotland in the age of the French Revolution*, ed. B Harris (Edinburgh, 2005), 243. See especially A Carlyle, *The justice and necessity of the war with our American colonies examined. A sermon preached at Inveresk, December 12, 1776* (Edinburgh, 1779), 39, and *The love of our country : explained and enforced in a sermon from Psalm, cxxxvii, 5, 6, preached in St Andrews Church, Edinburgh, March 19, and in Dalkeith Church, April 2, 1797* (Edinburgh, 1797). The other sermons Carlyle preached in the years above mentioned exist in manuscript form at the National Library of Scotland (Edinburgh), MS 23844-23853.

⁴⁴ On Price's influence, see J E Bradley, *Religion, revolution, and English radicalism* (Cambridge, 1990), 134.

⁴⁵ J Toulmin, *The American war lamented. A sermon preached at Taunton, February the 18th and 25th, 1776...* (London, 1776), 17-18.

quoting a passage from Price's *Observations* and one of the verses from Psalm 122 which Price was to choose as text for the *Discourse*. Another example is that of Newcome Cappe, minister in York and active in Christopher Wyvill's Yorkshire Association and in campaigns against the Test and Corporation Acts. In his 4 February 1780 fast sermon, Cappe exhorted his flock to resist the passions excited by war and cultivate the 'universal sympathy and goodwill' which is essential to a Christian character.⁴⁶ Cappe added an epigraph taken from a sermon by Dr Richard Watson of Cambridge University, another vocal opponent of the war and champion of Lockean principles, to the effect that 'Christianity in its regards steps beyond the narrow bounds of national advantage in quest of universal good [...] annihilates the disposition for martial glory, and utterly debases the pomps of war'.⁴⁷ Universal benevolence was thus invoked by Dissenting preachers to denounce the war and warn against unconstitutional encroachments on civil liberties. Rather than opposing universal benevolence and patriotism, those writers, anticipating Price's *Discourse*, tried to distinguish between spurious patriotism (leading to war and destruction) and authentic expressions of love of country, which included the defence of civil and religious liberty and the right of resistance against abuse of authority. Neither Cappe nor Toulmin rejected patriotism; like Price, they defended a demanding conception of patriotism that avoided any national complacency and involved a critical attitude.

But ultimately, the ideological content of patriotic duties mattered more than the emphasis on Christian benevolence. This accounts for an apparent exception, George Walker's sermon to the Nottinghamshire militia *The duty and character of a national Soldier* (1779). Against Jenyns, Walker argued that:

Half-taught Philosophers, and half made Christians [...] may

⁴⁶ N Cappe, *A sermon preached on Friday the fourth of February, MDCCLXXX. The late day of national humiliation, to a congregation of Protestant-Dissenters, in Saint-Saviour-Gate, York...* (York, 1780), 37.

⁴⁷ R Watson, *A sermon preached before the University of Cambridge, on Friday, February 4th, 1780, being the day appointed for a general fast* (4th edn., Cambridge, 1780), 7. Richard Watson (1737-1816), Regius Professor of Divinity at the University Cambridge, had forcefully defended Lockean principles and denounced corruption and the influence of the crown in *The principles of the Revolution vindicated* (a sermon preached on 29 May 1776 to commemorate the restoration of Charles II).

reprobate [patriotism] as the narrower of a Christian's heart, as unfriendly to that equal and universal good-will which the New Testament would inspire; but while Jesus Christ, who came from the Father of the Universe, bids us love all mankind, God who has assigned to us our place amongst men, has left to most of us no wider expression of a Christian benevolence than the ardent and affectionate love of country. Our country is the whole world to us....⁴⁸

This argument, used by Carlyle for conservative purposes, served Walker to define a radical version of patriotism, stressing that the king was the servant of the people and that loyalty was due to the constitution and the people rather than to the monarch:

From you is expected, all the courage of a British Soldier, without the jealousy that awaits a standing army. You are the Soldiers of the People, more than of the Crown. [...] When we speak of Loyalty and obedience to the Prince, we mean in consistence with the Constitution and the Law....⁴⁹

Walker's contention that a citizen should always keep a watchful eye on monarchs and the holders of civil power had long been a staple of Old Whig thought. In the *Discourse*, Price was to present this duty as an integral part of true love of country, actually devoting more space to it than to the duty of national defence. Walker's emphasis on national defence was natural in an address to the militia in wartime, since the role of the militia was to fight a possible French invasion, not to launch an offensive against the Americans. Conversely, Price's downplaying of the duty of national defence, while generally explained by his enlightened hostility to warfare, can be more specifically ascribed to the context of optimism of the late 1780s and to Price's hope that the French Revolution

⁴⁸ G Walker, *The duty and character of a national soldier, represented in a sermon preached, January 2, 1779. At the High Church in Hull, before the Nottinghamshire Militia, commanded by Lord George Sutton, on the delivery of the colours to the regiment* (London, 1779), 18. George Walker (1734?-1807), Presbyterian minister and mathematician, was a leading figure in Nottingham in the opposition to the war and the campaign to repeal the Test and Corporation Acts. He frequented Shelburne's circle and Price supported his election to the Royal Society.

⁴⁹ Walker, *The duty and character of a national soldier*, 28. For a commentary on Walker's statements 'bordering on sedition', see Bradley, *Religion, revolution and English radicalism*, 133.

would usher in a period of peace that would render that duty nugatory.

Though Walker exalted patriotism and Price defended universal benevolence, the difference is largely due to context; in fact they agreed that both love of country and Christian charity were virtues, the difference being in the emphasis. The apparent exception of Walker's sermon in fact confirms that Price's conception of patriotism, involving popular participation and constant criticism of the constitution and the holders of civil power, was shared in radical and Dissenting circles during the American War. This difference, however, points to the limit of the inquiry into the philosophical content of the *Discourse*, showing that some arguments at least are best explained with reference to the immediate political context.

Price's *Discourse* provides a short and unequivocal defence of the necessary primacy of universal benevolence over any partial affection, including patriotism. Far from rejecting patriotism for the sake of some vapid cosmopolitanism, however, Price defended it as a virtue, taking care to define its proper limits and to distinguish it from degraded versions. Price's insistence on the proper bounds of patriotism should not divert the attention from the fact that the 4 November 1789 sermon was a celebration of the libertarian heritage of English history and an appeal to cultivate, not denigrate, love of country.

A reading that does not try to anticipate the debates of the 1790s makes it manifest that the *Discourse on the love of our country* spells out some implications of Price's *Review* and his pamphlets of the 1770s, thus revealing the continuity between his moral philosophy and his political theory. The opposition between enlightened and spurious forms of patriotism, central to the *Discourse*, was already present in Price's earlier works, but also in several sermons preached by radical ministers during the American War. Many ideas contained in the *Discourse* were debated, sometimes defended, in the radical discourse of the 1770s and 1780s, even in writings by those, like Cartwright, who were steeped in the national tradition and seemingly impervious to cosmopolitan ideals. The treatment of universal benevolence in the *Discourse* owes virtually nothing to French revolutionaries but derives from British debates around Christianity, sympathy and universal benevolence. But the French

Revolution had exalted into sanguine hope the mood of optimism that was already prevalent in the years following American Independence. In Price's eyes, the liberation of the French people confirmed his own theories, and the revolution prompted Price to expound the full theory of love of country and universal benevolence, because true love of country could henceforth be translated into action.

Price's *Discourse*, however, did not bring together all the strands of radical opinion. It is highly probable that his theory of patriotism was not espoused by all those who listened to his 4 November 1789 and attended the celebrations of the Revolution Society.⁵⁰ It would be most imprudent to suggest that any consensus around Price's principles existed during the American War; then, as in 1789, praise of universal benevolence coexisted with a traditional form of patriotism extolling the virtues of the ancient constitution, the Saxon forefathers and the martyrs of Stuart despotism. Price's defence of universal benevolence, while it was not contradicted in radical circles, was far from being fervently espoused by all radicals or all Dissenters and could therefore not be presented as the official theory of radical patriotism (there never was such a thing). Perhaps its most remarkable feature was that it was both a contribution to debates in moral philosophy and a tool that could be harnessed to criticize the government and defend the American and French revolutions. Both Price's allies and his opponents recognized this potency.

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⁵⁰ M Fitzpatrick, 'Patriots and patriotisms : Richard Price and the early reception of the French Revolution in England', *Nations and nationalisms*, 220.

ENLIGHTENMENT, DISSENT AND TOLERATION

*Martin Fitzpatrick**

When D O Thomas and I decided to found the *Price-Priestley Newsletter*, it was at a time when the dominant view of the Enlightenment was derived from Peter Gay's magisterial volumes. For Peter Gay the Enlightenment was a unified secularising movement, humanitarian in outlook, which emancipated man from the shackles of orthodox religion. He argued that the dialectical interplay with Christianity was crucial in the formation of modern paganism and indeed recognised that many of the radical developments of the Enlightenment came from 'devout Christians' including Joseph Priestley. But the Enlightenment was not a Christian movement; he observed that 'ideas and attitudes generally associated with subversive atheistic philosophes' were 'the common property of most educated men in the eighteenth century'.¹ So although Gay did not ignore religion, notably that of Newton and the first generation of his followers, one ended up with the attitude of Laplace who did not even need God as a hypothesis.² In sum, his philosophes were 'modern pagans'.³

Soon after Peter Gay published his study, a more accessible work, at least in terms of length, was published in the series of the Pelican History of European Thought by Norman Hampson. His study of the Enlightenment has received less attention from scholars than it deserves although it has probably been used by many undergraduates studying the Enlightenment for it has sold well enough to be re-printed again and again. Hampson observed that the coherence as well as the confidence of the Enlightenment, rested essentially on religious foundations.⁴ His observation was important for understanding the underlying assumptions of the Enlightenment. He did not, however, investigate the inter-

* I am grateful to James Dybikowski, Anthony Page and Mark Philp for advice on this paper.

¹ Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment. An interpretation. Vol. I The rise of modern paganism* (1970; edn. London, 1973), 8, 23.

² Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment. An interpretation. Vol. II The Science of Freedom* (London, 1970), 145.

³ Gay, *The Enlightenment*, vol. I, 8.

⁴ Norman Hampson, *The Enlightenment*, vol. 4 The Pelican History of European Thought (Harmondsworth, 1968), 106. It is now described by Amazon as a 'Mass Market Paperback'.

relationship of Enlightenment and religion as represented by established churches, denominations or sects. It is true that there was growing interest in the subject notably in relation to America and in 1976 Henry May's important study on the Enlightenment in America was published in which religion plays a central role.⁵ It was around this time that D O Thomas and I decided to found the *Price-Priestley Newsletter (PPN)*. We wrote in the first editorial that we felt that there was growing interest in Price and Priestley and the time was ripe for the creation of a forum for the exchange of ideas for scholars working in the field. I think it achieved that, but it was less successful in attracting studies of their friends and contemporaries, although it was not entirely lacking in such studies. So we felt the need to broaden the field by creating a journal with a new title which would itself signalise our broader ambitions, and in 1982 we published the first number of Enlightenment and Dissent.

* * * * *

When we began the *PPN* the idea of an English Enlightenment was barely canvassed. We had, however, noticed that Franco Venturi, in an essay on the European Enlightenment, concluded:

Bentham, Price, Paine, Godwin, the whole band of English thinkers who appeared at the end of the century, represented the delayed but vigorous and deep Enlightenment in England.⁶

This was perhaps a straw in the wind and *E&D* added its own puff, in its flysheet at its founding, by claiming that it was devoted to the 'investigation of the relationship between the Enlightenment and all aspects of dissent'.⁷ Unsurprisingly, we were very pleased when Roy

⁵ Henry May, *The Enlightenment in America* (Oxford, London, New York, 1976).

⁶ Franco Venturi, *Italy and the Enlightenment. Studies in a cosmopolitan century*, edited with an introduction by S J Woolf, trans. Susan Corsi (London, 1972), 32. His Trevelyan lectures at Cambridge University in 1969, were published as *Utopia and reform in the Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1971).

⁷ Articles published since 1982 have ranged from John Locke, Mathew Tindal, Samuel Clarke (special number), Henry Grove, Edmund Law, William Chambers, David Hartley, William Paley, Richard Price, Joseph Priestley, Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Hays, William Godwin, Francis Maseres, Joseph Towers, Sir William Jones, David Williams, John Thelwall and Jeremy Bentham, and most recently important issues devoted to eighteenth-century Newtonianism and to Dissent and women. For the full contents of all the issues see the web site: www.philosophy.ubc.ca/ed/

Porter wrote in reviewing the journal in the *Times Literary Supplement* in the 1980s:

‘Whether such a beast as the English Enlightenment ever existed is still a bone of contention. This admirable journal is helping to settle the question in the affirmative.’

Helping certainly, but Porter himself had stressed that Enlightenment in England ‘throve *within* piety’ in his chapter in the book which he had co-edited with Mikuláš Teich on *The Enlightenment in national context*.⁸

From the time of the foundation of the PPN and then *Enlightenment and Dissent*, and certainly not just as a result of them, there was a growing number of studies relating to Enlightenment and religion by, amongst others, Clarke Garrett (1975), Jack Fruchtman Jr. (1983); David Spadafora (1991) Peter Miller (1994), J H Brooke (1991), Alan Sell (1997) and Brian Young (1998).⁹ On a more general level there was James Byrne’s study of *Religion and the Enlightenment from Descartes to Kant*

⁸ Roy Porter & Mikuláš Teich, *The Enlightenment in national context* (Cambridge, 1981), 6-7. When in 2000 he published his *Enlightenment, Britain and the creation of the modern world*, he included a valuable chapter on ‘rationalizing religion’.

⁹ Works include those to do with the millennialism and progress, such as Clarke Garrett’s, *Respectable folly: millenarians and the French Revolution in France and England* (1975), Jack Fruchtman Jr.’s, *The apocalyptic politics of Richard Price and Joseph Priestley: A study in late eighteenth-century English republican radicalism* (1983); there was also David Spadafora’s *The idea of progress in Britain* (1991) which recognised the importance of the ideas of David Hartley. In 1994 Peter Miller published his *Defining the common good. Empire, religion and philosophy in eighteenth-century Britain* which includes a valuable chapter on ‘The common good, toleration and freedom of thought’; there is an important chapter on ‘Science and religion in the Enlightenment’ in J H Brooke’s, *Science and religion. Some historical perspectives* (Cambridge, 1991) which investigates the often complex relationship between of enlightened science and religion generally in Britain; amongst Alan P F Sell’s many informative works, see especially, *John Locke and the eighteenth-century divines* (Cardiff, 1997), and B W Young, *Religion and Enlightenment in eighteenth century England. Theological debate from Locke to Burke* (Oxford, 1998). This list does not claim to be complete and studies of individuals also need to be taken into account, notably James Dybikowski’s, *On burning ground: an examination of the ideas, projects and life of David Williams; Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 307 (Oxford, 1993), and Anthony Page’s, *John Jebb and the Enlightenment origins of British radicalism* (Westport, Connecticut & London, 2003).

(1996). His conclusion was very similar to Peter Gay's, namely that:

The crucial step which began the dethronement of theological truth from its high natural status was the belief that the progress of science in understanding the natural world could also be achieved in the analysis of human society.¹⁰

Byrne's view however was far from simplistic. The Enlightenment was not a uniform movement. He noted that one should not assume that 'Enlightenment science was always the enemy of religion'.¹¹ He instanced Priestley as 'a good example of the alliance which could be forged between science and religion', suggesting that this sort of bold thinking was possible where 'authority is weak as it was in the Dissenting tradition to which Priestley belonged'.¹²

A less positive view of Priestley's enlightenment and of his rational Dissenting contemporaries was put forward by J C D Clark. Dissenters up to the 1760s had been loyal and quiescent subjects of the Hanoverian dynasty.¹³ A much more critical atmosphere then developed as a result of a transition which was occurring in the realm of ideas.¹⁴ Priestley was at the forefront.¹⁵ His radicalism and that of his fellows was derived from their theology, or militant heterodoxy as Clark puts it. Thus relatively minor campaigns for religious reform – The Feather's Tavern petition and the petition for relief for Dissenting ministers, tutors and schoolmasters

¹⁰ James M Byrne, *Religion and the Enlightenment from Descartes to Newton* (1996, American edn. Louisville, Kentucky, 1997), 177.

¹¹ Byrne, *Religion and the Enlightenment*, 157.

¹² Byrne, *Religion and the Enlightenment*, 162.

¹³ J C D Clark in his *English Society, 1688-1832: ideology, social structure and political practice during the ancient régime* (Cambridge, 1985), 316, describes as an 'uncritical eulogy' Richard Price's celebratory sermon, 'Britain's Happiness' of 1759 – Britain's great year of victories in the Seven Year's war – in which Price described Britain as 'A land which has the best constitution of government, the best laws, the best king and the best religion in the world.' D O Thomas ed., *Price. Political writings* (Cambridge, 1991), 5. A closer reading of the sermon suggests that Price was not uncritical of the constitution but that he refrained from developing his criticisms because it would have been inappropriate on the occasion of a general thanksgiving. Ibid. 10.

¹⁴ Clark, *English society*, 318: 'a transition confined to a small circle of largely metropolitan radicals associated with the club of Honest Whigs'.

¹⁵ Clark, *English society*, 320. Priestley was a member of the Honest Whigs. He notes too (324) that the results of the general election of 1774 indicated that the base of radicalism was limited to London.

from subscription to most of the Thirty-nine articles – were significant for the fact that ‘a whole millenarian impulse, fuelled by Arianism and Socinianism lay behind them’. Priestley’s ‘prescriptions for reform were ... little short of calls for rebellion’.¹⁶

In contrast with the enthusiastic chialism of Priestley and the Rational Dissenters, an alternative English Enlightenment was offered by J G A Pocock: an enlightenment which was founded on conservative Whig constitutionalism which colluded with sceptical philosophy, moderate Anglicanism and economic modernisation. It was an enlightenment threatened by radical and revolutionary tendencies.¹⁷ It is a tempting way of looking at Enlightenment in England with a ‘Dissenting Enlightenment rising against a conservative Enlightenment’.¹⁸

Such ideas placed in doubt the notion of a common Enlightenment. It is no surprise that Pocock argued for ‘enlightenments’ rather than ‘*The Enlightenment*’ because ‘it creates the [inaccurate] presumption of a single unitary process displaying a uniform set of characteristics’.¹⁹ The proliferation of contextual studies of enlightenment, very much stimulated by Porter and Teich’s *Enlightenment in national context* (1981), meant that increasingly there was more understanding of differences than of unity. Indeed, there is a certain irony in the fact that Knud Haakonssen argued that Pocock’s version of clashing Enlightenment in England was itself ‘too neat to catch the complexity of enlightened Dissent’.²⁰ He noted this in his introduction to *Enlightenment and religion. Rational Dissent in eighteenth-century Britain*, a work which exemplified his observation. The various studies in the volume underline the fact that ‘the dividing lines between Orthodox, Enlightened and narrowly Rational Dissent were often extremely blurred’.²¹

¹⁶ Clark, *English society*, 335.

¹⁷ I owe this passage to Knud Haakonssen, ‘Enlightened Dissent: an introduction’, in Knud Haakonssen ed., *Enlightenment and religion. Rational Dissent in Eighteenth Century Britain* (Cambridge, 1996), 2-4. The ‘peculiarly’ clerical enlightenment in England is impressively investigated by Brian Young, *Religion and Enlightenment* which he sees as located ‘within the spectrum which extends between the thought of Locke and Priestley (ibid. 2).

¹⁸ Pocock, ‘Conservative Enlightenment’... cit. Haakonssen, 4.

¹⁹ L G Croker, ‘Introduction’, *The Blackwell companion to the Enlightenment*, ed. J W Yolton, Roy Porter, Pat Rogers, Barbara Maria Stafford (Oxford, 1991), 9 n.1. It may be worth noting that Croker in his account of the origins of the Enlightenment claims that ‘The English ... were the first bearers of the torch.’ Ibid. 3.

²⁰ Haakonssen, *Enlightenment and religion*, 4.

²¹ Haakonssen, *Enlightenment and religion*, 10.

Contextual studies were far from providing a complete cure for the problem of enlightenment definition. With a growing range of information and diverse approaches it is unsurprising that some began to feel that the essence of the enlightenment, namely its ideas, was getting lost. At the same time, paradoxically, its ideas were clearly enough identified by its twentieth century critics.

In a review of the four volume *Encyclopaedia of Enlightenment* (2003) Jonathan Israel argued that, ‘under the combined assaults of Post-Structuralism, Post Modernism, the rise of the new social history ..., the Enlightenment conceived as a movement of ideas appears to be not just firmly in retreat and increasingly under siege but also fragmenting into disparate remnants with no coherent profile.’²² However, he argued that the Enlightenment was very much alive and would spring back against its critics. He argued that the key enlightenment values of democracy, egalitarianism, republicanism, comprehensive toleration and anti-colonialism are far from played out. These values were derived from the radical Enlightenment which had originated in seventeenth-century Holland. Its supreme philosopher and guiding spirit was Spinoza. There was, Israel suggested, never a single Enlightenment rather there was a ‘radical Enlightenment, a conservative Enlightenment and Counter Enlightenment’.²³ Importantly he insists that these camps were well-defined; their adherents were highly conscious of their location.

The review sketched out ideas which Israel developed with impressive erudition and wide-ranging detail in his massive trilogy on the Enlightenment which he completed in 2011 with the publication of *Democratic Enlightenment; philosophy, revolution and human rights, 1750-1790*. This is the volume in which he discusses Rational Dissent. However, he had already made his views known in lectures which he gave at Oxford in 2008, subsequently published as *A revolution of the mind. Radical Enlightenment and the intellectual origins of modern democracy*.

And it is to this which I shall now turn, because it makes clear the role of Rational Dissent in his analysis more effectively than in his trilogy on the Enlightenment. It is also an excellent guide to his thesis in which he

²² Jonathan Israel, ‘Enlightenment! Which Enlightenment’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 67, no.3 (July 2006), 523-45.

²³ Israel, ‘Enlightenment! Which Enlightenment’, 542.

sees an intellectual chasm between moderate Enlightenment: Lockeian and dualist, sceptical, balancing the claims of reason and tradition and cautious in its attitude to enlightening all; and radical Enlightenment: Spinozist, monist, and materialist, which believed in the power of reason to effect radical not to say revolutionary improvements in the lives of all.²⁴ So where do Rational Dissenters fit into this view of Enlightenment?

Israel suggests that the Socinians provide the most important exception to the general rule that those of the radical enlightenment were not Christian. They, of all Christians, were the closest to Spinoza for their Christianity was heretical and deeply critical of much of organised religion and traditional theology. They privileged good living and the moral life over faith and proved to be among Spinoza's most important allies in late seventeenth-century Holland. Their alliance was mutually beneficial. The Socinians were crucial for the diffusion of Spinozism, while they learnt from Spinoza a new and highly sophisticated method of Biblical criticism and broader arguments for toleration than could be derived from Locke.²⁵ Later in the century, for 'Socinians' read 'Unitarians', who are seen as part of the radical Enlightenment. This produces, I believe, a difficulty for Israel: neither Price nor Priestley, whom he sees as exemplars of this enlightenment, fit easily into his account. Of the two, Priestley fits the better as he was a monist and materialist, but Israel tries to draw his links with the Spinozist tradition too tightly. Spinoza receives hardly a mention in the 25 volumes of J T Rutt's *Theological and miscellaneous works of Joseph Priestley*. There

²⁴ Israel, *A revolution of the mind. Radical Enlightenment and the intellectual origins of modern democracy* (Princeton and Oxford 2010), 19, suggests that 'Beyond a certain level there were and could only be two Enlightenments – moderate (two substance Enlightenment), on the one hand, postulating a balance between reason and tradition and broadly supporting the status quo, and, on the other, radical (one substance) Enlightenment conflating body and mind into one, reducing God and nature to the same thing, excluding all miracles and spirits separate from bodies, and invoking reason as the sole guide in human life, jettisoning tradition.' Exposition of Spinoza's philosophy including his 'one substance' metaphysics can be found in the first volume of Israel's trilogy: *Radical Enlightenment. Philosophy and the making of modernity, 1650-1750* (Oxford, 2001), especially chs. 13 -15: 230-274.

²⁵ *Revolution of the mind*, 23.

are three indexed references none of them complimentary.²⁶ Israel accepts that Priestley's location in the materialist camp is not directly through Spinoza but via d'Holbach, a key figure in the radical Enlightenment. However, his evidence for Priestley's materialism being derived from d'Holbach *Système de la nature*, is slim.²⁷ It was not d'Holbach who 'convinced him that the age-old distinction between body and soul was philosophically untenable', but David Hartley whose work he edited and published in 1774.²⁸ There is no mention of toleration in Priestley's references either to Spinoza or d'Holbach.

²⁶ Two are in the *Institutes of natural and revealed religion* (3 vols. 1772-1774). Priestley's purpose is to show in detail the deficiencies of ancient and modern heathenism, the crucial importance of revealed religion as a guide to a life of truth and virtue () and the 'natural or necessary connexion between *miracles* and *doctrines*' (ibid.). The final reference is a late one from *A general history of the Christian Church from the fall of the western empire to the present time [concluded]* (Northumberland 1803). He thought it 'probable that he [Spinoza] was an unbeliever in revelation, though he wrote nothing on the subject. There was ... nothing in his doctrine that was necessarily inconsistent with a belief of a Providence, and moral government of the world, or consequently with a state of retribution after death ... All that can in strictness be said of him, is, that he fell into metaphysical absurdity, in supposing the same thing to the *cause* and *effect*.' J T Rutt, *The theological and miscellaneous works of Joseph Priestley* (25 vols. in 26, London 1817-1831), II, 90, 110; X, 430.

²⁷ His argument for Priestley's materialism being derived from d'Holbach's *Système*, rests on a paper by Erwin Hiebert (*Revolution of the mind*, 160-61, fns. 17 & 18). However, Hiebert makes no such claim and points most notably to Hartley's influence. See his 'The Integration of Revealed Religion and Scientific Materialism in the Thought of Joseph Priestley' in Lester Kieft & Bennett R Willefors Jr., *Joseph Priestley Scientist, Theologian, and Metaphysician* (Lewisberg & London, 1974), 27-61, at 31-32 & 35-36. It is true that there is a passage in his memoirs in which Priestley talks about meeting the atheists of Baron d'Holbach's circle. What concerns him is not the materialism but the atheism of d'Holbach's and his circle. His determination to persuade them of the error of their ways led him to write the first set of his *Letters to philosophical unbelievers*. Jack Lindsay ed., *The autobiography of Joseph Priestley*, 111; (Israel's reference appears to be in the wrong place).

²⁸ On the timing of Priestley's acceptance of Hartleian materialism, Daniel Ishet suggests that although the influence of Michell and Bosovich may have been important, the timing was governed by Priestley's desire to undermine Anglican orthodoxy. See, Dan Eshet, 'Rereading Priestley: Science at the intersection of Theology and Politics', *Hist. Sci.*, xxxix (2001), 127-59, esp. 146-7. Israel's case would have been stronger had he pointed to the influence on Priestley of Anthony Collins. But Collins does not entirely fit into Israel's thesis since his advocacy of toleration was influenced by Locke and Bayle, a moderate and a radical in his terms. I am indebted to James Dybikowski

Moving on to Price, Israel does not claim that Spinoza or d'Holbach influenced him although he does imply that the tolerant Socinian tradition did. He cites Price's *The evidence for the future period for the improvement of mankind* (1787) for the notion that at the resurrection 'a government of consummate order will be established and all faithful and worthy of all religions will be gathered into it.'²⁹ That leads Israel to argue that 'what one believes or does not believe cannot be the grounds for exclusion, having no bearing on the dictates of universal morality'.³⁰ This is potentially misleading, although the problem lies with Price rather than with Israel. As D O Thomas has noted, Price has difficulty reconciling a rationalist with a theocentric ethic – in particular the belief that one should pursue virtue for its own sake and the contrasting view that one should pursue it as 'obedience to a rewarding God'.³¹ In the latter mode, Price wrote, 'as long as men continue void of religion and piety, there is great reason to apprehend they are destitute of the genuine principle of virtue, and possess but little true moral worth'.³² That would certainly make d'Holbach and other atheists unlikely participants in a 'government of consummate order', and Price an uneasy proponent of the moral universalism which Israel argues was 'a key common feature of British, American, and French radical thought'.³³

Israel not only has problems with Price's moral philosophy, he also mistakes his theological position. What he intends to demonstrate is that the leading Rational Dissenters can be included in the radical Enlightenment because of their affiliation with the Spinozist-Socinian tradition. He describes Price as 'officially Arian but privately Unitarian'.³⁴ In fact Price regarded himself as Unitarian *and* Arian, what he wasn't was

for this observation. Cf. Jonathan I. Israel, *Enlightenment contested. Philosophy, modernity, and the emancipation of man 1670-1752* (Oxford, 2006), vii, 48, 151, 178, 346, 351-52.

²⁹ Op. cit, in D O Thomas, *Price, political writings*, 175. In the text, although not in his footnote, Israel misattributes this passage to Priestley.

³⁰ *Revolution of the mind*, 156.

³¹ D O Thomas, *The honest mind. The thought and work of Richard Price* (Oxford, 1976), 107-08.

³² D D Raphael ed., *Review of the principal questions and difficulties in morals* (1758, new edn 1787, revised, Oxford, 1974), 144-45.

³³ *Revolution of the mind*, 156.

³⁴ *Revolution of the mind*, 27.

a Socinian.³⁵ In his *Sermons on the Christian doctrine* (1787) he offered a broad definition of Unitarian to include those who, like himself, believed in the pre-existence of Christ (Arians) and those who believed Christ to be a mere man (Socinians).³⁶ Such a comprehensive view of Unitarianism, embodying those who believed that Christ was divine if subordinate to the Deity and those who believed that he was entirely human, enabled Price to join the Unitarian Society on its foundation in 1790. There was nothing private about that.³⁷

The fact that Price and Priestley shared very similar political views but were deeply divided over their theology and indeed their metaphysics, places in doubt Israel's crucial insistence on the chasm between dualists and materialists with the former belonging to the moderate Enlightenment and the latter the radical. If the Spinozist tradition is the key to radical enlightenment, probably the best candidate amongst English radical enlighteners was John Jebb, for he was undoubtedly influenced by d'Holbach, although even in his case, d'Holbach read in the light of a Hartleian agenda.³⁸ But he was a Socinian and unequivocally a democrat

³⁵ Israel's source (which he misreads) for his view is R K Webb's discussion of 'Price among the Unitarians', *Enlightenment and Dissent*, 19 (2000), 147-170, at 162. Lindsey viewed Price as a Unitarian because Price did not believe in 'praying to Christ'. Israel identifies Price as a Socinian without qualification in his *Democratic Enlightenment*, 465.

³⁶ 'By Unitarians I mean those Christians who believe there is one God, and one object of religious worship; and that this one God is the Father only, and not a trinity, consisting of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost'. For this and a further discussion of the issue, see William Morgan, *Memoirs of the life of Richard Price*, ed. D O Thomas, *Enlightenment and Dissent*, 22 (2003), 120-21-fn. 148. Lindsey viewed Price as a Unitarian because Price did not believe in 'praying to Christ'. See Theophilus Lindsey to William Turner of Newcastle, 28 October 1786, in G M Ditchfield, *The letters of Theophilus Lindsey (1723-1808)*; volume I: 1747-1788, *Church of England Record Society*, 15 (2007), 495.

³⁷ The problem occurring at the time, was that Unitarians like Thomas Belsham and Priestley were adopting a narrow definition of Unitarian which would exclude Arians. Priestley believed that the Unitarian view of Christ, namely that he was 'a mere man ... (who) had no existence prior to his birth, in the reign of Augustus', preceded the Arian view of the pre-existence of Christ. J Priestley, *An history of early opinions concerning Jesus Christ* (Birmingham, 1786), IV, 169.

³⁸ See Anthony Page, 'Enlightenment and a "Second Reformation": the religion and philosophy of John Jebb (1736-1786)', *Enlightenment and Dissent*, 17 (1998), 48-82, esp. 60-78. Page notes that Priestley's *Doctrine of philosophical necessity* (1777) was dedicated to Jebb, in which he described Hartley as 'our reverend master' (68).

arguing for universal male suffrage.³⁹ Yet is he not the exception that proves the rule? If it is essential to have a tight fit between materialist philosophy and radical enlightenment then there aren't too many late eighteenth-century radicals in Britain who fit the bill.⁴⁰

What happens if we leave the overall thesis aside and examine what Israel says about toleration. Is his division between moderate and radical enlightenment helpful in analysing dissenting attitudes towards toleration in the later eighteenth century? What might that division be?

The Moderates:

The moderates saw toleration in terms of the amelioration of existing society. The two key figures were Locke and Voltaire, both of whom regarded religion as supremely valuable to society and were critical of orthodox established religion, but feared the corrosive effect of universal toleration.⁴¹ For those like Voltaire the best one could hope for is that the moderate enlighteners' war against religious bigotry and fanaticism would lead to greater tolerance.⁴²

The Radicals:

The radicals were in the Spinozan/Socinian tradition; universal toleration was their aim. 'Spinozism ... equipped them (the Socinians) with a much more incisive and broader argument for toleration than any other thinker had yet come up with (and much broader than that of Locke)...'⁴³ Their approach and vocabulary was moving away from the language of toleration to the language of a natural right to freedom of speech and thought, and they believed that the separation of church and state was essential for the attainment of that goal. Moreover, their ideas of toleration

³⁹ See Anthony Page, *John Jebb and the Enlightenment origins of British radicalism*, 100.

⁴⁰ *Revolution of mind*, 10-11. The influence of the *philosophes* on William Godwin is discussed in detail by Mark Philp, *Godwin's political justice* (London, 1986), 38-57. He concludes that 'the conventions of Godwin's Dissenting background over-rode the dissonant elements he discovered in the work of the *philosophes*.' Ibid. 57.

⁴¹ *Revolution of the mind*, 3-5. Re. Voltaire, his attitude toward toleration was associated with those who had no 'fixed principles concerning the deeper nature of things and who did not pretend to know what ultimate truth is but instead knew what it is not and revered the true principles, as he saw it, of reason and toleration, namely those of Locke, Newton, and himself: "voilà mes vrais philosophes".'

⁴² *Revolution of mind*, 5 see also 127-28.

⁴³ *Revolution of mind*, 23.

were not compartmentalised, for ‘Radical Enlightenment was ... quintessentially defined by its insistence on full freedom of thought, expression and the press, and by identifying democracy as the best form of government’.⁴⁴ ‘All radical enlighteners held that liberty of thought and expression (*de parler et écrire*) benefits society, promotes knowledge, and also serves, in d’Holbach’s words, as a “powerful dike against the plots and intrigues of tyranny” and religious fervor. No particular religion should be sponsored by the state, and the semi-toleration then prevailing in England, North America, and Holland, they agreed should be translated into a full toleration...’⁴⁵

There are a few further points from Israel to be made in order to see how his views relate to Dissent in England:

- 1 Israel accepts that in enlightened circles in the second half of the eighteenth century there was a general belief in progress and that one aspect of this was the development of toleration.⁴⁶
- 2 By the 1780s the moderate Enlightenment had failed and the more vigorous radical enlightenment took over.⁴⁷
- 3 ‘The distinction between mainstream and radical Enlightenment, ... was ... both intellectually and socially an unbridgeable, polarizing dichotomy that no one could evade.’⁴⁸
- 4 Israel makes an important distinction between Enlightened radicals like Price, Priestley, Paine and Jebb, and those like John Thelwall who remained firmly in the old Commonwealth tradition whose aim was the restoration of the ancient constitution. They remained in favour of the balanced constitution and distrusted speculative opinions which tended to ‘plunge society “into commotion”’.⁴⁹ Such radicals were not

⁴⁴ *Revolution of mind*, 21.

⁴⁵ *Revolution of mind*, 81. The quotation is from *Système social*.

⁴⁶ *Revolution of mind*, 5.

⁴⁷ *Revolution of the mind*, 34.

⁴⁸ *Revolution of the mind*, 30. Interestingly in the full quotation Israel acknowledges the role of ‘legal discrimination and social conditions, including gender discrimination, as much as ... ideas’ in bringing about the divide between moderate and radical Enlightenment.

⁴⁹ *Revolution of the mind*, 31. This distinction is, arguably, much less clear than suggested here.

interested in the ‘philosophical grounding of human rights, in turning radical ideas into a universal ideology.’

Bearing these things in mind, how far do such views explain the quest for toleration amongst Dissenters in the late eighteenth century? They seem to fit the movement from limited concerns about subscription for Dissenting ministers, tutors and schoolmaster in the early 1770s to wider concerns about the repeal of the Test and Corporation acts in the late 1780s, and, in that repeal campaign, the movement from repeal in so far as it affected Protestants, to repeal as they affected all and notably the Roman Catholics. And finally the ambitious, but short lived campaign for toleration for Unitarians. They also seem to fit the move from modest claims for toleration to more strident claims for universal toleration and the separation of church and state; the move from what has been described as an appeal to candour to an appeal to human rights.⁵⁰ Finally on such a significant day as 5 Nov. it seems fitting to note the association of claims for religious rights with those for democratic rights, exemplified in Richard Price’s encapsulation of the principles of the London Revolution Society:

‘The right to liberty of conscience in religious matters.’

‘The right to resist power when abused.’

The right to chuse our own governors; to cashier them for misconduct; and to ‘frame a government for ourselves.’⁵¹

Although this suggests that the narrative of the Dissenter’s campaigns for greater toleration bespeaks a move from moderate to radical enlightenment, this will need closer examination to be entirely convincing.

* * * * *

Context:

If Dissenters are to qualify for inclusion in the radical enlightenment then, in their thinking on toleration, the freedoms they claimed as of right must apply to all. Their claims for freedom of conscience and for a right to freedom expression need to be closely examined to see if they are what

⁵⁰ See, Richard Burgess Barlow, *Citizenship and conscience. A study in the theory and practice of religious toleration in England during the eighteenth century* (Philadelphia, 1962), Chs.V & VI, 171-271

⁵¹ Richard Price, *A discourse on the love of our country* (6th. edn. with additions, London, 1790), 34.

they claim to be, that is, in order to make sense of arguments for wider toleration we need to pay especial attention to any qualifications which are made to their implementation in practice.⁵²

Until the mid century at least, Dissenting arguments for toleration were rather inward looking. Dissenters were on the defensive – they had to justify their Dissent from the Church of England. Indeed the oft re-printed pamphlet (15 editions by 1816) first published in 1753 by Micaijah Towgood (1700-1792) indicated that defensiveness in its title: *A dissent from the Church of England, fully justified*; and the subtitle indicated its line of argument: *And proved to be the genuine and just consequence of the allegiance which is due to Jesus Christ, the only lawgiver in the church*.⁵³ In the process of defending Dissent Towgood's work contained criticism of the established church and its constitutional position which would serve the Dissenting cause for many a year. The seventh edition was published by Benjamin Flower in 1798 and he described it as 'a sort of standard book with the dissenters ... no dissenting family should be without it.'⁵⁴ It also appears that extracts from the work appeared in a three penny pamphlet around the turn of the century.⁵⁵

⁵² John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, *Cato's letters or essays on liberty, civil and religious, and other important subjects*, ed. and annotated by Ronald Hamowy (4 vols. in 3, Indianapolis), vol. 1, xxiii–xxiv. Ronald Hamowy may be correct in arguing that Trenchard and Gordon in *Cato's letters* 'set forth a defense of freedom of conscience unmatched for its breadth and vigor in the literature of the period', but he accepts that their splendid theoretical argument for religious freedom was in their (Trenchard's and Gordon's) view to be limited in practice to Protestant Dissenters.

⁵³ *The Dissenting gentleman's Answer* (1746), *The Dissenting gentleman's second letter to ... Mr White* (1747) and *The Dissenting gentleman's third letter to ... Mr White* (1748). Towgood had already published *The Dissenters apology* in 1739. His reputation as a champion of Dissent was made with a series of letters in controversy with John White, perpetual curate of Nayland, Suffolk, who had accused Dissenters of schism. *Dissent from the Church of England fully justified* was a digest of those letters with some additions. On Towgood see also the discussion in Grayson Ditchfield's article in this number.

⁵⁴ *A dissent from the Church of England, fully justified* (8th edn. Cambridge, 1800), Advertisement. This edition, like the previous edition, was published in duodecimo rather than the octavo of previous edition – in the hope that, being cheaper, it would widen the audience.

⁵⁵ *Dissent from the Church of England*, in an Advertisement to this the eighth edition, Flower notes that there had recently appeared an answer by T Andrews to Towgood based on extracts in the three-penny pamphlet.

The essence of Towgood's defence was that the Dissenters' Christianity was founded upon the sufficiency of scripture and upon the rights of the individual conscience.⁵⁶ The established church had departed from true Christianity and had misused its spiritual authority for 'political and worldly purposes'.⁵⁷ Towgood denied the contemporary notion that church and state were inseparable. The church, he argued, was governed by the civil power and was a department of government like the treasury.⁵⁸ Although his book is not a tract on toleration and contained discussion of issues at best tangential to the question – such as what posture one should adopt when taking the sacrament, or whether confirmation was a Christian practice,⁵⁹ it was highly serviceable for those who wanted the extension of toleration both by abolishing the subscription requirement for Dissenting ministers, tutors and schoolmasters, portrayed as an encroachment on the right of conscience, and by repealing of the Test and Corporation Acts which was an abuse of the sacrament as a test for office.⁶⁰

So to what extent was Towgood's work representative of Enlightenment? And in Israel's terms, which one? His defence of Dissent is primarily religious – it isn't a Lockean philosophical argument for toleration – Locke is only briefly mentioned. It acknowledges the more enlightened spirit of the times, and the more tolerant nature of the age and the debt they owed to their forefathers for their 'firm adherence ... to the cause of liberty and truth, civil and religious'.⁶¹ It calls for further reformation to ensure that the 'freedom of thinking, in which the present age glories' does not lead men into 'the wilds of disconsolate infidelity'.⁶²

⁵⁶ *Dissent from the Church of England*, 151. See also vi. Unlikely as it seems, Towgood was prepared to envisage a day when the Almighty 'shall dispose the hearts of our brethren, who have cast us out, to receive us again.' For the importance of individual conscience and of scriptural sufficiency, see Alan P F Sell, 'Some Theological aspects of the English Enlightenment Calmly Consider'd', *Eighteenth Century Thought*, 2 (2002), 255-98 and his, *John Locke and the eighteenth-century divines*, 143-45.

⁵⁷ *Dissent from the Church of England*, 16.

⁵⁸ *Dissent from the Church of England*, 63-4, 130-31, 220-21. Towgood specifically denies the notion of church and state being 'like a married pair' which 'must stand or fall together'.

⁵⁹ *Dissent from the Church of England*, 14, 141-44.

⁶⁰ *Dissent from the Church of England*, in 1787. Towgood adds, as an appendix, the views of counsel on whether a clergyman had the right to deny a 'notorious and evil liver' from taking the sacrament, which he needed to take to qualify for office.

⁶¹ *Dissent from the Church of England*, 149-50, n.‡.

⁶² *Dissent from the Church of England*, 271-72.

Although it is a defence of separation from the Church of England, it also hopes for Christian unity, and by Christian it means Protestant Christian.⁶³ So one can make a case for it being an example of moderate and fairly modest Enlightenment, useful to the cause of Protestant toleration. Indeed subsequent editions added information relating to the campaigns for the abolition of subscription and to the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. However, in so far as it crosses boundaries, those are all Protestant. It does not make the transition from limited toleration to universal toleration.

Can that transition be traced in a movement away from an appeal to candour to an appeal of natural rights? This idea, articulated by Anthony Lincoln in his excellent *Some political and social ideas of English Dissent 1763-1800* (Cambridge 1938),⁶⁴ was, as noted, applied to the Dissenting campaigns for greater toleration in the late eighteenth century by R B Barlow.⁶⁵ The campaign for the relief of subscription for Dissenting ministers, tutors and school masters he encapsulated as the ‘appeal to candour’ and that for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Act as the ‘appeal to human rights.’ If this is correct, then the 1770s can be seen as a period of moderate enlightenment and the 1780s of radical enlightenment very much in line with Israel’s thesis. However that depends upon an important assumption, namely that the appeal to candour was an alternative to the appeal to human rights. Whereas it can be argued that those appeals existed alongside each other, and that they both to a degree changed in character as the century war. That change can in part be seen in terms of radicalisation but never completely.

Candour

Candour is a complex concept and it was not superseded by the claim for ‘human rights’. It could be deployed in ways suitable to a moderate

⁶³ *Dissent from the Church of England*, 273. He echoes, the Genevan Pastor, Jean Alphonse Turretini (1671-1737), whom he had read on subscription through Samuel Chandler’s translation, in calling for the demolition of the ‘walls’ separating the churches. See Samuel Chandler, *The case of subscription to explanatory articles of faith as a qualification for admission into the Christian Ministry, calmly and impartially reviewed* (London, 1748), 175.

⁶⁴ *Op.cit.*, 239. See the critical study, Alan Saunders, ‘The state as highwayman: from candour to natural rights’, in Haakonssen ed., *Enlightenment and religion*, 241-71, at 242-43.

⁶⁵ Barlow, *Citizenship and conscience*.

enlightenment and to a radical enlightenment. I would suggest that the dominant view of candour to the mid century and beyond was one which stressed impartiality, sincerity, the desire to be free from prejudice, the acceptance that one may be in the wrong, and a proper respect for the opinions of others. Controversy carried on in the spirit of ‘candour and moderation’ was, according to Andrew Kippis, employing the method used by ‘a Locke or a Hoadly’,⁶⁶ and this form of candour was particularly associated with a charitable disposition.⁶⁷

Such a view of candour embodied a sensitivity to the dangers of plain speaking and an awareness that some subjects (notably theological ones) were so polarising that care should be taken in expressing one’s views. Thus for example Nathaniel Lardner (1684-1768) wrote his *Letter concerning the logos* – which put forward a humanitarian view of Jesus – in 1730. It was not published until 1759⁶⁸ and then anonymously and only with the author’s name posthumously in 1788. Lardner’s *Letter* was a key text in persuading Priestley to adopt a Socinian position (so

⁶⁶ Andrew Kippis in his introductory preface to the third edition of Joseph Fownes’s *An enquiry into the principles of toleration* (London, 1790), preface np. Fownes, in the preface to the first edition, praised Locke, but was unaware that the words he cited were those of William Popple: ‘absolute liberty, just and true, equal and impartial liberty is the thing we stand in need of’. It is a matter of contention as to whether Locke approved of Popple’s word, but is worth noting that in the scale of Dissenting writing on toleration, Fownes weighs down on the moderate side. See John Horton & Susan Mendus, *John Locke’s “a Letter Concerning Toleration” in focus* (London, 1991), 9-10. The same passage was cited via Blackburne’s *Confessional* by Samuel Heywood in a footnote in the second edition of his *The right of Protestant Dissenters to a complete toleration asserted* (London, 1789), 50.

⁶⁷ This was a view of candour which Mary Ann Kilner (1753-1831) taught her young audience. See *A course of lectures, for Sunday evenings: containing religious advice to young persons: in two volumes* (5th edn. London, 1790?), I, 74-79, Sunday XII, On Candour. Kilner was of Huguenot origins. Candour, identified as a key constituent of Englishness, is explored by Paul Langford in *Englishness identified, manners and character 1650-1850* (Oxford, 2000), ch.2, 85-136.

⁶⁸ Nathaniel Lardner, *A letter writ in the year 1730. Concerning the question whether the Logos supplied the place of the human soul in the person of Jesus Christ. To which are now added two postscripts ...* (London, 1759). In his Preface (iv) Lardner hoped that the question could be discussed ‘without noise and disturbance, in the way of free, calm, and peaceable debate’.

Priestley informs us).⁶⁹ He knew Lardner and submitted a manuscript to him on the doctrine of the atonement which was too heterodox for Lardner who was prepared to publish only part of it. In due course Priestley went ahead and published in full his ideas on the atonement.⁷⁰ One of those works was his *Appeal to the serious and candid professors of Christianity* (1772) and at once we can see that a much bolder, more combative idea of candour was being employed. Priestley was prepared to follow his ideas wherever they took him and to publish the results. Being the optimist that he was, he believed that if the serious professors were candid they would examine his ideas without any preconceptions and come to impartial conclusions, which he believed would favour his own views. Whereas the former view of candour embodied a good deal of the acceptance of the status quo and so fits well into Israel's notion of moderate enlightenment, Priestley claimed candour as an ally of rigorous controversy. He hoped that truth would be pursued with 'pious zeal and charitable severity'.⁷¹ Priestley was something of a loose cannon. When William Enfield pointed out that stirring up ideas about religious liberty and complaining of ecclesiastical tyranny endangered the peace and tranquillity which allowed Dissenters freedom for their own religious opinions, he ignored his prophetic observation and some twenty years later suffered at the hands of the rioters of Birmingham.⁷²

So what I am arguing is that there was not so much a move away from an appeal to candour, as a means of gaining greater toleration for

⁶⁹ Priestley implies, by stating his indebtedness to Lardner, that he had not been reading Socinus. Alan P F Sell, *Christ and controversy. The person of Christ in Nonconformist thought and ecclesial experience, 1600-2000* (Eugene, OR, 2011), 50. Arianism not Socinianism was the source of debate at Daventry Academy and there are no references to Socinus or the Racovian Catechism in the 1763 edition of Philip Doddridge's, *A course of lectures on the principal subjects in pneumatology, ethics, and divinity: with references to the most considerable authors on each ...*

⁷⁰ In his *Familiar illustration of certain passages of scripture* (Leeds 1770) and in his *Appeal to the serious and candid professors of Christianity* (London 1772). Both works went through several reprintings.

⁷¹ Sermon on persecution: a sermon first preached at Mill Hill Chapel, Leeds 23rd December 1770, p.4, I am indebted for this reference to Dr. Tony Rail who has transcribed the sermon from shorthand.

⁷² See my 'Rousing the Sleeping Lion. Joseph Priestley and the Constitution in Church and State', The Inaugural Leeds Library Priestley Lecture, 1 Nov. 1993 (Leeds, 1993), esp. 16-17.

Dissenters, towards claiming toleration as a human right, rather candour took on a different complexion as the century wore on.⁷³ Not all Dissenters approved of the assertive Priestleian variant. Many, like Enfield, saw its dangers and did not wish to incur more social disapproval than already existed. Fearing the stirring of a hornets nest on the question of toleration they believed in preparing the ground for the extension of toleration by negotiating with the political establishment. So for those who maintained such a belief it was fortuitous that the campaign for the abolition of subscription in 1772 began with what was in effect an invitation from Lord North's Government⁷⁴ and when they succeeded in 1779 it was in part through negotiation and compromise. By the mid 1780s the situation had changed. The development of extra-parliamentary movements for parliamentary reform in which Rational Dissenters played an active part may have encouraged them to act independently of government.⁷⁵ The Dissenters led by Rational Dissenters took the decision themselves to campaign for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. They appointed a repeal committee which organised campaigning, eventually on a countrywide basis. They appealed to public opinion and they canvassed MPs and lobbied the government. Early in their campaigning a pamphlet was published entitled *An appeal to the candor*,

⁷³ Saunders, 'The state as highwayman', notes 'After 1773 (the Dissenters) might speak more of rights than hitherto, but they could not speak less of candour...', 268.

⁷⁴ In the debate on the Feather's Tavern Petition Lord North remarked that his objections to any change in requirement for Anglican clergy to subscribe to the Thirty-Nine articles would not apply to a claim for relief from subscription for the Dissenting Clergy. See John Stephens, 'The London ministers and subscription, 1772-1779', *Enlightenment and Dissent*, 1 (1982), 43-72 at 43.

⁷⁵ For example, Richard Price, John Jebb, Joseph Towers, Capel Lofft, Andrew Kippis, Matthew Towgood and Thomas Brand Hollis were all member of the Society for Constitutional Information. Many also supported Christopher Wyvill's Association movement. The movements for parliamentary reform were, however, wary of including wider toleration in their programme. When the Society for Constitutional Information eventually included a toast for religious toleration at one of their dinners – on 10 May 1786 following a general audit – the minutes show that the wording of the toast was altered to exclude; 'May universal toleration prevail through all the world'. Later in the year the society refused Richard Price's request that the Virginian Act for Establishing Religious Freedom be printed among their tracts. Public Record Office, Minutes of the Society for Constitutional Information, Treasury Solicitor's Papers, 11.961, f.139, ff. 151-52.

*magnanimity and justice of those in power.*⁷⁶ Written by someone closely associated with the repeal committee, it reads more like a demand than a request for an impartial consideration of the matter: that is, if those in power were candid, they would have to accept some unpalatable truths and concede the extension of toleration to the Dissenters. This was obvious enough from the full title: *An appeal to the candor, magnanimity and justice of those in power, to relieve from severe and opprobrious severities and penalties, a great number of their fellow subjects, who will give every security and testimony of their fidelity and attachment to the present establishment, which does not oblige them to violate their consciences.* What candid person would not want to relieve them of *severe and opprobrious severities and penalties*?

The pamphlet began with a cautionary reminder to those in power, taken from Milton, that ‘any law against conscience, is alike in force against any conscience, and so may, one way or other, justly redound upon themselves.’⁷⁷ And then it proceeded to list many of the Dissenting grievances and not just those relating to the Test and Corporation Acts. It concluded as one might expect: ‘every consideration of humanity, justice are united, and plead for the repeal of these obnoxious acts.’⁷⁸ During the course of the argument the writer makes it clear that the repeal of the acts would be in line with the growing evidence of toleration in an enlightened age (in France and in the Habsburg Empire). Repeal should be granted in the spirit of enlightened patriotism for a nation which ‘prides herself on being more free and illumined than the rest of mankind...’⁷⁹ The writer

⁷⁶ *An Appeal to the candor, magnanimity and justice of those in power* (London, 1787). The pamphlet was published on 20 March 1787. The author of the pamphlet knew of the replies which the repeal committee had received from counsel concerning the legal position of Dissent.

⁷⁷ *An appeal to the candor, magnanimity and justice of those in power*, 3. John Milton’s *A treatise of civil power in ecclesiastical causes* (1659), was reprinted by Joseph Johnson in 1790 with a dedication to Richard Price. For the quotation see, p. vi. The author has adapted the quotation and placed it in the third person. There appears to have been no separate printing of this work between its first publication and Johnson’s edition, but that does not mean that it was not accessible. There were editions of Milton’s prose works published in 1698 and 1738 and one sponsored by Thomas Hollis of Lincoln’s Inn Field, edited by Richard Baron in 2 volumes (1753–56). See W H Bond, *Thomas Hollis of Lincoln’s Inn. A Whig and his books* (Cambridge, 1990).

⁷⁸ *An appeal*, 12.

⁷⁹ *An appeal*, 7–8.

aligns himself with radical ideas of toleration: toleration was not to be circumscribed by prudential considerations. Foreshadowing Paine, 'The word (toleration) ought not to be used in a free state, as the cause ought not to exist.'⁸⁰

The appeal failed but the repeal committee, were convinced that their cause would ultimately prevail.⁸¹ Thus, what D O Thomas called the doctrine of candour, can at this time be associated with radical Enlightenment. This is not to say that all those who supported the cause of wider toleration for Dissenters were in the radical Enlightenment camp, and that they all understood candour in the same way. As in the case of parliamentary reform one could find those who favoured moderate reform and those who favoured radical reform. Very often they used the same language, but what is tangible is that during the campaign for repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts there was a move away from Protestant libertarianism to universal rights, from protestant toleration to universal toleration. In this context, the appeal to candour was less an appeal to those with influence (despite the title of the aforementioned tract) it was an appeal to public opinion; prudential considerations were less important than the pursuit of truth through open public debate.⁸² Hence Alan Saunders' valuable suggestion that 'candour, which once meant being impartial as between persons, came eventually to mean being impartial as

⁸⁰ *An Appeal*, 8. In his *A view of the principles of the principles and conduct of protestant dissenters* (1769), Priestley had referred to toleration as a 'humiliating idea'. Cf. Thomas Paine: 'Toleration is not the *opposite* of intolerance, but is the *counterfeit* of it. Both are despotisms. The one assumes to itself the right of with-holding Liberty of Conscience, and the other of granting it.' See Mark Philp ed., *Thomas Paine: Rights of man, Common sense, and other political writings*, (Oxford & New York, 1995), 137.

⁸¹ Thomas W Davis ed., *Committee for repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts Minutes 1786-90 and 1827-8* (London Record Society, 1978), 19. Their repeal committee declared that 'A claim which stands upon such high grounds as natural right and political wisdom cannot in the end fail to dispel every degree of apprehension and jealousy and to triumph over opposition'.

⁸² John Jebb went so far as to suggest that, 'There are times, when it should be esteemed criminal in any person, arrived at years of discretion, not to have formed an opinion – treasonable, when a fair opportunity presents itself, not to propagate, and support his opinion, by the force of the argument, and every legal method in his power.' *An address to the freeholders of Middlesex, assembled at Free Masons Tavern, in Great Queen Street, on Monday the 20th of December, 1779* (London 1779, 4th edn. corr., 1782), 7 fn.‡.

between ideas.’⁸³ Candour thus became a vital means for the progress of knowledge, as Sir George Savile put it in the debate on the Feathers Tavern Petition, ‘Truth needs not be afraid of not obtaining the victory on a fair trial ... For it is to impartial and free inquiry only that error owes its ruin and truth its success.’⁸⁴

Natural Rights

The claim of a natural right to toleration was not exclusive to the later eighteenth century. The Dissenters earlier in the century believed that they had a right to toleration. Indeed in 1739 the first point which they made in the case for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts was:

Every man has an undoubted right to judge for himself in matters of religion. No one therefore ought to be punished, by being deprived of any of the common rights of subjects, and branded with a mark of infamy, merely for exercising this right in things that no way affects the public welfare and prosperity of the kingdom.

Such a claim was combined with the argument that the Dissenters had a proven record as loyal, worthy citizens. It was to the detriment of the community that they were deprived of serving in corporations. They went so far as to suggest that as ‘many persons of substance and capacity’ had been excluded by the Corporation Act, ‘the government of several corporations has fallen into the hands of the meaner sort of people, to the great prejudice of such corporations, the discouragement of industry, and the decay of trade.’⁸⁵ In so far as an appeal to candour was deployed it was to indicate that any prudent, right thinking person would concede that it was in the interest of social harmony to repeal the Test and Corporation Acts. Furthermore there was no question that the movement at that time for greater toleration included Roman Catholics. Their uncertain loyalty precluded the acceptance of their natural right to liberty of conscience.

⁸³ Saunders’ important discussion is in his, ‘The state as highwayman: from candour to rights’; for his suggestion, 249. See also the discussion of candour in Mark Philip’s, ‘Preaching to the unconverted...’, herein, *passim*.

⁸⁴ Belsham, *Memoirs of Lindsey*, 60. Savile was an influential supporter of Theophilus Lindsey, who became a trustee as well as a subscriber to his Unitarian chapel in Essex Street, London. See, Ditchfield, *The letters of Theophilus Lindsey (1723-1808)*, I: lxxv.

⁸⁵ Bernard Lord Manning, ed. by Ormerod Greenwood, *The Protestant Dissenting Deputies* (Cambridge, 1952), 30-31.

When Priestley dared in his *Essay on the first principles of government* to suggest that all faiths should be tolerated – no religion should be regarded as criminal, and no opinion should be outlawed⁸⁶ – he immediately drew the wrath of Hollisites, particularly Archdeacon Blackburne. Less predictable was that Andrew Kippis a fellow Rational Dissenters dismissed his arguments as superficial.

‘...Dr. Priestley, pleads for a full toleration of the papists; and this we cannot avoid regarding as the most exceptionable part of his treatise. He has by no means considered the subject with the accuracy and the extent which its great importance demands. The question, whether the papists have a right to a full toleration, is not to be discussed in the compass of eight small pages.’⁸⁷

Some twenty years later, when delivering the sermon celebrating the centenary of the Glorious Revolution before the London Revolution Society, Kippis welcomed the relaxation of the some of the penal statutes against Roman Catholics and expressed the hope that ‘it may be reserved for the farther glory of this reign, to abolish all penal laws in matters of religion’.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ *Essay on government*, 275-6.

⁸⁷ *The Monthly Review*, XXXIX, 473-74. Kippis would become one of the most influential of Rational Dissenters and would help the repeal committee in 1787 to prepare the case for repeal and subsequently assist with their publications. See Davis ed., *Committee for repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts*, minutes 9-10, 47, 106, 129.

⁸⁸ *A sermon preached at the Old Jewry on the Fourth of November 1788 before the Society for Commemorating the Glorious Revolution* (London, 1788), 29. Kippis was not as radical as Priestley for no doubt he had Catholics in mind in arguing that such toleration could only be granted to an individual who is able to give ‘security for his civil allegiance and his peaceable behaviour as a member of the community.’ This was very much the condition of Pitt’s government for increasing the toleration available to Catholics. Kippis’s language differs from Price and Priestley. He associates himself with those who promote through ‘religious, civil and social acts, the genuine principles of Whiggism and of the English constitution’; *ibid.*, 4. In his sermon Kippis went over the history of James II’s reign and in the process demonstrated that the Glorious Revolution had saved Britain from the dangers of Popery; *ibid.*; 8-10. But England was already a limited monarchy with a balanced constitution under the Tudors; *ibid.*, 17. He passes over the civil wars without comment, jumping straight from the Petition of Right to the reign of Charles II; *ibid.*, 22. Later he is very critical of the English Revolution and its failure to secure anything ‘solid, effectual and lasting’; *ibid.*, 31.

In his peroration he exhorted his congregation: 'Let it be the object of your fervent solicitude, that the cause of liberal inquiry, of universal toleration, and of public and private freedom, may live and flourish when yourselves are laid in the silent grave.'⁸⁹

This might appear to endorse Israel's argument that the movement of ideas comes first and then enlightened action follows as their persuasive force takes effect. In the case of the Dissenters it didn't happen quite like that. The appeal to a more radical view of candour came as Dissenters became increasingly frustrated by their status in law.⁹⁰ Their ideas about toleration were to a considerable extent the outworking of issues concerning the law in relation to Dissent in increasingly turbulent times, some inspiring regarding toleration (notably the American Revolution) and some worrying (the Gordon Riots).⁹¹ If there was a key time it was not the 1780 but the late 1760s, early 1770s. That is when many of their ideas about toleration were clarified. The process began with prolonged legal argument about the status of Dissent under the Toleration Act. There had been a longstanding question as to whether the Dissenters had the right to refuse to take corporate office on the ground that they were not prepared to qualify sacramentally for office under the terms of the Corporation Act of 1661. Dissenters who refused to take office on such grounds could be fined for their refusal. The City of London discovered

⁸⁹ *A sermon preached at the Old Jewry*, 46. Like Price in his sermon the following year, he saw the Glorious Revolution as an exemplar to Europe. It had impacted on Europe and Britain had become 'the guardian of kingdoms', 32.

⁹⁰ Kippis, in his Preface to the 1790 edition of Joseph Fownes's, *An enquiry into the principles of toleration*, after recommending 'a spirit of moderation and candour', conceded that 'there may sometimes be cases in which bigotry and intolerance may assume so insolent a form, as to demand severe reprehension'.

⁹¹ Priestley was quick to issue an *Address* to the rioters in which he re-iterated his arguments for toleration of Roman Catholics. Iain McCalman in his 'New Jerusalem: prophecy, Dissent and radical culture in England, 1786-1830', in Haakonssen ed., 320, notes that Priestley's aims were the same as those of George Gordon and that he 'merely disputed "the means used to secure your great object"'. It is true that Priestley and most Dissenters had an millenarian expectation that Popery would eventually come crashing down, but there is a significant difference between those like George Gordon who favoured maintaining, if necessary by violent means, the repression of the Catholics in England and those like Priestley who arguing consistently for the relaxation of penal laws against them, kept on convivial terms with his Catholic neighbours, and who expected that the Catholicism would be trounced in candid argumentation.

that this was a useful way to raise cash toward the construction of a new Mansion House. The practice was challenged finally in the courts in what became the case of *Allen Evans*. At stake was whether the Toleration Act legalised Dissent and so gave them the right to refuse office on conscientious grounds. Eventually the Dissenters won in the House of Lords in 1767, when Lord Mansfield declared a ringing verdict that the practice amounted to persecution which was contrary to ‘Natural Religion, Revealed Religion, and sound Policy.’⁹²

When Sir William Blackstone published in 1769 volume four of his *Commentaries on the laws of England* (1765-1769) he ignored the Mansfield verdict and described nonconformity as a negative offence against the established church. As one might expect, Priestley was quick to reply to Blackstone attacking his underlying assumption that mere nonconformity was a crime and that the Toleration Act provided only an indulgence to Dissent. While making some concessions to Priestley, Blackstone nevertheless insisted that the Toleration Act had not abolished the crime of Dissent.⁹³ His views were scrutinised in greater detail by Rev. Philip Furneaux who, with impressive erudition, went through Mansfield’s reasoning (he had been present in the House of Lords to hear the verdict, which he had memorised)⁹⁴ to argue that the Toleration act by suspending pains and penalties for Dissent represented a genuine toleration. He then took his argument beyond the toleration provided by the act. He attacked the notion that the constitution in church and state was sacred. In ‘an establishment with a toleration, it is the toleration which is the most sacred part of the constitution.’ Implicit was the notion that church and state should be separate, and one should tolerate all opinions orthodox or heterodox. He concurred with Priestley that all religions served the needs of civil society. ‘Every good subject’ should be able to follow his conscience and pursue truth as he saw fit. Human authority was inferior to the authority of Scripture. Although he was more cautious

⁹² Rev. Philip Furneaux, *Letters to the Honourable Mr. Justice Blackstone concerning his exposition of the Act of Toleration...* (2nd edn. with additions, London, 1771), 278.

⁹³ See Wilfrid Prest, *William Blackstone. Law and letters in the eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 2008).

⁹⁴ See Thomas Belsham, *Memoirs of the late Reverend Theophilus Lindsey. M.A.* (London, 1812), 65-66.

in his views than Priestley (Priestley would substitute law abiding for good subject), their logic pointed towards universal toleration and the separation of church and state. As he himself argued ‘it was quite unsatisfactory for the ‘rights of human nature’ to ‘lie at the mercy of any’.⁹⁵ The more Dissenters, and especially Rational Dissenters, whose heterodoxy technically still placed them beyond the law, examined issues relating to toleration – subscription and then the Test and Corporation Acts – the more they would contemplate the notion of toleration as a human right. Such views were fortified by the feeling that, in the enlightened age in which they lived, this was going to be the way of the future in America and Europe.

What might we conclude?

Amongst Dissenters there was a movement of opinion from demands for complete toleration for Protestant Dissenters to one for universal toleration, so that in 1790 the Dissenters’ move for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts included all affected by the acts including Roman Catholics. There was however, no simple dividing line between moderate and radical Dissenters. For example buried in Towgood’s work one can find views which had radical potential, in particular the natural right to resist power when abused,⁹⁶ the importance of free enquiry,⁹⁷ and a millenarian sense of rapid change ahead.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ For all the paragraph see my ‘Natural Law, Natural Rights and the Toleration Act’, in Diethelm Klippel ed., *Naturrecht und Staat. Politische Funktionene des europäischen Naturrechts* (München 2006), 35-58 at 52-54.

⁹⁶ *Dissent from the Church of England*, 149.

⁹⁷ Towgood was educated at Taunton Dissenting Academy where freedom of enquiry was encouraged. See David Wykes, ‘The contribution of the Dissenting academy to the emergence of Rational Dissent’, in Haakonssen ed., *Enlightenment and religion*, 121. The cautionary footnote 66 implies that it was Towgood’s tutor, Henry Grove who encouraged such an attitude, not his predecessor Matthew Warren.

⁹⁸ *Dissent from the Church of England*, 238, 261, 271: ‘The natural consequence of ... free enquiry will be, that superstition will totter, and that all claims and pretensions of a spiritual kind, which are not founded on truth will fall before the *axe laid at the root*’. In arguing against subscription Turretini (see n.62) felt the need to refute the argument that it would lead to Arminianism, Deism and Socinianism. He does so in part by suggesting that where there was no subscription requirement Socinianism had not increased: ‘Have they Socinians in *Germany*, in *England* or in *Holland*? Is there a Socinian at Zurich or Basil?’ *Ibid.*, 172.

Endorsement of universal toleration may or may not be an indication of radical political ambitions. One mustn't forget the excitement of 1789-1790, when all enlightened things seemed possible, but what those things were was often ill-defined and incoherent. If we stick to what was defined – universal toleration – one can see that it came, for a period of time, to be supported by a wide spectrum of opinion within orthodox and rational Dissent (there was no counter petition against change as there was over the subscription issue). The Rational Dissenters undoubtedly took the lead but they were not all political radicals. The best and arguably most influential case for repeal was Samuel Heywood's, *The right of Protestant Dissenters to a compleat toleration asserted*, a work which, over its three editions,⁹⁹ indicated the move from Protestant to universal toleration, but Heywood was hardly a radical even though he was a forthright defender of Dissent.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, 'compleat' toleration was not quite synonymous with universal toleration. Heywood drew attention to William Paley's definition of complete toleration in a passage which indicates that he had not broken away from a natural law approach to toleration as opposed to a straight universal rights approach. Paley uses the term 'complete' toleration to describe a situation in which Dissenters from the established church are admitted to 'offices and employments in the public service'.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ The three editions were 1787, 1789 and 1790. In the third edition, Heywood accepts that Roman Catholics could be included in the Dissenters campaign for toleration. In this he was in accord with the Dissenters' choice of Charles James Fox to propose the motion for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts in March 1790, for Fox had argued the case for universal toleration in the repeal debate of May 1789. See my 'Joseph Priestley and the cause of universal toleration', *The Price –Priestley Newsletter*, no.1 (1977), 3-30, at 18-19.

¹⁰⁰ Heywood came to take the view that the Dissenters should seek the repeal of all penal laws relative to religion, but he gently intimated to William Russell, friend and supporter of Joseph Priestley, that, although the Dissenters of his Midland district favoured moving for such a repeal, it would be prudent in the interests of Dissenting unity to focus on the Test Acts in their printed declarations. See Tony Rail, 'Looted Priestley and Russell Letters in the PRO', *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society*, XXI No.3 (April 1997), 191-204, at 195-98, Samuel Heywood to William Russell, 27 October 1789; same to same, 25 Nov. 1789; also my, 'Heywood, Samuel (1753-1828)', *Continuum Encyclopaedia of British Philosophy* (4 vols., London and New York, 2006), vol.2, 1452-1454.

¹⁰¹ Heywood, op. cit. (1st edn., London, 1787), 110-11, citing William Paley, *The principles of moral and political philosophy* (London, 1785), 581.

He confesses that his argument differs from Paley's but his conclusion is the same. He cites Paley's final summary of his discussion, 'Of religious establishments, and of toleration', which is an excellent illustration of natural law arguments for toleration in a revolutionary age:

That a comprehensive national religion, guarded by a few articles of peace and conformity, together with a legal provision for the clergy of that religion, together with a *complete* toleration of all dissenters from the established church, without any other limitation or exception, than what arises from the conjunction of dangerous political dispositions with certain religious tenets, appears to be, not only the most just and liberal, but *the wisest and safest system* [Heywood's italics] which a state can adopt: inasmuch as it unites the several perfections which a religious constitution ought to aim at – liberty of conscience, with means of instruction; the progress of truth, with the peace of society; the right of private judgement, with the care of public safety.¹⁰²

In this view, the right to liberty of conscience was not indefeasible. Of course, not all Rational Dissenters were so cautious, but the boundary between moderates and radicals was fluid, certainly in practical terms.¹⁰³ One might expect the ideological boundary to become clearer in the early 1790s when the Dissenters' campaigns had failed and when they came under considerable Loyalist pressure, sometimes violent. This one would expect to be a radicalising force. And it was to a degree. One thinks of Mrs Barbauld's, *An address to the opposers of the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts* (1790), her brother's (John Aikin's), *The spirit of the constitution and that of the Church of England compared* (1790) and *An address to the dissidents of England on their late defeat* (1790), Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the rights of men* (1791), and Samuel

¹⁰² Heywood, op. cit (1st edn., 1787), 110-11, citing Paley, *Principles of moral and political philosophy*, 586, with minor corrections when checked against my own 2 vol. 13th edn. (1801) of Paley's work: vol.2, 351-52.

¹⁰³ Convincing evidence of the fluidity of the boundaries between moderates and radicals can be found in the correspondence of Theophilus Lindsey; see the magnificent edition of his letters: Grayson Ditchfield ed., *The letters of Theophilus Lindsey (1723-1808)*, vol. I, 1744-1788; vol.II, 1789-1808, *Church of England Record Society*, 15 & 19 (2007 & 2012).

Heywood's *High Church politics* (1792) – published as a consequence of the failure of the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts and of the Unitarian petition.¹⁰⁴ Yet when in 1795 *A manual of liberty, or testimonies in behalf of the rights of mankind* was published¹⁰⁵ – the chosen extracts in the sections relating to liberty of conscience and liberty of the press (red hot issues in the year when the two acts against seditious words and writings and seditious meetings were passed) come from right across the moderate and radical boundaries charted by Israel. Under liberty of conscience the two longest extracts (c.5 pages each) were from Voltaire and William Godwin.¹⁰⁶ We find a similar cross section under liberty of the Press.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Of the failure of that petition Grayson Ditchfield has noted that, although the failure led many Unitarians to prefer the existing de facto toleration rather than campaign again and risk public opprobrium, 'this spirit of realistic acceptance was infused also with defiance.' See his 'Public and Parliamentary support for the Unitarian Petition of 1792', *Enlightenment and Dissent*, 12 (1993) 28-48 at 46.

¹⁰⁵ *The manual of liberty: or testimonies in behalf of the rights of mankind; selected from the best authorities, in prose and verse, and methodically arranged* (London, 1795) attributed to 'Marshall' by Halkett and Laing, possibly James Marshall, William Godwin's amanuensis. Extracts of this work were translated into Welsh by the radical Thomas Evans ('Tomos Glyn Cothi'); National Library of Wales MS 6238A, 'Y GELL GYMSG'. I am indebted to Dr. Marion Löffler for this reference. A poet and the first professed Unitarian minister in Wales. Evans was an admirer and translator of Priestley into Welsh, and was nicknamed 'Priestley bach' – 'the little Priestley'. A weaver by trade, he was self-educated, and was assisted in his education and in setting up his Unitarian chapel by Theophilus Lindsey who supplied him with books. For a summary of his career and his relationship with Lindsey, see Grayson Ditchfield ed., *The letters of Theophilus Lindsey (1723-1808)*, vol. II, 1789-1808, lvi; also Marion Löffler, *Welsh responses to the French Revolution: press and public discourse, 1789-1802* (Cardiff, 2012), 29.

¹⁰⁶ *The manual of liberty*, 376-92 extracts under 'liberty of conscience'; the first is from Voltaire's *Philosophical dictionary*, his article on Freedom of Sentiment, the others being from Burke, *Vindication of natural society*, Price, *Importance of the American Revolution*, Godwin, *Political justice*, a sentence from Machiavelli, Lord Mansfield in the Case of Allen Evans, Turgot, *Le conciliateur*, Montesquieu, *Persian letters*, Sir William Temple, *Works*, Helvétius *De l'homme*, and a verse from Rowe, *Tamerlane*.

¹⁰⁷ *The manual of liberty*, 393-406: two extracts from Gordon, *Cato's letters*, a footnote from Machiavelli, Lord Chesterfield, *Works*, Hume, *Essays*, Helvétius, *De l'homme* and Milton, *Liberty of unlicensed printing*.

No doubt it was a useful tactic to indicate that such concerns were not confined to radical extremes, but it is also indicative of the wide range of authorities which continued to inspire those arguing for comprehensive toleration, some home grown, others from abroad. So although there were aspects of the English Enlightenment which, as Brian Young has observed, were ‘peculiarly’ English, as far as toleration is concerned neither the English nor the British more generally, were isolated from developments on the continent or in America. There are many examples of the inter-relationship which I have been unable to discuss here, Price and Priestley being key figures. Although for Rational Dissenters the cause of liberty was a sacred cause, that notion was not unique to England or Britain.¹⁰⁸ Not all were in the Laplace camp by the end of the eighteenth century. Even in France, which provides the best example of the secularising force of the Enlightenment, in the working out of the implications of the Rights of Men and Citizens as regards toleration, the Huguenots and Jews played a crucial role.¹⁰⁹

One final observation – a year before his death Kippis preached a sermon on the subject of the calamity of war.¹¹⁰ It is a prolonged reflection on the ways of providence in which biblical text and current events are constantly juxtaposed. The times were painful indeed but Kippis was confident that the world was governed by a beneficent providence. Which is close to confirming Norman Hampsons prognosis with which I began:

This perpetual insistence on the connexion between religion – natural or revealed – and the welfare of man in society, was far from fortuitous. It was, in fact, the very basis for optimism about the moral validity of all that tangle of relationships that went by the name of ‘nature’. It was the guarantee that human laws and institutions, whose relativity to local conditions was becoming increasingly evident, could be justified in terms of an unwritten moral code common to all humanity. It was the origin of the ‘natural rights’ of man in his own society and of the superiority of the universal rights of humanity as a whole

¹⁰⁸ Kippis, *A sermon preached at the Old Jewry*, 4.

¹⁰⁹ See Lynn Hunt, *Inventing human rights. A history* (New York & London, 2007), 150-60.

¹¹⁰ Andrew Kippis, *A sermon preached at the chapel in Prince's Street, Westminster, on Friday, February 28, 1794* (London, 1794).

over the collective egoism of a particular state. It confirmed the benevolence of Providence, prescribed his duty to the citizen and ensured the harmonious concordance of self-interest and a universal moral order. For these purposes, natural religion was as efficacious as revealed, but one or the other was necessary. The coherence, as well as the confidence of the Enlightenment, rested on religious foundations.

We may also conclude that the survival of Enlightenment ideals also owed a good deal to its religious foundations and to those whose religion was most under scrutiny from the establishment in church and state.

Aberystwyth

PREACHING TO THE UNCONVERTED: RATIONALITY AND REPRESSION IN THE 1790s

Mark Philp•

This paper reflects an anxiety I have about how people talk to each other and how they write in a way that is intended to communicate to others: how they themselves understand and experience that process. In part these interests arise from discussions with Jon Mee when he was working on his latest book, *Conversable worlds*, but many of them go back a long way and have cropped up again and again in the work I have done on the 1790s and beyond, and have featured in different ways in different papers.¹ I can put the picture most starkly by saying that I believe that something significant broke down in the 1790s, so that a fissure appears in the political, cultural and social landscape that was not there before. This can be characterised in a number of ways – democrats versus aristocrats, reformers versus loyalists, supporters of France as against its detractors and critics. However described, this fissure endured for some time, and was a permanent scar for a great many members of that generation.

All political controversy involves disagreement – indeed, politics is about the authoritative resolution of disagreement (not necessarily producing agreement, but at least producing acceptance of the decision as authoritative). But what happened in the 1790s was that there was a willingness on the part of many to find authoritative judgments philosophically questionable and lacking in legitimacy and cogency and, for others, to think they need another sort of backing, created by popular mobilisation, to make them stick. As a result, among a considerable group of enlightenment minded individuals, who shared a common culture of debate and discussion, and which included many rational Dissenters, a longstanding consensus about how British politics worked fractured, leaving a number of central figures who had extended their Dissenting principles into matters of politics in the 1780s and 90s exposed and isolated.

* My thanks to Martin Fitzpatrick and those attending the *Enlightenment & Dissent* symposium in November 2011 for their comments, and to Pamela Clemit who saved me from many an error.

¹ Jon Mee, *Conversable worlds: literature, contention and community 1762-1830* (Oxford, 2011).

One question that we might ask is ‘why then’. I don’t pretend fully to answer that question, but I indicate some things that ought to go into the explanation. These include the ways in which people constructed their political discourse, which was, in turn, influenced in part by the development of certain tendencies within the generation of rational Dissenters that came of age in the 1780s and 90s. My primary research interests have been more in writers like Godwin and Paine, than in the prime movers of rational Dissent, but my sense is that a number of people who came from this wider culture, with its style of argument and its expectations of others, found themselves drawn to the debates of the early 1790s but fell victim to the unanticipated evolution of those discussions into the virulently partisan conflicts of the 1790s. One central issue concerned the relationships between religion, truth and politics.

Consider, for example, the Virginia Statute of 1786:

Whereas almighty God hath created the mind free; that all attempts to influence it by temporal punishments or burthens, or by civil incapacitations, tend only to beget habits of hypocrisy and meanness, and are a departure from the plan of the Holy author of our religion, who being Lord of both body and mind, yet chose not to propagate it by coercions on either, as was in his Almighty power to do...²

Richard Price’s response was as follows:

Had the principles which have dictated it been always acted upon by civil governments, the demon of persecution would never have existed; sincere inquiries would never have been discouraged; truth and reason would have had fair play; and most of the evils which have disturbed the peace of the world, and obstructed human improvement, would have been prevented.³

Price was simply repeating a position that was central to Dissent, but whereas the Statute was resolutely theological in character, there was an

² Virginia Statute 1786 cited in Merrill D Peterson & Robert C Vaughan, *The Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom: its evolution and consequences in American history* (Cambridge, 1988), xvii.

³ Richard Price, July 26, 1786, Letter to Mr. Urban, printed in *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, (London, 1787), vol. 57 (1), 74.

equivocation in much written in rational Dissent that suggests a broader reading. Consider, for example, Priestley's comment:

It is universally understood, that REASON and AUTHORITY are two things, and that they have generally been opposed to one another. The hand of power, therefore, on the side of any set of principles cannot but be a suspicious circumstance. And though the injunction of the magistrate may silence *voices*, it multiplies *whispers*; and those whispers are the things at which he has most reason to be alarmed.⁴

The belief in the sovereignty of individual conscience in matters of religion had no necessary connection with ideas about the rights of individuals with respect to politics. It is often suggested that there is some such connection – that the right of private judgment is naturally generalised from the dimension of religion to that of politics. It is clearly not, however, a universal deduction. Nonetheless, the borderline between politics and religion is always potentially a porous one.

In Britain, in the late eighteenth century, the vast majority of religious sects accepted the existing division between the secular and the theological, and accepted that different rules applied in each sphere and that there was no simple relationship between the demands of the two spheres. Dissenters may have chafed against the restrictions of the Test and Corporations Acts, but in many ways they did so because they felt their loyalty to the state was not in question and felt that disabilities – perhaps appropriately applied in some cases – should no longer be applied to them. In the course of the debate on the Acts many made claims about the sanctity of private judgment and the evils of enforced conformity, but that case was a conditional one – given that belief was important *and was not prejudicial to the security of the political order*, then it ought to be tolerated.

A considerable number, however, also supported the argument by an appeal to truth. Indeed, some moved from truth in one's relationship with God, to truth as a matter of rationally grounded belief. In doing so, they made possible the breaking down of the barriers between religious belief and belief and knowledge more widely. This, in turn, raised the question of how people should understand failures to perceive the truth and how

⁴ Joseph Priestley, *Essay on the first principles of government...* in *Political writings*, ed. Peter Miller (Cambridge, 1993), 56-7.

they should react when others did not respond to the appeal to truth – when they denied shared convictions and could not be persuaded. How should they understand that? And how should they react to it? This second issue becomes more acute when instead of dividing the world up into spheres of belief in which different principles apply (the religious and matters of faith, as against the political and matters of argument), we begin to see the whole of life as a single sphere in which the same principles are seen as applicable across all instances and issues. As Godwin argued, ‘truth is in reality single and uniform, and it is irresistible.’⁵ But if it is those things, why do people disagree and how can they be brought to agreement? This was a central issue for William Godwin – given his willingness to turn the secular world into a search for truth and (derivatively) virtue – but I also want to suggest that it might also have been a much more widely held position.

Note that some disagreement is clearly tolerated – conversation and deliberation involving the clash of mind with mind were central to Godwin’s account of human progress. People had to exercise their private judgment, but they also needed to engage in public discussion as a way of testing and further developing their ideas. Godwin was suspicious of dependence on the ideas of others, but he was not solipsistic: exchange and debate are central to his sense of the march of truth. He was clearly not alone – people did not necessarily believe that truth was instantly communicable but they did think that mind was progressive, that there would be convergence, and that over time progress was inevitable. And there was a powerful sense that this progress was spreading from the domain of theology and religious belief to the broader political and social world – influenced in part by the American and French Revolutions.

This encouraged a younger generation of Dissent to see progress in still more political and social terms and to raise their expectations of convergence. Godwin took this tack. He was not a hot head – he saw the need to move slowly, not to precipitate conflict. He understood that people needed time to take on board new ideas and to adjust and adapt themselves to them. But he believed that things change over time, he anticipated further and more extensive changes, and he saw it as a responsibility to promote such change.

⁵ William Godwin, *An enquiry concerning political justice* (London, 1793), 181 & 886.

In some respects, this is ground that has been quite well covered, in that Godwin scholars have looked a good deal at the shifting ways in which Godwin seeks to get his message across. In contrast to traditional biographies which tend to emphasise *Political justice*, new work by David O'Shaughnessy on Godwin on the theatre and Vicki Myers on rhetoric and the *Enquirer* has broadened our appreciation of Godwin's aspirations to convey his principles to a wider audience in ways that were more forceful and compelling.⁶ His disappointment at the speed at which Joseph Gerrald consumed *Caleb Williams* while in his prison cell awaiting transportation only confirms this sense that he was trying to do things in his work that would go substantially beyond mere entertainment.

And, when I had done all, what had I done? Written a book to amuse boys and girls in their vacant hours, a story to be hastily gobbled up by them, swallowed in a pusillanimous and unanimated mood, without chewing or digestion. [Joseph Gerrald] told me that he had received my book late one evening, and had read through the three volumes before he closed his eyes. Thus, what had cost me twelve month's labour, ceaseless heartaches and industry, now sinking into despair, and now raised and sustained in unusual energy, he went over in a few hours, shut the book, laid himself on his pillow, slept and was refreshed, and cried, Tomorrow to fresh woods and pastures new.⁷

It was an unusual moment of self-doubt for Godwin (although one he commits to paper only in 1832) – but it speaks to the extent to which he was ambitious for his work, not as entertainment, but as instruction and communication. Indeed, the same can be said for his attitude to the theatre. In a note among Godwin's papers he wrote:

Why is the drama useful?

Because it is eminently subservient to the discovery & propagation of truth

Moral truths, if they have not been discovered, have in this

⁶ David O'Shaughnessy, *William Godwin and the theatre* (London, 2010); Victoria Myers, 'William Godwin and the *Ars Rhetorica*', *Studies in Romanticism*, 41 (3), 2002. Also, thanks to Pamela Clemit's emerging volumes of Godwin's letters, readers can see Godwin's own struggles with candour in his most intimate friendships: *The letters of William Godwin: volume 1: 1778-1797*, ed. Pamela Clemit (Oxford, 2011).

⁷ Don Locke, *A fantasy of reason* (London, 1980), 70-71.

method been elucidated & enforced

It does that, which sermons were intended to do: it forms the link between the literary class of mankind & the uninstructed, the bridge by which the latter may pass over into the domains of the former

In comparison with this object, of what consequence is it, whether it does or does not inculcate les petites moralités.⁸

Although this attention has added considerably to our appreciation of Godwin's purposes and of the extent to which they informed the broad range of his work, less attention has been given to Godwin's own reaction to the resistance of others to his views, aspirations, and arguments.

I have argued elsewhere that what happened in the political, literary and cultural world of Britain from 1792 was a gradual escalation of political conflict such that the terms of engagement changed dramatically.⁹ What began as a literary and philosophical debate, was no longer that – no longer a discussion or conversation. It became an increasingly bitter conflict, generating on the one side forms of popular mobilization and protest, and invoking on the other the full penalty of the law, government repression, and the mobilisation of loyalism. In that context, with an increasingly Manichean division of reformers and loyalists, how were people to understand and explain their opponents' positions?

There was also the supplementary question of at what point candour and the exploration of truth stopped? How far does candour remain an obligation irrespective of the response? For those raised in traditions of rational Dissent, candour involved a way of communicating – both a way of expressing one's thoughts and beliefs, and a manner of listening – one that had to give due weight to what others said. In *Political justice*, Godwin argued that the obligation to truth over-rode incidental objectives, such as preserving one's life!¹⁰ But could there be a point at which people might come to see the other as sufficiently malign, corrupt, and autocratic

⁸ Abinger MS Dep c. 21 fol. 57; transcribed in Pamela Clemit ed., *The letters of William Godwin vol.1 1778-1797* (Oxford, 2011), 66, n.1.

⁹ See my 'Fragmented Ideology of Reform' in Mark Philp ed., *The French Revolution and British popular politics* (Cambridge, 1990), and 'Disconcerting Ideas: Explaining Popular Radicalism and Popular Loyalism in the 1790s', in Glenn Burgess and Matthew Festenstein eds., *British radicalism 1550-1850* (Cambridge, 2007).

¹⁰ William Godwin, *An enquiry concerning political justice* (London, 1793), Bk IV, chap III, section II, 238-52.

to warrant giving up on candour? That question might track a philosophical point (about the conditions for acknowledging the other as conversationally competent)¹¹ – but it might also point to a more historical question about when in fact people began to feel it was no longer possible to argue. Was it with the defeat of the attempts to repeal the Test and Corporations Acts? Or with the destruction of Priestley's home and those of others in the Birmingham Riots in July 1791; or was it with the rise of the Reeves' Associations for the Preservation of Liberty and Property Against Republicans and Levellers (from December 1792); or the Treason Trials of 1794, or was it delayed to the Gagging Acts of 1795, or after? Did different communities experience these things differently, at different times, even if they came to similar conclusions?

* * * * *

As Jon Mee's *Conversable worlds* shows, there were different modes of conversation, from the polite, to the robust, to the clash of mind with mind.¹² People had different understandings of the conventions, and distinguished different degrees of acceptability in the manner of conversation. And there were different conventions for different circles, and over time these conventions changed, as did the circles. Circles associated with rational Dissent shared a particular view of how such argument should proceed: candid, not conversational; truth orientated, not for enjoyment and entertainment; committed and serious, not light or witty.¹³

The conversable world was one in which people argued – but the argument was not a war. It was an exchange, it was explorative, and it changed people. But there was also a back-up account – a way of explaining pre-conceptions – in terms of corruption, self-interest, fraud and power and the gains that arose from this. That helped people to account for the delays and resistances. From this position it was easy to believe that Burke has been purloined by a pension, that the government was serving very particular class interests – that it was becoming despotic

¹¹ On which see a large part of the *oeuvre* of Jurgen Habermas.

¹² *Conversable worlds...*, Introduction and Ch. 1.

¹³ See D O Thomas, *The honest mind: the thought and work of Richard Price* (Oxford, 1977); Martin Fitzpatrick, 'Toleration and Truth', *Enlightenment and Dissent*, 1 (1982), 3-31; and my 'Democratic virtues: between candour and preference falsification' *Enlightenment and Dissent*, 19 (2000) 23-44.

in resisting the voices of reasoned argument by having recourse to force. In the case of rational Dissent there is evidence that they already had recourse to such explanations and were (in many cases) tempted to take a more retiring approach to the world, from the late 1780s. This certainly does not apply to all: Richard Price, writing to Priestley pointed out that ‘You endeavour very kindly to comfort me over Mr Burke’s abuse but I have not been much impressed by it ... Such has been the fate of most persons who have aimed at mending the world and opposed the corruption of the world.’¹⁴ Nonetheless, with several exceptions, there was widespread loyalist activity directed against Dissenters and reformers more broadly, and an increasing withdrawal, and a drawing in amongst a close group of friends, neighbours and co-religionists in many areas of the country. This seems to have been less acute in areas of Dissenting strength – Cookson, cites Norwich, Nottingham, Leeds, and Liverpool, but also Exeter, Shrewsbury, Warwick, Derby and Sheffield.¹⁵ There was also London. In some of these places there was resistance to quietism, but that necessitated a more elaborated sense of why a premeditated and carefully contrived persecution was happening and how it should be met.¹⁶

While Dissent had a number of resources for this task, drawing on strong Christian traditions in their responses to the war with France, a slightly different situation probably faced those who had moved closer to infidelity and away from these core Dissenting communities. That group, which was concentrated in London, was rather insulated from the earlier backlash against Dissent. Its members were less directly threatened by Loyalism (again, especially in London), and some were buoyed up to a considerable extent by the successes of the Society for Constitutional Information and the London Corresponding Society in regenerating the extra-parliamentary movement for reform. Perhaps most important was

¹⁴ *The correspondence of Richard Price: volume III February 1786-February 1791*, ed. Bernard Peach & D O Thomas (Cardiff, Durham N.C., 1994), 337.

¹⁵ John Cookson, *The Friends of Peace* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983). But the story in even these towns is a complex, varied and local one as evidenced in Martin Fitzpatrick’s ‘The View from Mount Pleasant: Enlightenment in late-eighteenth century Liverpool’, *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 2008 (1), 119-44; and in the broader survey of anti-Dissenting attacks in David L Wykes, “‘The Spirit of Persecutors exemplified’”. The Priestley Riots and the victims of the Church and King mobs’, *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society*, XX, no.1 (April, 1991), 17-39.

¹⁶ Cookson, 13: ‘persecution, premeditated and carefully contrived’.

the existence of a very strong sense of solidarity amongst a large coterie of the middling and professional classes who were looking for reform. These men and women did come, increasingly, to see the government as engaged in a conspiracy against their liberties, but they also believed that time and numbers were on their side, and that the people would awake to the imposture being practiced by the government with its alarms about Jacobinism.

Godwin, for example, accused John Reeves of dashing the means of propaganda from the hands of the reform associations only to pick them up and use them himself. Godwin professed (and there is every reason to think he was being sincere) that the use of pamphlets, squibs, songs and handbills served only to disturb the population – effectively he doubted their value as a means of spreading truth and enlightening the population. He reproved Reeves for taking the same tools and doing so to excite the vulgar – ‘to pull down the houses and destroy the property of the Dissenters.’ He went on to deny that Reeves was a sincere friend of the constitution – ‘Every sincere advocate for the Constitution will wish for no better than a fair and tranquil field of debate and an honourable surrender on both sides of all the means of inflammation...’ But Reeves was not a sincere adherent since ‘every disputant that breaks out into rage, scurrility, and violence, proves that he has no confidence in the strength of his arguments. If you believed what you pretend to believe, you would scorn to take advantages; you would not fear for the event in the contest.’ But he predicted that within months his followers would discover him in his plot against the liberties of all. For Godwin, the people could be deceived, but not indefinitely, and those who imposed upon them would be discovered and disdained.¹⁷

The same understanding was at work in his letter to Sir Archibald Macdonald, save that, for Godwin, the standing of Attorney General made his attack on freedom of expression still more dangerous. He quoted Macdonald as saying that ‘Intemperate speaking is pregnant with danger’, responding by accusing him of being the more dangerous: ‘it is *your* conduct that is pregnant with danger – danger to the cause you pretend to espouse, and not the words of an intoxicated Tallow chandler. There is no

¹⁷ See ‘To Mr Reeves, Chairman of the Society for protecting Liberty and Property...,’ signed Mucius in *Political and philosophical writings of William Godwin*, ed. Mark Philp (London, 1993), vol. 2, 16-19.

method that leads so surely and so suddenly to the dissolution of power, as an endeavour to stretch it beyond its ability.’¹⁸

We might think this was merely a rhetorical strategy, but it was so extensively deployed by Godwin, and was so much in keeping with his principles and his profession of them, that there are grounds for taking it at face value. Government for Godwin, as for Hume, was founded on opinion.¹⁹ Inflaming that opinion, or usurping authority in the name of jeopardy or security, risked disturbing the balance of the political order and the orderly progress of truth and understanding. Godwin was as critical of the reformers when they resorted to scurrility and rabble rousing as he was to the government when it did so, because he thought – indeed, in the light of the Gordon riots and the Priestley riots, he knew – that opinion could run wild when artfully stimulated, with dramatic, indeed terrible, consequences. He thought the vulgar were misled, in want of education and enlightenment, and were being exploited by both sides, who incited their hostility for their own purposes, even though they were often ill-served by the results.

In the early 1790s Godwin saw himself as holding a line – and he devoted himself to holding it. He did so in his debates with members of the reform organisations; in his remonstrations in *Cursory strictures* and his *Considerations*, which were written in terms that were equally reproving to the government and to the activities of the reform societies (and those of his friend John Thelwall); in *Political justice* and its revisions; and in the *Enquirer* and his shift to a more conversational mode. He held that line throughout the 1790s. He was not put off by the Birmingham riots, nor by the course of French events, nor by the draconian sentences delivered by Braxfield against his friends, nor by the challenges of the Treason Trials and then the two Acts. His disappointment in the war was rehearsed early – as were his fears that this too was a matter of policy – ‘the cause of the present war is despotism, the consequence is anarchy’:

It was with great difficulty the people of England were drawn into the snare which was spread for them. A long apparatus was necessary of panics, and associations, and signatures solicited

¹⁸ ‘To Sir Archibald Macdonald, Attorney General’ signed Mucius, *Political and philosophical writings*, vol. 2, 20-23 (emphasis added).

¹⁹ *Political justice*, II (IV), 105; Hume’s *Essays: moral, political and literary* ‘Of the First Principles of Government’.

through every corner of the island, and crafty invectives in behalf of a murdered monarch whom no man was in earnest to save. At last it is but like a nocturnal intoxication which may vanish before morning.

There is an easy and a sure path. Let each man who reflects have an opinion upon the subject. Let him not have a half faced opinion, but one that carries his heart and soul along with it. Let him declare that opinion with constancy and firmness. Let him exert his powers to clear away the darkness that clouds his neighbour's mind. Let him do this and in a little month perhaps we shall regain a station of tranquillity. In a little month we shall have driven far off the catastrophe which otherwise too surely threatens us, and which the heart of every man of humanity and discernment bleeds to contemplate.²⁰

So he identified insincerity, collusion, corruption and subterfuge in the government, but he stuck to the exchange and to the measured tones of argument. He did not try to persuade the designing Machiavels in government, but he wanted to show the people that they were being misled. In that sense he believed that candour and argument could move people, even when government forces blustered and confused them.

But that situation did not persist. Consider Godwin's relationship with Samuel Parr with whom he had been on good terms for some years, visiting him on several occasions in Warwickshire and meeting with him in London during Parr's visit to town. Indeed, there is a suggestion that Godwin and Parr's daughter Sarah may have had a flirtatious (if that word can properly be used with respect to Godwin) attachment, possibly an understanding. In his *Thoughts occasioned ... by Parr*, Godwin drew attention to those who had, unlike himself, welcomed and stuck by the French Revolution through its bloodiest days only, in 1797, to turn against France and the possibilities of human progress. The rise of Napoleon – whom Godwin described as 'an auspicious and beneficent genius' – had preserved the great principles of the revolution, and 'every thing promises that the future government of France will be popular, and her people will free.'²¹ But what had turned the English friends of liberty was the failure

²⁰ 'Essay against reopening the war with France' in *Political and philosophical writings*, vol. 2, 57-58.

²¹ 'Thoughts occasioned by the perusal of Dr Parr's Spital Sermon...' in *Political and philosophical writings*, vol. 2, 169.

of the more general cause. As that declined, so too has their own enthusiasm – ‘the human intellect is a sort of barometer, directed in its variations by the atmosphere which surrounds it.’²²

In these comments, Godwin was effectively trying to resist the tide – to insist that his position was unchanged, while others fluctuated along with public opinion, and that doing so indicated a defect in character, candour and commitment. For Godwin, the philosopher does not waver in his commitment to truth and to his principles, even when (as he does in *Political justice*) he revises in the light of further argument and deliberation. That, however, is not a case of bowing to public pressure and the vagaries of opinion; it is a process of reasoned debate and judgment. The position he took throughout the piece is that of a vilified innocent, whose position is above the storm and above reproach. But that meant that he had to have a way of explaining the positions adopted by his enemies and critics. He accused Mackintosh of tergiversation. But Parr was another matter. Godwin admitted that there was no apostasy here, but that, with Jacobinism destroyed, ‘Dr Parr has chosen, to muster his troops, and sound the trumpet of war.’²³

Godwin and Parr had debated with each other on many occasions (with Godwin undergoing a detailed criticism by Parr during one of his visits there),²⁴ but it was the attack from the pulpit, and by innuendo, that Godwin resented, because it turned their private exchanges into a public denunciation. ‘I will accuse him, as king Lear reproaches the angry skies, that, if he were not of my political kindred, and “owed me no subscription, yet I call him servile” auxiliary that he has “joined his high-engendered battles” to theirs.’ Above all, it was Parr’s non-deliberative public rebuke and the penetration of loyalism into his private relationships and the candid and conversational world of the early 1790s that so disturbed and distressed Godwin.²⁵

²² Ibid., 170.

²³ Ibid., 176–78.

²⁴ On 7 and 8 July 1795, see *The Diary of William Godwin*, ed. Victoria Myers, David O’Shaughnessy & Mark Philp (Oxford: Oxford Digital Library, 2010): <http://godwindiary.bodleian.ox.ac.uk>.

²⁵ See John Barrell, *The spirit of despotism: invasions of privacy in the 1790s* (Oxford, 2006).

One of the surprising things for many about Godwin's position in his *Reply to Parr* was his identification of the late 1790s as the turning point in the reaction against reformers – well after the French extremism of 1792-4 and the height of government repression in England in 1794-6. That dating was symptomatic, not so much of the further revival and extension of anti-Jacobinism and loyalism (although that may have been a component), but of Godwin's sense that there was a dramatic collapse of confidence among those who had continued to side with the cause of reform after the summer of 1792. It was at this point (rather than after Birmingham), that whole groups of middle class and professional men and women, many of whom were associated with rational Dissent or sympathetic to its positions, tended to turn inward, and at which groups began to fragment under pressure. His sense of that fragmentation is clearly very personal, but it probably does capture a wider experience, perhaps especially in London, in the late 1790s. The breaking up of allegiances may also have been exacerbated by the furore created by Paine's *Age of reason* and by the linking of infidelity to reform (both by zealots and by their denouncers). Also Godwin's *Memoirs...of Wollstonecraft* alienated a number of his acquaintance and provided a ready target for intrusive attack on the private and domestic lives of radicals. There is no doubt that the reaction against the *Memoirs...* shook Godwin; and issues of religion became the subject of further doubts on Godwin's part at precisely this time. In the late 1790s Godwin's atheism was seriously and systematically challenged in discussions with Coleridge and others – as if his doubts about doubts, reflect a more general unease and uncertainty in the period. It was also in this period that Godwin's fortunes began to sink. By the early 1800s he was composing a list of 'Amis perdus' – somewhat prematurely since some (like Mackintosh) did reconnect with him. But the list is significant: it includes George Dyson, Basil Montague, James Stoddart (whose sister married William Hazlitt), Samuel Parr, John Pinkerton, Elizabeth Inchbald, James Mackintosh, Maria Gisbourne/Reveley, John Arnot, Henry Dibbin, Hannah Godwin, Amelia Opie, William Bosville, Francis Burdett, and Thomas Kearsley. And he coupled this with a list of Whigs who were keeping their distance.

The list is significant because it represents Godwin's own anxieties about the world slipping away from him; and because it captures a major fragmentation of a tight circle of conversational and personal

acquaintance in the 1790s. Moreover, I suspect this list represents many sides of Godwin's anxieties – some of these friends were people he offended because of his marriage to Wollstonecraft (Inchbald), or by his behaviour after (Gisbourne), or by his rather high-minded attitude to love affairs between his disciples (Dyson and Dibbin) and his sister Hannah's apprentices and his housekeeper (Louisa Jones). Nonetheless, it is plausible to suppose that his sense of increasing isolation was common – especially amongst his Dissenting friends and acquaintance. He came to rely on Johnson more, but that circle was smaller too, the *Analytical Review* had closed by the summer of 1799, both Johnson and Wakefield spent time in prison, and Brand Hollis' circle and (after 1806) Horne Tooke's were increasingly distant to Godwin.

This was not the end for Godwin, but my sense is that by the mid-1800s (c.1803-5), he felt that it was. And, his confidence in the progress of truth was shaken. In his *Reply to Parr*, he wrote:

Long habit has so trained me to bow to the manifestations of truth wherever I recognize them, that, if arguments were presented to me sufficient to establish the uncomfortable doctrine of my antagonists, I would weigh, I would revolve them, and I hope I should not fail to submit to their authority. But, if my own doctrine is an error, and if I am fated to die in it, I cannot afflict myself greatly with the apprehension of a mistake, which cheers my solitude, which I carry with me into crowds, and which adds somewhat to the pleasure and peace of every day of my existence.²⁶

This was almost a shift from candour to theodicy and consolation – an abandonment of the obligation to test one's beliefs rigorously. But, in fact, I think it is better (if perhaps charitably) understood as Godwin recognising that such self-examination demanded a conversational, discursive dimension – and that, with the collapse of that discursive community, this had become increasingly impossible. Indeed, it is then scarcely surprising that Godwin's conversational world should dramatically contract, especially after the completion of the *Thoughts...* on Parr in May/June 1801 – as is clear from the almost complete disappearance of topics of any substance noted in his diary between 1801 and 1808, (and although they re-appear after 1808, it is at a very much diminished rate).

²⁶ 'Thoughts occasioned ...', 190-91.

* * * * *

I have suggested that Godwin's experience might have been similar to many in the broader community of rational Dissent. I do not want to press that case hard, although I think it has some warrant. I am more interested in opening the question of how far, and how widely, Godwin's experience of fragmentation and the collapse of a common culture at the end of the 1790s, was a shared one, and was a part of a wider legacy of the polarising political conflicts of the decade. Godwin's representation of his experience is of a community that remained relatively close and united into the late 1790s, despite riots and controversies, deaths and emigrations. It was a community that retained a commitment to reform, that became primarily directed to the campaign for peace, but that collapsed at the end of the 1790s. What is less clear are the boundaries of the community, the degree of its over-lap with the Dissenting Enlightenment, and the extent of any larger penumbra that brought in the more generally literary and mercantile communities of the period. Godwin's experience was of a face-to-face world linked by candour, conversation, and deliberation. That world was central to his sense of who he was and what he stood for, and it was central also to the self-conception of many of his closest friends and acquaintances, and to their sense of to what standards of belief and argument they had a responsibility to adhere. They faced a hostile world from very early in the 1790s, and that took its toll (with emigrations and imprisonments). But it did so without really threatening their self-conception, largely because they developed strategies for explaining why people failed to recognise the truth, and because they took a longer view that was more positive. But Godwin's sense of the fracturing of his own conversational communities identified a much more problematic fragmentation, which destroyed the social and intellectual world upon which his beliefs turned out to be predicated. The result was increasing doubt, or a switch to a stronger sense of individual faith and justification. Moreover, it seems implausible to think that he was alone in experiencing these pressures, rather than it being a wider experience of a dissolving set of associations and networks that were no longer joining people together and sustaining their collective narrative and confidence. Godwin may have been especially vulnerable, given his movement from circles linked to what was an extraordinarily close community of Dissent in the 1780s and early 90s, into the wider

literary, political and cultural world of intellectual radicalism after 1793. But he was not alone in that movement, and it seems likely that many from Dissenting backgrounds were touched by the same process.²⁷

Godwin's doubts about his own conduct emerged in this period and his confidence in his opinions and judgments was clearly shaken. He irretrievably fell out with his closest friend, Thomas Holcroft, and lost contact with many people who had played major parts in his life from the 1790s. His conversational world was up-turned – not extinguished, but dramatically transformed. Coupled with this, his sense of wanting and being able to communicate across partisan lines seems to have evaporated. He no longer preached to the unconverted, because he was no longer confident that they could be swayed by force of argument, or that his argument was, in the end, the most convincing. The shift from philosophy to theodicy, indicated in the passage I cited from Parr, may not be a universal experience for rational Dissent and the friends of reform, but I do not think many remained unchanged by their experience in the 1790s and as they emerged into the first decade of the nineteenth century.

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²⁷ John Seed, "A set of men powerful enough in many things": Rational Dissent and Political Opposition in England, 1770-1790', in Knud Haakonssen ed., *Enlightenment and religion: Rational Dissent in eighteenth century Britain* (Cambridge, 1996), 140-168 emphasises the withdrawal from radicalism and public controversy among Dissenters; Martin Fitzpatrick's 'The View from Mount Pleasant: Enlightenment in late-eighteenth century Liverpool', loc. cit., tells a more complex story that shows some stalwart commitment to enlightenment and to radicalism in the Liverpool movement. My sense is that this more complex story is right, but that this makes the narrative increasingly local, and in many cases it is likely that people sought solace in activities that were increasingly private. In Godwin's London circles that may also have been the case, contributing to his sense of a shift in culture in which his own position is marginalised.

SEPARATISTS AND DISSENTERS AMIDST THE ARGUMENTS FOR AND AGAINST TOLERATION: SOME SOUNDINGS, 1550-1689

Alan P F Sell

The ramifications of the terms ‘tolerance’ and ‘intolerance’ are bewildering to the point of intolerable. In common parlance the attitude labelled ‘tolerance’ is generally held to be ‘good’ (though G K Chesterton wrote, disapprovingly, that ‘Tolerance is the virtue of the man without convictions’), whereas ‘intolerance’ is deemed to signify an attitude of which the subject ought to feel ashamed. Further thought will, however, suggest that tolerance of wrong is often deemed to be ‘bad’, while intolerance of cruelty is thought to be ‘good’. Things become even more complicated when we realize that whereas ‘tolerance’ is a term often annexed to liberalism – especially by liberals, while ‘intolerance’ is thought of as the characteristic attitude of conservatives, it is perfectly possible for a liberal to be wrongly intolerant (of those outside the fashionable politico-cultural sect, for example),¹ and for a conservative to be mistakenly tolerant (as when gross financial inequalities as between citizens of the same country do not appal).

It might be thought that we can bracket all of these considerations by focusing our attention upon ‘toleration’ in the sense of ‘the legal right of *a*, *b* and *c* to do *x*, *y* and *z*’. We shall swiftly discover, however, that while some have been tolerant of toleration in this sense, others have been noticeably intolerant of it. It will also become apparent that the question of toleration both in the sense of what is deemed to be legally tolerable in society and in relation to degrees of tolerance within the Church is bound up with the questions, How far are punishment or persecution appropriate when people appeal to liberty of conscience? By whom, and upon what grounds should they be administered? In a word, we are stepping into an argumentative hornet’s nest. In the hope of bringing some

¹ For further thoughts on this intriguing reality see Alan P F Sell, ‘Christianity, secularism and toleration: liberal values and illiberal attitudes,’ in A R Murphy, C Russell, J Pluciennik and I Hübner eds, *Literature, culture and tolerance* (Bern: Frankfurt am Main, 2009), ch. 5.

order to the matter, and fully recognizing the risk of falsification that I run in making the attempt, I shall classify the arguments for and against toleration under the headings, broadly philosophical, broadly political, broadly ecclesiastical and broadly theological. I hide behind the adverb, 'broadly', because I know that many arguments overlap my categories; I am simply trying to bring some semblance of intellectual coherence to the discussion of a variety of conflicting, and frequently mutually contradictory, arguments that I cannot expunge from the record because they are there. I by no means suggest that individual authors focused upon one type of argument to the exclusion of all others. On the contrary, the approach of many of them was eclectic, as is exemplified in the case of the Congregational politician, Charles Wolseley (1629/30-1714), a member of Oliver Cromwell's inner circle and a lifelong advocate of toleration, who published *Liberty of conscience* in 1668. He adduces three types of argument in defence of the proposition 'That no Prince, nor State, ought by force to compel men, to any part of the Doctrine, Worship, or Discipline of the Gospel.' First, compulsion in this matter would violate natural law, and be opposed to 'the common Light and Reason of mankind'; secondly, appealing now to the Gospel, compulsion is 'no means appointed by *Christ* to bring about any Gospel end;' and thirdly, now the pragmatist, he contends that error is not banished, nor the truth embraced, by force: it is 'not adequate to the Malady',² he declares. It is my hope that the recognition of the diversity of types of argument (none of which I can here discuss in detail, and some of which I shall not pursue)³ will bring home to us something of the nature of the intellectual Babel in which the Separatists and Dissenters sought to make their voices heard.

² C Wolseley, *Liberty of conscience, upon its true and proper grounds asserted and vindicated. Proving that no prince nor state, ought by force to compel men to any part of the doctrine, worship or discipline of the Gospel. To which is added, The second part, viz. Liberty of conscience, The magistrate's interest* (London, 1668), 26, 28, 34. He proceeds to argue, *inter alia*, that Gospel worship cannot be established by force (a) because it is spiritual; and (b) because it is voluntary. Hence, to force people in this matter is to make hypocrites of them and to commit sin.

I

Under the heading, ‘broadly philosophical’, we may first note the epistemological argument that toleration is the child of scepticism. In general terms the upshot is that since we have no access to absolute truth it behoves us to adopt a tolerant attitude towards the beliefs, opinions and claims of others. When we view the matter more closely we see that scepticism is a stream that runs in many channels, and that thinkers as various as Platonists and naturalists have had recourse to it. In the opinion of the Platonist Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464) precise truth is unattainable because our minds cannot comprehend the ‘unqualifiedly Maximum’.⁴ By no means an absolute sceptic, Nicholas nevertheless holds that human knowledge of the truth is necessarily and unavoidably partial and approximate only. When he draws out the implications of his epistemology for religion, he concludes that diversities of religious belief and practice originate in, and reflect but do not replicate, the truth of God which none can attain; and that sincere believers, regardless of their particular rites and practices are worshipping the one God.⁵ Ideas of this kind filtered down to Herbert of Cherbury (1582-1648), who in *De veritate* (1624) argued on grounds of the limitations of human knowledge that tolerance of differing views was to be commended. Thereafter the stream bifurcates, flowing on the one hand to the Cambridge Platonists, and on the other to Locke.

The Cambridge Platonists, whose general approach is epitomized by the text, ‘The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord’ (Proverbs 20: 27), were

³ For example, John Howe’s proto-psychological argument that mental idiosyncrasies or, as we should call them, temperamental differences, may prompt differences of view which should be tolerated; and Thomas Pope Blount’s view that forbearance was required because differences of opinion could be caused by dietary and climatic differences. See J Howe, *A sermon concerning union among Protestants* (London, 1683); T P Blount, *Essays on several subjects* (London, 1697).

⁴ *De docta ignorantia*, I, 2-3.

⁵ *De pace fidei* (1453), ch. XIX. Cf. Ralph Cudworth, *The true intellectual system of the universe* (1678; edn. 3 vols, London, 1845), I, 366. The idea flows down to our own time in the writings of John Hick.

well aware that this implied both that the human spirit reflected its Creator and thus to a degree had knowledge of him, and that it was a candle, not a searchlight. 'All our Notions and Opinions can be but broken Things,' declared Peter Sterry (1613?-1672): 'Truth is a Spiritual Thing, and Divine; The Opinions and Notions in which we see it, are all Earthly Things, and Natural Things: And therefore it's impossible for any one Notion or Opinion to give you the full Truth; but we have that little Truth, which we have in a Thousand broken Notions.'⁶ In the participatory language characteristic of Platonism, Ralph Cudworth (1617-1688) pointed out that 'Truths are not multiplied by the diversity of minds that apprehend them; because they are all but ectypal participations of one and the same original or archetypal mind and truth.... [S]o when innumerable created minds have the same ideas of things, and understand the same truths, it is but one and the same eternal light that is reflected in them all ... or the same voice of that one eternal Word, that is never silent, re-echoed by them.'⁷ The resulting pluralism of thought requires that when individuals see matters in differing ways, toleration is called for not only because of the epistemological deficiency which afflicts all human beings (a deficiency exacerbated in the opinion of some writers by a wilful blindness deriving from sin), but also because of differing cultural and life experiences. As Sterry put it, 'Had my Education, my Acquaintance, the several Circumstances and Concurrences been the same to me, as to this person from who I now Dissent, that which is not his sense and state, might have been mine.'⁸

In 1661 Joseph Glanvill (1636-1680) published *The vanity of dogmatizing*. This caused a flurry of pamphleteering, and in 1665 Glanvill brought out a revised edition under the title, *Scepsis scientifica, or confest ignorance, the way to science; in an essay on The vanity of dogmatizing*. He here protested against scholastic philosophy, and staunchly advocated

⁶ P Sterry, *The appearance of God to man in the Gospel* (London, 1710), 410.

⁷ R Cudworth, *The true intellectual system of the universe*, III, 71.

⁸ P Sterry, *A discourse of the freedom of the will* (London, 1675), 124. Again, John Hick has remarked that had he been born elsewhere than in England he might well have been of another faith.

the experimental method. He brings the following considerations against dogmatizing: '(1) 'Tis the effect of ignorance. (2) It inhabits with untamed passions, and an ungoverned spirit. (3) It is the great disturber of the world. (4) It is ill manners, and immodesty. (5) It holds men captive in error. (6) It betrays a narrowness of spirit.'⁹ However, Glanvill sought a comprehensive, non-dogmatic Church of England within which a wide range of opinions might be tolerated, and hence he did not favour the toleration of Dissenters, his friendship with some of them – Baxter among them – notwithstanding, because such toleration would defeat his primary objective. We are some way from the post-Toleration atmosphere of the 1730s when Dissenters made continuing attempts to restrict them as evidence of the truth of their position, and more liberal members of the Church of England drew the sting of their more Erastian colleagues by arguing that a tolerant spirit demonstrated the purity of their Church.

In somewhat different tones from Glanvill, Locke likewise advanced an epistemological argument for toleration:

Since, therefore it is unavoidable to the greatest part of Men, if not all, to have several *Opinions*, without certain and indubitable Proofs of their Truths; and it carries too great an imputation of ignorance, lightness or folly, for Men to quit and renounce their former Tenets, presently upon the offer of an Argument, which they cannot immediately answer, and shew the insufficiency of: It would, methinks, become all Men to maintain *Peace*, and the common Offices of Humanity, and *Friendship*, in the diversity of *Opinions*, since we cannot reasonably expect, that any one should readily and obsequiously quit his own Opinion and embrace ours, with a blind resignation to an Authority, which the Understanding of Man acknowledges not. For however it may often mistake, it can own no other Guide but Reason, nor blindly submit to the Will and Dictates of another.¹⁰

⁹ J Glanvill, *Scepsis scientifica* (London, 1665), 165-72.

¹⁰ J Locke, *An essay concerning human understanding*, ed. Peter H Nidditch (Oxford, 1975), IV, xvi, 4.

At this point I jump forward to the nineteenth-century historian, Lecky who, according to the theologian A M Fairbairn, ‘argued that toleration is the child of scepticism, possible only in an age when men have grown conscious of the difficulties that beset belief.’¹¹ We have already seen that epistemological scepticism is prompted by factors other than difficulties regarding religious belief. But Fairbairn finds that Lecky errs in another way: ‘Toleration’, he contends, ‘is not only possible, but necessary, the moment religion is made a matter for the conscience rather than the magistrate, but impossible the moment it becomes an affair of the magistrate rather than the conscience.’¹² With this morality is added to the philosophical mix and we plunge into a recent debate in Locke interpretation. Jeremy Waldron has argued against Locke, that if due account is not taken of the moral dimension and we are left only with epistemological scepticism, we shall be able to show that intolerance is irrational, but we shall have no grounds for withstanding coercion.¹³ Susan Mendus’s retort is justified: for Locke ‘the moral wrongness of intolerance consists precisely in its irrationality.’¹⁴ I myself have suggested that Waldron abstracts from Locke’s overall position; indeed, he himself uses the phrase,¹⁵ ‘When stripped of its Christian premises (if indeed it can be so stripped...)’ – a question that he begs and declines to pursue. That it cannot be so stripped is made clear by Locke’s own words. He argues that ‘The toleration of those that differ from others in matters of religion, is agreeable to the gospel of Jesus Christ’, and that ‘we must not content ourselves with the narrow measures of bare justice: charity,

¹¹ A M Fairbairn, *Jubilee lectures ... of the Congregational Union of England and Wales* (2 vols in one, London, 1882), lx. Fairbairn quotes W E H Lecky, *History of the rise and influence of the spirit of rationalism in Europe* (2 vols., London, 1865), II, 56 ff.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ J Waldron, ‘Locke: toleration and the rationality of persecution’, in Susan Mendus ed., *Justifying toleration. Conceptual and historical perspectives* (Cambridge, 1988), ch. 3; reprinted in John Horton and Susan Mendus eds., *John Locke ‘A Letter Concerning Toleration’ in Focus* (London, 1991), 98-124. I refer to this edition of Locke’s *Letter* throughout.

¹⁴ S Mendus, *Toleration and the limits of liberalism* (London, 1989), 41.

¹⁵ J Waldron, ‘Locke: toleration and the rationality of persecution,’ 149. See further, Alan P F Sell, *John Locke and the eighteenth-century divines* (Cardiff, 1997; repr. Eugene, Or: Wipf and Stock, 2006), 330.

bounty, and liberality must be added to it. This the Gospel enjoins, this reason directs, and this the natural fellowship we are born into requires of us.’¹⁶ Near the beginning of his paper Waldron quotes Locke to this effect, branding it an *ad hominem* address to the Christian authorities, but ruling it out as philosophically interesting, because what is required is an argument addressed to civil magistrates as wielders of state power not as church members. But here Waldron drives a wedge between what to Locke and most others were two sides of the same coin: the civil magistrates were God’s appointees and were called to serve him, hence the Christian’s *prima facie* obligation to respect and obey them. If our interest is in the thought of Locke, and not in abstracting general arguments for toleration we may not overlook these considerations.

With his phrase, ‘the natural fellowship we are born into’, Locke balances his appeal to the Gospel with one to natural law, and here we have a link between Locke the Cambridge Platonists and the later Rational Dissenters. Thus, Henry More (1614-1687) asserts that ‘there is a Right in every Nation and Person to examine their Religion, to hear the Religion of Strangers, and to change their own, if they be convinced;’¹⁷ while on 22 May 1772 Richard Price (1723-1791) wrote to the Earl of Chatham concerning still-delayed toleration. He thanks Chatham for what he had said in the House of Lords three days earlier, namely, ‘I am for this bill, my Lords, because I am for toleration, that sacred right of nature and bulwark of truth and most interesting of all objects to fallible man’, and regretted that ‘no force of argument could secure success for us; and that we must still continue to owe to our governors a security to which we have, as we apprehend, a natural right.’¹⁸ Price’s point is that the state should not interfere in religious matters at all except with a view to offering equal protection to all varieties of non-order-threatening beliefs. Strictly, the state was in no position to grant or withhold toleration, for religious and civil liberty ‘must be enjoyed as a right derived from the Author of nature only.... If there is any human power which is considered

¹⁶ Locke, *A letter concerning toleration*, 16, 23.

¹⁷ H More, *An explanation of the grand mystery of Godliness* (London, 1660), 521.

¹⁸ D O Thomas and Bernard Peach eds., *The correspondence of Richard Price. Volume I: July 1748-March 1778* (Durham, NC and Cardiff, 1983), 131 and n.

as *giving* it, on which it depends, and which can invade or recall it at pleasure, it changes its nature, and becomes a species of slavery.¹⁹

II

Something else that Chatham said in the House of Lords will lead us to some broadly ecclesiastical arguments for and against toleration. In answering Hay Drummond, the Archbishop of York, Chatham declared, 'You talk of our English Church system; but we have no system: we have a Calvinistic creed, a Popish liturgy, and an Arminian clergy. The Dissenters you revile contend for a spiritual creed and spiritual worship.'²⁰

This, although not an entirely accurate – nor, in the circumstances, the most diplomatic – judgment, does at least make the point that if doctrinal diversity could be tolerated within the Church of England, it ought to be possible to tolerate it elsewhere. Once again we may return to the Cambridge Platonists for a witness to charitable tolerance. 'The Spirit of Religion', wrote Benjamin Whichcote (1609-1683) during a time of religious upheaval, 'is a Reconciling Spirit.'²¹ Locke concurred: 'peace, equity, and friendship, are always mutually to be observed by particular churches, in the same manner as by private persons, without any pretence of superiority of jurisdiction over one another.'²² Indeed, he was more specific than that, and drove to the sectarian root of the matter as he opposed those who 'impose their own inventions and interpretations upon others, as if they were of divine authority; and ... establish by ecclesiastical laws, as absolutely necessary to the profession of Christianity, such things as the holy Scriptures do either not mention, or at least not expressly command.' He cannot understand 'how that can be called a church of Christ, which is established upon laws that are not his, and which excludes

¹⁹ R Price, *Additional observations on the nature and value of civil liberty and the war with America* (3rd edn. London, 1777), 4.

²⁰ Thomas and Peach eds., *The correspondence of Richard Price*, I, 131.

²¹ Aphorism 712 in *Moral and religious aphorisms, collected from the manuscript papers of the Reverend and learned Doctor Whichcote*, republished by Samuel Salter (London: 1753).

²² Locke, *A letter concerning toleration*, 24.

such persons from its communion as he will one day receive into the kingdom of heaven.’²³

Edward Stillingfleet (1635-1699), at the time Dean of St. Paul’s, unsurprisingly, took a different view. For his sermon entitled, *The mischief of separation*, preached in the Guildhall Chapel before the Lord Mayor, Robert Clayton, on 11 May 1660, he took Philippians 3: 16 as his text: ‘Nevertheless, whereunto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.’ The gist of his argument is that since the Nonconformists are able to affirm the doctrinal Articles of the Church of England; since they generally grant that the parochial churches are true churches; and since many have no objection to taking communion in those churches, he can see no justification for their continued separation, least of all at a time when the country is in great danger owing to the threat posed by Roman Catholicism.²⁴ John Owen (1616-1683) was but the most prominent of a number of Dissenters who came out in hot pursuit of the Dean. While not denying that ‘the parochial churches, at least some of them, in this nation are true churches’, he nevertheless levels the following charges against them: they need to be further reformed; they impose ‘many things ... on the consciences and practices of men, which are not according to the mind of Christ’; they are lax in true church discipline, and are governed by courts that are ‘unknown to Scripture’; they deprive the people of the liberty of choosing their own pastors; and while failing to edify the people themselves they forbid them to seek edification elsewhere.²⁵ Stillingfleet returned to the fray with a *Discourse of the unreasonableness of separation*, to which Owen produced *An answer* appended to *An enquiry into the original, nature, institution, power, order, and communion of evangelical churches*. In his note ‘To the reader’ Owen rebuts Stillingfleet’s charge that the Nonconformists’ objective is ‘the furtherance and promotion of the designs of the Papists and interest of Popery’, pointing out that ‘we should

²³ Ibid., 21-2.

²⁴ See E Stillingfleet, *The mischief of separation. A sermon preached at Guild-Hall Chappel* (London, 1680), 21-22, and cf. the Epistle Dedicatory.

²⁵ J Owen, *A brief vindication of the Non-conformists from the charge of schisme* (London, 1680), 35-6.

be the very first who should drink of the cup of [the Jesuits'] fury, could they ruin the protestant interest in England.²⁶

Lest it be thought that no Church of England parson lifted a finger in support of Nonconformists, the minority view of Samuel Bold, who later defended Locke against his critics, may be noted. In 1682 Bold published *A plea for moderation towards Dissenters*, in which he concluded that 'The overdoing of Conformity, that is, making more necessary to Conformity than the Laws of the Land have made necessary, is as great a fault as Nonconformity.... From the subtle and deceitful Craftiness, and the violent Rage and Force of [those who endorse such a policy] and of their Brethren and Companions the Papists, the merciful and good Lord deliver every Sincere and Hearty Protestant.'²⁷ These sentiments earned Bold prosecution at the Sherborne assizes. He was fined and imprisoned for seven weeks, before being summoned before William Gulston, Bishop of Bristol, charged with libel and sedition. These proceedings were terminated on Gulston's unexpected death. More prominent than Bold, Gilbert Burnet was similarly minded.²⁸

We have already begun to veer towards broadly political arguments for and against toleration, but before briefly reviewing these we must notice how in ecclesiastical circles arguments could readily cancel one another out. Tertullian had long ago argued that God would not welcome worship unwillingly offered,²⁹ and flowing down from the Renaissance was the conviction that enforced religion is harmful. This idea received stimulus from Castellio who in 1562, at a time of religious strife in France, rhetorically asked, 'Do you urge your enemy to act against his conscience? If he does, it will be fatal to his soul.'³⁰ Again, it was argued that compulsion in religious matters could lead to hypocrisy, to which the

²⁶ Idem, *An enquiry* (London, 1681), unpag., but 1, 8.

²⁷ S Bold, *A plea for moderation towards Dissenters; occasioned by the Grand-Juries presenting the Sermon against persecution at the assizes holden at Sherburn in Dorsetshire. To which is added, an answer to the objections commonly made against that sermon* (London, 1682), 42.

²⁸ See G Burnet, *The case of compulsion in matters of religion stated* (London, 1688); idem, *An exhortation to peace and unity* (London, 1689) and the first of his *Two sermons preached in the cathedral church of Salisbury* (London, 1710).

²⁹ Tertullian, *Apologeticus*, XXIV.

³⁰ S Castellio's anonymous work, *Conseil à la France desolée* (1562).

answer came, ‘I have a Lewd *Negro*, who was bred an Idolater, I must not compel him to go to Church, for fear I *only* make him a hypocrite. Oh uncharitable!’³¹ Others maintained that punishment of error (error being, of course, determined by those inflicting the punishment) removes a troubling virus and thus protects others. From the other side the Separatist John Robinson (c.1575-1625) contended that while compulsive laws might yield hypocrisy they could never create the spirit ‘that received the word gladly.’³² For his part the Baptist Samuel Richardson (fl. 1643-1658) urged that ‘Corporal punishments cannot suppress errors, neither doth truth need any such help to maintain it.’³³ This did not silence those who believed that while torture was not called for, other forms of coercion could encourage the erring to reconsider their position. In the view of Henry Dodwell (1641-1711) it was not true that ‘*coercion* is not a *probable means* of bringing even *good men* to a *conscientious* change of their Opinions. For ... It is of itself likely to allay that *tumour and rigour* of spirit, to which even *good men* are betrayed by *prosperity*, which does usually alienate them from all sober thoughts of *accommodation*, and even of sober and impartial *inquiry*.’³⁴ I find that none in our period were quite as blunt as Augustine who, being cruel to be kind, declared that ‘the Church ‘persecutes in the spirit of love, [the impious] in the spirit of wrath’³⁵ – a distinction likely to have brought little solace to the persecuted.

By contrast it is cheering note the strenuous efforts exerted by those who in the seventeenth century worked tirelessly for tolerance and harmony among the churches. They frequently recalled the supreme command of

³¹ Anon., *Toleration and liberty of conscience considered, and proved impracticable*, 1685, 23.

³² J Robinson, *The works of John Robinson*, ed. R Ashton (3 vols. London, 1851), II, 488.

³³ S Richardson, *The necessity of toleration in matters of religion* (London, 1647), in Edward Bean Underhill ed., *Tracts on liberty of conscience and persecution 1614-1661* (London, 1846), 275.

³⁴ H Dodwell, *A reply to Mr. Baxter's pretended confutation of a book entituled Separation from churches with episcopal government schismatical* (London, 1681), 200.

³⁵ Augustine, *Epistle* 185, 11.

Jesus Christ himself: 'Love one another as I have loved you' (John 13: 34), and transformed it into an affective ecclesiastical argument for toleration. In so doing they were not originators. The basis of the argument is found, for example, in the writings of John Foxe (1517-1587) the martyrologist, who declared that

The nearer each approaches to the sweet spirit of the Gospel, by so much farther he is from the hard decision of burning and torturing. It is tyrannical to constrain by faggots. Consciences love to be taught, and religion wants to teach. The most effective master of teaching is love. Where this is absent there is never anyone who can teach aright nor can anyone learn properly.³⁶

No one in the seventeenth century made more of this approach than that most pacific of Presbyterian Puritans, John Howe (1630-1705), in his *Sermon concerning union among Protestants*. His text is Colossians 2: 2, 'That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding.' Howe's case is that truly to grasp the Gospel with the understanding is to love the saints. Christian love, he declares, is not 'a love to Christians of this or that party or denomination only. That were as much as to unduly straiten and confine it ... To limit our Christian love to a party of Christians ... is so far from serving the purpose now to be aimed at, that it resists and defeats it; and instead of a preservative union, infers most destructive divisions. It scatters where it should collect and gather.'³⁷ Howe did not only speak along these lines; he strove to put his ideas into practice, working tirelessly for the Happy Union between Presbyterian and Congregational ministers. Indeed, he drafted the *Heads of Agreement* on which the Union was based. Sadly, the Union that was inaugurated with such promise in 1690, had collapsed owing largely to doctrinal strife by 1693.

³⁶ Quoted by A G Dickens, 'Religious toleration,' *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society*, XX, no. 2 (October, 1965), 69.

³⁷ *The works of the Rev. John Howe, M.A., with memoirs of his life by Edmund Calamy* (2 vols, New York, 1808), I, 475.

III

The broadly political arguments advanced against toleration were, unsurprisingly, prompted by the perceived need to deal with the state's enemies of one kind and another. There was, as we shall see, genuine fear that Rome wished to undo the English Reformation, and hence that those who supported the alien power were tantamount to traitors; there was also, in the wake of the regicide of 1649, a powerful memory of the disruption that could be caused to civil society by unrestrained radical sectaries. Responses to this situation varied, and some arguments cancelled one another out, with some writers, pragmatically, contending that toleration makes for a tranquil society, others, equally pragmatically, countering that in fact it leads to ungovernable anarchy must therefore be resisted. Thus, for example, on the one hand Anthony Collins (1676-1729) spoke – albeit in 1726 – for those who believed that ‘*Toleration or Liberty of Conscience* in matters of mere Religion, was the way of Knowledge and Truth, the way of good Neighbourhood, and Peace, and Order, and the way of Wealth and strength in Society.’³⁸ On the other hand Samuel Parker expostulated that ‘*Indulgence and Toleration is the most absolute sort of Anarchy.*’³⁹ In 1670, in the wake of the Ejection of 1662, Parker (1640-1688), the Erastian Bishop of Oxford, threw down the gauntlet in *A discourse of ecclesiastical politie: wherein the authority of the civil magistrate over the consciences of subjects in matters of religion is asserted; the mischiefs and inconveniences of toleration are represented, and all pretences pleaded in behalf of liberty of conscience are fully answered*. ‘Where a Religion is Establish’d by the Laws,’ he thunders, ‘whoever openly refuses Obedience plainly Rebels against the Government, Rebellion being properly nothing else but an open denial of Obedience to the Civil Power.’⁴⁰ For his pains, Parker and others of his

³⁸ A Collins, *A letter to the Reverend Dr. Rogers* (London, 1727), 2.

³⁹ S Parker, *A discourse of ecclesiastical politie* (1659, edn. London, 1670), liv.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 105. Even Jeremy Taylor had taken a similar anti-toleration line in a sermon preached at the opening of the Irish Parliament on 8 May 1661. See further Gordon Schochet, ‘Samuel Parker, religious diversity, and the ideology of persecution,’ in Roger D Lund ed., *The margins of orthodoxy. heterodox writing and cultural response, 1660-1750* (Cambridge, 1995), ch. 5.

ilk were accused of Hobbism. For their part, Dissenters – and especially Quakers – were frequently, and hysterically, portrayed as disguised agents of Rome. It was against this background that in 1660 the Presbyterian, John Corbet, argued for uniformity in preference to toleration of difference, on the ground that ‘the dividing of Church communion is the dividing of hearts, and ... we shall not live like brethren, till we agree to walk in one way.’⁴¹ The upshot was that those who stood on theological and conscientious grounds against the attempted imposition of uniformity of faith and practice were not only regarded as criminals deserving of punishment but as traitors. Moreover, if the Act of Uniformity of 1662 was directed against ministers of religion and schoolmasters, other acts impinged directly upon the lives of church members. Among these was the Conventicle Act of 1664, which provided that if five or more persons, other than those of the same household, met for religious purposes they were liable to a fine of £5 for the first offence, £10 or imprisonment for a second offence, and transportation – but not to Virginia and New England – for a period of seven years for the third offence. While it is true that the adverse laws were applied across the country with varying degrees of rigour, the intention was clear, and many in fact suffered under them.

But at the top of the list of suspected religious bodies was the Church of Rome. To this day Dissenters can be disquieted by Rome, but they are not generally afraid of it. It is therefore not easy for us to get into the mindset of those who regarded Rome and the territories under its sway as an ‘axis of evil’, to purloin a certain cattle rancher’s phrase. Many who were not thrown into hysteria at the thought of Rome nevertheless regarded English Roman Catholics as owing allegiance to a foreign power, and therefore as not to be tolerated. In 1680 John Owen, for example, asked a question to which he thought the answer was obvious: ‘Who knows not that the present danger of this nation is from *Popery*, and the endeavours that are used both to introduce it and enthrone it, or give it Power and Authority among us?’⁴² At roughly the same time Locke referred to the popery ‘that so nearly surrounds and threatens us.’⁴³

⁴¹ J Corbet, *The interest of England in the matter of religion* (London, 1660), 73-4.

⁴² J Owen, *A brief vindication of the Nonconformists from the charge of schism*, 1.

But Rome was not the only bogeyman. There was atheism too. This was regarded as a threat to civil society because of the Psalmists's declaration that 'The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God' (Psalm 14: 1)—and the Psalmist's 'fool' is not the stupid or silly person, but the immoral person. God was regarded as the source of the moral law and to repudiate God was to repudiate morality as well. Atheists were thus deemed to be undermining the moral fabric of society, and it was not until well into the nineteenth century that it began to be widely conceded that one could be both an atheist and a person of high moral standards. It is therefore not surprising that with enemies without and within, toleration could be regarded as a dangerous objective and arguments for it could be deemed foolhardy and even subversive of good order in society.

The strength of these ideas are clearly seen in the case of Locke, who became a great apostle of toleration. I say 'became', because it is well known that in the 1650s he was opposed to it in the interests of national stability; he later became persuaded that Dissenters should be tolerated, partly through conversations with Shaftesbury, and because of his favourable experience first in the Duchy of Cleves⁴⁴ and later in the Netherlands of a degree of religious tolerance that was unknown in England; partly through his friendship with the Remonstrant theologian Philippus van Limborch;⁴⁵ and partly on the ground that owing to epistemological deficiency magistrates were in no position to enforce conformity. This last position that had been articulated by the General Baptist, Thomas Monck, and six of his colleagues in 1661: 'That magistrates may err in spiritual and religious matters, woful experience hath taught the world in all ages.'⁴⁶ But (however inconsistently) Locke did not extend his pro-toleration argument to accommodate Roman

⁴³ Unreferenced quotation in John Marshall, *John Locke, toleration and early Enlightenment culture* (Cambridge, 2006), 28.

⁴⁴ See Locke's letter of 12/22 December 1665 to Robert Boyle, in Mark Goldie, ed., *John Locke. Selected correspondence* (Oxford, 2002), 27.

⁴⁵ For a helpful account of 'The Dutch influence on English toleration' see K H D Haley, in *The Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society*, IV, no. 4 (June 1989), 255-65.

⁴⁶ T Monck and others, *Sion's groans for the distressed*, in *Tracts on liberty of conscience and persecution*, 365.

Catholics and atheists for, in his view, both, in their different ways, posed threats to civil order. While he did not inveigh against Roman Catholic doctrinal and sacramental beliefs in the way that some other Protestants did, Locke nevertheless held that because Roman Catholics ‘deliver themselves up to the protection and service of another prince’, and atheists are guilty of ‘The taking away of God, [which] though but even in thought, dissolves all’⁴⁷ neither party was to be tolerated.⁴⁸

The so-called Toleration Act of 1689⁴⁹ provided that while all the legislation adverse to the Dissenters remained unrepealed on the statute book, its penalties would not be applied to orthodox Protestant Dissenters. In its own words, it was ‘An Act for exempting their Majesties’ Protestant subjects dissenting from the Church of England, from the penalties of certain laws.’ Here was the blatant exclusion of Jews, and also of the Roman Catholics. Section XVII of the Act further excludes ‘any person that shall deny in his preaching or writing the doctrine of the blessed Trinity as it is declared in [the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England].’ With this we are reminded that Socinians, were regarded by some, along with blasphemers, as disturbers of the civic peace – an accusation levelled from time to time at least until the Priestley riots of 1791.

For more than a century the political motivation of those who designed successive Uniformity Acts had been to convert into policy the idea concisely expressed by Richard Hooker: ‘there is not any man of the Church of England but the same man is also a member of the commonwealth; nor any man a member of the commonwealth, which is not also of the Church of England’⁵⁰ – and this in the interests of national

⁴⁷ Locke, *A letter concerning toleration*, 46, 47. In the *Areopagitica* (1644) Milton had argued for a wide toleration – not excluding Socinians, - on the ground that in a free society truth could take care of itself. However, he was content to except Roman Catholics from toleration on the ground that once in power they would deny toleration to others. We should note that although Locke completed his *Letter concerning toleration* in 1685, his mature views on the subject were not widely known until after the Toleration Act of 1689.

⁴⁸ See further on the progress of Locke’s view, Sell, *John Locke and the eighteenth-century divines*, 151-157.

⁴⁹ I William and Mary, sess. I, c.18.

unity. The Toleration Act of 1689 testifies to the impracticality of seeking national unity by the legalized imposition of religious uniformity. Some of the Dissenters had known from the outset that this was not only a policy doomed to fail in practice; it was mistaken from the outset because when the chips are down, God takes precedence over Caesar. With this we come to their broadly theological argument.

IV

It is first necessary to face up to the fact that where toleration was concerned the Dissenters were perfectly capable of dissenting from one another. It will emerge that they were capable of arguing both for and against toleration. This implies that the theological argument for toleration, pioneered by Baptists and, with some exceptions, endorsed by Congregationalists was capable of being blunted by ecclesiological considerations. On all sides there were those who could find it easier and more proper to tolerate those of their own polity, presumed to have been ordained in Scripture.

Although, as we have seen, the Separatist John Robinson was opposed to enforced belief, he nevertheless, like most in his age, believed that godly magistrates were appointed by God and that their tasks were ‘by compulsion to repress public and notable idolatry, as also to provide that the truth of God in his ordinance be taught, and published in their dominions.’⁵¹ The problem here, of course, is that Robinson holds the magistrate responsible for enforcing Christ’s rights, and Robinson knows what those rights are. This is why, concluded W B Selbie, ‘the early Independents could condemn persecution of themselves and at the same time tolerate, or even approve, persecution of others. They were ensnared by the usual sophism that, since their doctrine was the truth, it was just for them to be encouraged and for its adversaries to be put down.’⁵²

⁵⁰ R Hooker, *The works of that learned and judicious divine, Mr. Richard Hooker* (3rd edn, 3 vols, Oxford, 1845), III, 330.

⁵¹ J Robinson, *Works*, III, 105.

⁵² W B Selbie, *Evangelical Christianity. its history and witness* (London, 1911), 112.

To this general rule the early General Baptists provided a notable exception. To them we must turn for pioneering advocacy of universal toleration on theological grounds. Shortly before his death John Smyth (c.1570-1612), exiled in the Netherlands, had prepared the draft of one hundred *Propositions and conclusions*, and these were published in 1612. The eighty-fourth proposition is to the effect that ‘the magistrate is not by virtue of his office to meddle with religion, or matters of conscience, to force or compel men to this or that form of religion, or doctrine: but to leave Christian religion free, to every man’s conscience, and to handle only civil transgressions ... for Christ only is the king and lawgiver of the church and conscience.’⁵³ Here we have the seeds of the anti-establishment argument, but it is important to understand that this is more than a straightforwardly political argument; it is an inference drawn from the prior fact that Christ alone is Lord of the conscience. It would be thoroughly anachronistic to read this as a secular-humanist argument for liberty of conscience, or freedom of the will. On the contrary the General Baptists believed that, owing to the pernicious effects of sin, the individual’s will was bound until released by God’s grace.⁵⁴ These General Baptists were not apostles of latter day human rights; they stood for the rights of God over conscience, Church and world. The point is underlined by Thomas Helwys (c.1575-c.1616), who had returned from the Netherlands in 1611, who founded the first Baptist church on English soil, and who published *A short declaration of the mistery of iniquity* in 1612. Here, in the wake of a good deal of anti-Roman-and-Church of England polemics, he famously advocates universal religious toleration:

Our lord the King is but an earthly King, and he hath no authority as a King but in earthly causes, and if the Kings people be obedient and true subjects, obeying all humane lawes made by the King, our lord the King can require no more: for mens religion to God is betwixt God and themselves; the King shall not answer for it, neither may the King be iugd between God and

⁵³ W L Lumpkin, *Baptist confessions of faith* (Valley Forge, PA, rev. Edn, 1969), 140.

⁵⁴ For a full discussion of this and related points see Lee Canipe, “‘That most damnable heresie’”. John Smyth, Thomas Helwys, and Baptist ideas of freedom’, *The Baptist Quarterly*, XL (July, 2004), 388-411. Cf. M Dorothea Jordan, ‘The early Independents and the visible Church,’ *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society*, VIII, no. 6 (October, 1923), 303-304.

man. Let them be heretickes, Turcks, Jewes, or what soever, it apperteynes not to the earthly power to punish them in the least measure. This is made evident to our lord the King by the Scriptures.⁵⁵

The theological point is reiterated in a personal note written by Helwys inside the cover of the copy of his book that he sent to James I: 'The king', he declares, 'is a mortal man and not God.'⁵⁶ As Brian Haymes rightly says, 'The crucial matter for Helwys is the sovereign right of Christ the King and the holy nature of the human conscience before God,'⁵⁷ and this, I would add, as declared in the Scriptures. Thus, when later Locke likewise esteemed it 'above all things necessary to distinguish exactly the business of civil government from that of religion', and contended that 'it appears not that God has ever given any such authority to one man over another, as to compel any one to his religion',⁵⁸ he was so far in agreement with the General Baptist pioneers. For their part they were not harbingers of Locke's epistemological argument for toleration.

That Smyth and Helwys were not alone in advocating the pro-toleration case is clear from such publications as *Religion's peace* (1614) by Leonard Busher; *Objections answered* (1615) and *A most humble supplication* (1620) by John Murton;⁵⁹ and *The bloody tenent of persecution* by Roger Williams (c.1606-1683). Williams's book appeared in 1644, and in the same year seven Particular Baptist Churches in London published their *London confession*, in which they agreed that 'a civill Magistrate is an ordinance of God set up by God for the punishment of evill doers, and for the praise of them that doe well', but also affirmed that 'wee desire to give unto God that which is Gods, and unto Caesar that which is Caesars.'⁶⁰

By now the Westminster Assembly was in session, and tensions among

⁵⁵ T Helwys, *A short declaration of the mistery of iniquity* (Amsterdam (?), 1612), 69.

⁵⁶ This book is at the Bodleian Library, Oxford. I owe the information to Brian Haymes, 'On religious liberty. Re-reading *A short declaration of the mystery of iniquity* in London in 2005,' *The Baptist Quarterly*, XLII (July, 2007), 197-217.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 201. I am pleased that Haymes and I are in accord: 'It is crucial', he insists, 'to recognize that Helwys' argument is theological.' Ibid., 204.

⁵⁸ Locke, *A letter concerning toleration*, 17, 18.

⁵⁹ Busher's and Murton's tracts appear in *Tracts on liberty of conscience*.

⁶⁰ W L Lumpkin, *Baptist confessions of faith*, 169-71.

the Dissenters over toleration were exhibited both within and without the Assembly. I shall first note some of the external rumblings. In his work of 1644 Roger Williams, whose endorsement of Baptist views had earlier led to his banishment from Massachussetts to Rhode Island by the Congregationalists, adduced biblical texts ‘against the *Doctrine of Persecution* of the *cause of Conscience*.’ He set out to answer from Scripture the ‘objections produced by Mr. *Calvin*, Beza, Mr. *Cotton*, and the Ministers of the New English Churches, and others former and later, tending to prove the *Doctrine of Persecution* for cause of *Conscience*’, and to show that that doctrine ‘is proved guilty of all the *blood* of the *Soules* crying for *vengeance* under the *Altar*.’⁶¹ Throughout, Williams emphasises the distinction between Church and state that is to be observed where religious matters are concerned, and he addressed his work to Parliament.

In the same year in which Williams’s book appeared the John Cotton to whom he refers, published his book, *The keyes of the kingdom*. Cotton (1584-1652) had emigrated to the New World in 1633, and there he became a leading exponent of the Congregational Way. It was when he set out to rebut Cotton’s arguments that John Owen was converted to Congregationalism.⁶² To Cotton and others in New England, the Congregational Way was the only divinely sanctioned model of Church order, and they were not disposed to tolerate those who diverged from it. Many Congregationalists who remained in England cited their transatlantic co-religionists with approval. William Bartlet (1609/10-1682), minister at Wapping, was as bold as any in denying that the Congregationalists favoured the toleration of all doctrines and church practices. Indeed, he lamented that some did not join the Congregational Way precisely because they thought that in that fold ‘every man may do as he list,’ and that Arianism and Socinianism were rife in the churches.

⁶¹ R Williams, *The bloody tenent, of persecution for cause of conscience, discussed in a conference between truth and peace* (London, 1644), a2.

⁶² For the ecclesiological background see Alan P F Sell, *Saints: visible, orderly and catholic. The congregational idea of the church* (Geneva & Allison Park, PA, 1986; available: Wipf and Stock), 1, ch. 3.

This, Bartlet thunders, ‘is a great *untruth*, and so nothing but a *slander*, and an evill report that some evill Spyes give out ...’⁶³

We do not have to look far to discover who these ‘evill Spyes’ might be. Some Presbyterians were, without question, among them, supremely the virulent Thomas ‘Gangraena’ Edwards (1599-1647). ‘A *Toleration*,’ he declares, ‘is the grand design of the Devil, his Masterpiece and the chief Engine he works by at this time to uphold his tottering Kingdom; it is the most compendious, ready, sure way to destroy all Religion.... As original sin is the most fundamental sin of all sin, having the seed and spawn of all in it; So a *Toleration* hath all errors in it, and all evils.’⁶⁴ Edwards has the Congregationalists particularly within his sights. Indeed, he thinks that ‘as Independency is the mother and originall of other sects, so ’tis the nurse and patroness that nurses and safeguards them.’⁶⁵ He accuses Independent ministers of having pleaded for the toleration of Anabaptists and others, and is convinced that if toleration were granted the result would be ‘Scepticism in Doctrine, and looseness of life, and afterwards all Atheisme.’⁶⁶ Milton was not altogether without justification when, in 1646, the same year in which Edwards launched his torpedo, he wrote his poem entitled, ‘On the new forcers of conscience under the Long Parliament’, and declared that ‘New *Presbyter* is but old Priest writ large.’

Exceptional in his antagonism Edwards may have been, but so balanced a person as the moderate episcopalian Richard Baxter nevertheless affirmed more than forty years later – indeed, in the very year that the Toleration Act reached the statute books, that ‘We are not for unlimited Toleration: But that the Rulers justly distinguish in Law and Licence; 1. The approved, whom they must own and maintain. 2. The tolerable,

⁶³ W Bartlet, Ἰχθυογραφία. *Or a model of the primitive Congregational way*, (London, 1647), 124.

⁶⁴ T Edwards, *Gangraena: or a catalogue and discovery of many of the errorrs, blasphemies and pernicious practices of the sectaries of this time, etc.* (London, 1646), 153-54.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 158. Edwards had first inveighed against the Independents in *Reasons against the Independent government of particular congregations; as also against the toleration to be erected in this kingdome* (London, 1641).

⁶⁶ Edwards, *Gangraena*, 188.

whom they must tolerate. 3. The intolerable, whom they must restrain from doing hurt.’⁶⁷

Among those who subscribed to the Particular Baptist *London confession* was Samuel Richardson who, in 1647, published *The necessity of toleration in matters of religion*. In answer to the question why the Nonconformists cannot subscribe to the deliverances of the Westminster Assembly he explains that ‘You would all be tolerated, and would have none tolerated but yourselves; you would suffer none to live quietly, and comfortable, but those of your way.’ He exhorts them to love their enemies, ‘or else, how can we look upon you to be reformed, much less to be reformers.’⁶⁸ With this we come to the tensions over toleration exhibited during the Westminster Assembly.

Largely Presbyterian in composition, the Westminster Assembly nevertheless had five significant Congregationalists: Thomas Goodwin, Philip Nye, Sidrach Simpson, Jeremiah Burroughes and William Bridge, and four or five others, among its number. In his 1882 paper on ‘The Westminster Assembly’ John Stoughton said of these that ‘Their chief distinction, and it is a highly meritorious one, is that in an age when the current ran in the opposite direction, they contended for religious toleration.’⁶⁹ This eulogy requires qualification. We have already seen that the Congregationalist William Bartlet was still opposing complete toleration in 1647, and he was not alone in so doing. The truth, as exposed by Robert Paul, would seem to be that the Congregationalists of the Westminster Assembly found their pro-toleration voice only when, during the sessions, it became clear that if the Presbyterians succeeded in enforcing their polity across the country they themselves would be seriously disadvantaged. As Paul puts it,

⁶⁷ R Baxter, *The English Nonconformists as under King Charles II and King James II* (London, 1689), 15.

⁶⁸ S Richardson, *The necessity of toleration in matters of religion*, in *Tracts on toleration*, 284-85.

⁶⁹ J Stoughton, ‘The Westminster Assembly,’ in *Jubilee lectures: a historical series delivered on the occasion of the jubilee of the Congregational Union in England and Wales* (2 vols in one, London, 1882), I, 170.

There is no reason to think that when they entered the Assembly the Independents would have been any more reluctant to see Congregationalism established in England than their colleagues had been to establish it in America.... Liberty of conscience, which had no place among the pre-war prejudices of New England Congregationalism, within a few years became the main plank in [the English Congregationalists'] platform within the Assembly and in their representations to Parliament.⁷⁰

Something of the change of tone as between Presbyterians and Congregationalists will become clear from a comparison of some statements issuing from the Westminster Assembly with some drawn from the Congregationalists' *Savoy Declaration of Faith and Order* of 1658. In the first place we may note that according to the *Westminster Larger Catechism*, among the sins forbidden under the second of the Ten Commandments is that of 'tolerating a false religion...'⁷¹ There is nothing like this in Savoy. There is, however, a positive statement in the Preface, namely, that 'amongst all Christian States and Churches, there ought to be vouchsafed a forbearance and mutual indulgence unto Saints of all persuasions, that keep unto, and hold fast the necessary foundations of faith and holiness, in all matters extrafundamental, whether of Faith or Order.'⁷² When the saints step out of line in matters of doctrine or worship, the *Westminster Confession* says that 'they may lawfully be called to account, and proceeded against by the censures of the church, and by the power of the civil magistrate.'⁷³ *Savoy* omits this section. Savoy's most significant amendment of *Westminster*⁷⁴ is in its deletion of the latter's Chapter XXIII.iii, which affirms the civil magistrate's power

⁷⁰ R S Paul, *The assembly of the Lord. Politics and religion in the Westminster Assembly and the 'Grand Debate'* (Edinburgh, 1985), 31. Cf. Ibid., 50, 103, 440, 477.

⁷¹ *The Larger Catechism*, Answer to Q 109.

⁷² *The Savoy Declaration of Faith and Order 1658*, ed. A G Matthews, (London, 1959), 56.

⁷³ *Westminster Confession of Faith*, XX.iv.

⁷⁴ Apart from the introduction of a completely new chapter XX, 'Of the Gospel, and of the extent of the Grace thereof.'

to suppress blasphemies, heresies and corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline by the calling of synods if necessary, and its replacement by the following:

Although the Magistrate is bound to encourage, promote, and protect the professors and profession of the Gospel, and to manage and order civil administrations in a due subserviency to the interest of Christ in the world ... Yet in such differences about the Doctrines of the Gospel, or ways of the worship of God, as may befall men exercising a good conscience ... not disturbing others in their ways or worship that differ from them; there is no warrant for the Magistrate under the Gospel to abridge them of their liberty.⁷⁵

That the point was by no means immediately, still less universally, taken is clear from the fact that in 1659, the year following the publication of *Savoy*, Milton addressed *A treatise of civil power in ecclesiastical causes* to Richard Cromwell's first and only Parliament. On the basis of a number of biblical texts, and bolstered by the *argumentum ad hominem*, he affirms, 'That Christ is the only lawgiver of his church ... in religious matters, no well grounded Christian will deny.'⁷⁶ He elaborated thus:

Christ hath a government of his own, sufficient of it self to all his ends and purposes in governing his church; but much different from that of the civil magistrate; and the difference in this verie thing principally consists, that it governs not by outward force, and that for two reasons. First, because it deals only with the inward man and his actions, which are all spiritual and to outward force not liable: secondly, to shew us the divine excellence of his spiritual kingdom, able without worldly force to subdue all the powers and kingdoms of this world, which are upheld by outward force only.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ *The Savoy Declaration*, XXIV.iii.

⁷⁶ J Milton, *A treatise of civil power in ecclesiastical causes, shewing that it is not lawfull for any power on earth to compel in matters of religion*, (London, 1659), 10.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 37-8.

Milton draws the distinctions between matters spiritual and civil, and between the spiritual and worldly kingdom clearly enough, but he must surely have known that the saints lived in both kingdoms, and that the saints were sinners: otherwise why the Puritan concern for godly discipline in the Church? John Owen was among others who expatiated on the point.

Arguments of a somewhat different flavour emanated from those industrious pamphleteers, the Quakers. In 1663 William Smith (d. 1673), at the time imprisoned in Nottingham County Gaol, addressed a ‘tender Message of Love unto the King’ entitled, *Liberty of conscience pleaded by several weighty reasons on the behalf of the people of God called Quakers*. His argument in a nutshell is that since Quakers have received ‘the Light that comes from Jesus Christ, and walk in the same ... they ought to have that Liberty granted them into which Christ hath restored them.’⁷⁸ By no means all were persuaded that the Quakers had received the light of Christ, still less did they approve of the type of witnessing that Quakers undertook in consequence of their claimed divine illumination. For example, whereas other Dissenters were seeking freedom to worship without let or hindrance, the Quakers could justify disturbing the worship of others because they deemed it false. To Edward Burrough (1634-1662) it was wrong that the Quaker practice of entering ‘steeple-houses’ to reprove sin, to exhort people unto good, and to denounce deceitful hireling teachers, should be called ‘a disturbance of the peace, and an unlawful practice.’⁷⁹ For his part, Isaac Penington (1616-1679) argued that their persecution constituted evidence that the Quakers were born of God’s Spirit and ‘new-created in Christ’; they are hated and persecuted because they do not follow the ways of the world. On the contrary, their Light condemns the world, and their persecutors are trying to bring them back to the world again. Penington exhorts the magistrates not to ‘suppress the plants of God’, but to wield the sword

⁷⁸ W Smith, *Liberty of conscience pleaded* (London, 1662), 6.

⁷⁹ E Burrough, *A message for instruction to all the rulers, judges and magistrates, to whom the law is committed* (London, 1658), 13.

against evil.⁸⁰ The implication of Penington's argument would seem to be that if the Quakers were to be tolerated, that could only be because either the whole world had seen the light, or because they had fallen from grace.

It is not without significance that John Owen was a primary architect of *Savoy*, or that he was primarily responsible for its temperate Preface. It is clear, however, that there was a significant gap between the degree of toleration – largely of worship and church order – advocated by even the most advanced Congregationalists, and the universal toleration for which Helwys and his fellow Baptists had appealed. This becomes clear in the pro-toleration writings of Owen, the most intensely theological,⁸¹ if also on occasion the most prolix, author among the Congregationalists. Thus on the question of compulsion he does not appeal to natural law, or to epistemological deficiency, or to the human conscience as such, but to God as Lord of the conscience. In his view,

The sole question is, Whether God has authorized and doth warrant any man ... to compel others to worship and serve him contrary to the way and manner that they are in their consciences persuaded that he doth accept and approve.... [T]o affirm that he hath authorized men to proceed in the way before mentioned is to say that he hath set up an authority *against himself*.⁸²

In all of this one is reminded of the opening pages of Locke's *Letter concerning toleration*, and it is tempting to think that Locke may have been influenced by Owen, who had been Dean of Christ Church, Oxford, during Locke's student days there. Clearly, immediate influence cannot be

⁸⁰ I Penington, *Concerning persecution, which is the afflicting or punishing that which if good under the pretence of its being evil* (London, 1661).

⁸¹ Not, indeed, that he eschewed 'that prime dictate of nature which none can pretend ignorance of, viz., "Do not that to another which thou wouldst not have done unto thyself."' *Works*, VIII, 195. This 'do as you would be done by argument' was quite frequently advanced by Dissenters over a long period. Priestley, for example, invoked it in 1789 when welcoming Roman Catholics in the cause of religious liberty: 'While we join in asserting our own rights, let us not be unmindful of the rights of others, especially the common rights of *humanity* ...' *The theological and miscellaneous works of Joseph Priestley*, ed. J T Rutt (25 vols., London, 1817-1831; repr. Bristol, 1999), XV, 403.

⁸² J Owen, *Works*, XIII, 530.

contended for because it took Locke a long time to reach his mature conclusions on toleration; and there is no positive evidence to suggest that when he wrote his *Letter* he was consciously recalling Owen's teaching. None of which need prevent our hearing of echoes. In his concern 'to distinguish exactly the business of civil government from that of religion,' Locke writes:

[T]he care of souls is not committed to the civil magistrate, any more than to other men ... because it appears not that God has ever given any such authority to one man over another, as to compel any one to his religion.... [N]o man can, if he would, conform his faith to the dictates of another. All the life and power of true religion consists in the inward and full persuasion of the mind; and faith is not faith without believing.... The care of souls cannot belong to the civil magistrate, because his power consists only in outward force ... And ... the understanding ... cannot be compelled to the belief of anything by outward force.⁸³

Elsewhere Owen undertakes to discuss what 'is commonly called, Toleration in Religion, or toleration of several religions,'⁸⁴ and his emphasis is upon the appropriateness or otherwise of forbearance in cases spiritual and civil. As to the former, he declares that 'Personal forbearance of errors ... is a moral toleration or approbation of them; so also is ecclesiastical.'⁸⁵ Against such forbearance Owen inveighs with spine-chilling rhetoric: 'Hath the sword of discipline no edge? ... Are the hammer of the word and the sword of the Spirit, which in days of old broke the stubbornest mountains, and overcame the proudest nations, now quite useless? God forbid!'⁸⁶ On the question whether 'persons enjoying civil authority over others ... are invested with power from above, and commanded in the word of God, to coerce, restrain, punish, confine, imprison, banish, hang, or burn, such of those persons under their

⁸³ Locke, *A letter concerning toleration*, 17-18.

⁸⁴ J Owen, *Works*, VIII, 163.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 170.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 171.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 171, 178.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 195.

jurisdiction as shall not embrace, profess, believe, and practise, that truth and way of worship which is revealed to them by God', Owen is no less clear: 'I desire it to be observed that the general issue and tendency of unlimited arbitrary persecution, or punishing for conscience' sake ... hath been pernicious, fatal, and dreadful to the profession and professors of the gospel, – little or not at all serviceable to the truth.'⁸⁷ Magistrates are to serve as under God; they must know God's mind and will regarding his honour and worship; they must ensure that the gospel is preached to every citizen; those who hold false opinions and disturb civil society must be dealt with; and 'If any persons ... shall offer violence or disturbance to the professors of the true worship of God ... such persons are to fear that power which is the minister of God, and a revenger to them that do evil.'⁸⁸ As to matters spiritual, magistrates are 'not bound by any rule or precept to assist and maintain [persons] in the practice of those things wherein they dissent from the truth;' they are required 'to protect them in peace and quietness in the enjoyment of all civil rights and liberties;' and they may not proceed against them 'for their dissent in those things they cannot receive. Attempts for uniformity among saints ... by external force, are purely antichristian.'⁸⁹

V

We have seen that between 1550 and 1689 arguments of diverse kinds and degrees of rigour were advanced in favour of, and against, religious toleration. Those more philosophically inclined adduced arguments which turned upon the imperfections of human knowledge, the deliverances of natural law and the rights of conscience. In ecclesiastical circles the case was made that while people cannot be coerced into uniformity of belief and practice, the love of one another that Christians are commanded by Christ to display should be the spur to mutual tolerance and even union. Among political arguments was one to the effect that toleration would make for societal tranquillity, and another which concluded that it would

⁸⁹ Ibid., 205.

lead to anarchy. The realisation slowly dawned that uniformity of belief and practice was not achievable by legislation, and that in certain matters church and state must be considered as distinct from one another.

The theological argument for toleration turned upon the conviction that God was Lord of the conscience, and that where Caesar opposed him, Christians were to give God precedence. Within this general stance, however, differing degrees of toleration were advocated. Whereas the General Baptists of Helwys's generation, and later Roger Williams, were pioneer advocates of universal religious toleration – and even of the toleration of atheists, the Quakers felt entitled to toleration because they were children of the Light, and had a clear idea as to those who were not. For their part, the Presbyterians did not, and the Congregationalists did not at first, advocate toleration at all. Both parties, like the Separatist John Robinson before them, were inhibited by their view that the Bible, the Word of God, prescribed one church polity only, namely their own, and that to flout it was to disobey God and repudiate the Church's Lord, Jesus Christ. Those Congregationalists who had taken charge of parishes in Cromwellian times, and all of the Presbyterians, would not have baulked at an established Church provided that it were of their own sort. It was only when, during the Westminster Assembly, it appeared that the Presbyterians were likely to gain the upper hand that some Congregationalists, unlike their New England counterparts who were the power in their new land, began to urge toleration. But neither Congregationalists nor Presbyterians would have extended it to Roman Catholics. When toleration came in 1689, restricted and mean-spirited thought the Act was,⁹⁰ it was not because Christians of differing stripes had come to mutual agreement. As Robert Paul said, it was 'imposed on the theologians from without.'⁹¹ Much more water was to flow under the

⁹⁰ In that, while it accorded freedom of worship to Protestant orthodox Dissenters (that is, not to Roman Catholics, Socinians or Jews), the existing anti-Nonconformist legislation was not repealed, the Dissenters were reduced to the status of second-class citizens, and the divisive Church-chapel distinction was enshrined in English and Welsh life.

⁹¹ R S Paul, *The assembly of the Lord*, 491.

bridge before we come to the rueful judgment passed upon his own generation exactly a century ago by P T Forsyth: 'The inviolable freedom of the individual takes the place once kept for his absolute dependence and obedience before God.'⁹²

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⁹² P T Forsyth, *Faith, freedom and the future* (1912; repr. London, 1955, 129).

THE INFLUENCE OF ROUSSEAU ON PAINE'S POLITICAL THOUGHT

Carine Lounissi

Introduction

Thomas Paine has often been considered as the perfect example of the enlightened thinker whose writings express 'the essence of the eighteenth century' (Robert R Palmer)¹ or even in a more debatable way 'the quintessence' of it (Alfred O Aldridge).² More recently, Jack Fruchtman stated that 'Enlightenment principles permeate Paine's writings'.³ Paine is also viewed as the archetype of the cosmopolitan revolutionary who, to quote the French historian of the 19th century, Jules Michelet, 'had no fewer than three fatherlands, England, America and France'.⁴ Authors from the three countries were indeed among the sources on which Paine relied to develop his own system of thought. In 1942, Eugene P Link put Paine in the category of those whom he called 'the deviators from Locke who followed Rousseau',⁵ suggesting that the latter played a major role in shaping Paine's political thought. More recently, Frederick William Dame went so far as to say that 'Paine was a disciple of Rousseau'.⁶ Comparisons, whether superficial or more in-depth, between Paine and Rousseau were made in England as early as the 1790s after the publication of *Rights of man* and the controversy that ensued. However, whereas Paine's relation to Locke has often been tackled in critical studies, the possible influence of the citizen of Geneva's thought on that of the revolutionary of Thetford has to date not been much explored. Only

¹ Robert R Palmer, 'Tom Paine. Victim of the Rights of Man', *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 61 (1942), 162.

² Alfred Owen Aldridge, 'The Rights of Man de Thomas Paine : symbole du siècle des Lumières et leur influence en France', in Pierre Francastel ed. *Utopies et institutions au XVIII^e siècle : le pragmatisme des Lumières* (Paris, 1963), 277.

³ Jack Fruchtman Jr., *The political philosophy of Thomas Paine* (Baltimore, 2009), 11.

⁴ 'N'avait pas moins de trois patries, l'Angleterre, l'Amérique et la France', Jules Michelet, *Histoire de la Révolution française* (Paris, 1979), liv. V, chap. 6, vol. 1, 534.

⁵ Eugene P Link. *Democratic-Republican societies, 1790-1800* (New York, 1942), 104.

⁶ Frederick William Dame, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau and political literature in colonial America* (Lewiston, NY, 1996), 18.

a few have examined this issue specifically,⁷ even if Paine scholars have included remarks about the importance of Rousseau for Paine's political thought in their studies, like Alfred Owen Aldridge and Jack Fruchtman,⁸ as well as students of the influence of Rousseau in America,⁹ but without systematically addressing this issue. Yet it deserves such a treatment if only to better understand Paine's social contract theory and his vision of the political regime he thought was the best or rather the least worst one. It is likewise necessary because of Paine's role in the French Revolution and because he has been said to belong to the class of 'philosophers of the French type in England'¹⁰ to quote David Spadafora who only rephrased Walt Whitman's opinion according to which Paine's thought was 'a mixture of the French and English schools of a century ago and the best of both'.¹¹ This alleged French image of Paine is still to be found in recent studies. For example, Jack Fruchtman referred to him as a '*philosophe*'.¹² Investigating Rousseau's potential influence on Paine more closely may therefore also help determine the epistemological validity of this iconography.¹³

⁷ Published articles: Harry Hayden Clark, 'Thomas Paine's Relation to Voltaire and Rousseau', *Revue Anglo-américaine*, 9 (1932), 305-18; 393-405; Louise Marcil-Lacoste, 'Paine et Rousseau: sens commun et révolution', in Jean Roy ed., *Jean-Jacques Rousseau et la Révolution, Actes du Colloque de Montréal (25-28 mai 1989)* (Ottawa, 1991), 225-45. Elroy Dupuis, *A comparison of certain aspects of revolutionary thought in the writings of Thomas Paine and Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, an unpublished dissertation defended in 1937, University of North Carolina, 145 pp.

⁸ Alfred Owen Aldridge, *Thomas Paine's American ideology* (Newark, 1984), 137-46. Fruchtman Jr., *Political philosophy of Paine*, 21-24, 35, 98, 100, 129-31.

⁹ Dame, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau and political literature in colonial America*, 18-26.

Paul Merrill Spurlin, *Rousseau in America, 1760-1809* (Alabama, 1969), 12, 35, 61.

¹⁰ David Spadafora, *The idea of progress in eighteenth-century Britain* (New Haven, 1990), 10.

¹¹ Walt Whitman, *Complete prose works* (Philadelphia, 1892), 97.

¹² Fruchtman Jr. *Political philosophy of Paine*, 11.

¹³ It is quite paradoxical that despite Paine's supposed 'French' reputation, his activities in France between 1787 and 1802 should be most of the time either ignored by Paine scholars or given a secondary role in his career, except for studies made in France by Yannick Bosc and Carine Lounissi. Yannick Bosc, *La Terreur des droits de l'homme. Thomas Paine et le débat sur la Constitution de 1795* (Paris, forthcoming) ; Carine Lounissi, '*La pensée politique de Thomas Paine en contexte: théorie et pratique*', *Les Dix-huitièmes Siècles* (Paris, 2012).

Whereas Paine always denied he had read Locke's *Second treatise*,¹⁴ he faintly referred to Rousseau whom he had apparently read early since he mentioned him in 1776 in one of the articles he published with the penname 'The Forester'.¹⁵ Then in 'An Essay for the Use of New Republicans', published in 1792 in France, he quoted *The social contract*.¹⁶ Paine probably read Rousseau's works in English at first and then may have read a French edition of them when staying in France since, according to several sources and testimonies, he seems to have been able to read French, although he could not speak the language.¹⁷ New translations of *The social contract* were also published in London in 1791.¹⁸

¹⁴ 'I never read Locke nor ever had the work in my hand', Paine stated in an article he published in the *New York Public Advertiser* in August 1807. Alfred Owen Aldridge, 'Thomas Paine and the *New York Public Advertiser*', *New York Historical Society Quarterly*, 88 (1953), 377.

¹⁵ Philip S Foner ed., *The complete writings of Thomas Paine* (New York, 1945), vol. 2, 79.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 543.

¹⁷ A number of substantial testimonies make the case for Paine's ability to read French. Henry Redhead Yorke described Paine's room in France as containing 'three shelves [which] were filled with pasteboard boxes each labelled after the manner of a minister of foreign affairs, *Correspondance américaine; Britannique* (sic); *Française; Notices politique ; Le Citoyen français* etc.'; W T Sherwin, *Memoirs of the life of Thomas Paine with observations on his writings, critical and explanatory* (London, 1819), 188-189. In her *Memoirs*, Manon Roland, who knew Paine and collaborated with him, said that 'he understood French but could not speak the language'. Jeanne-Marie Roland de la Platière, *Mémoires de Mme Roland* (Paris, 2004), 256. Paine himself explained, in one of his letters in 1797, that he regularly read French newspapers, in particular 'the Paris papers' and the '*Nouvelles politiques*'; Foner ed. *Complete writings of Paine*, vol. 2, 1392-93. On January 7, 1793, in the *Convention*, the French parliamentary archives recorded that Paine asked in French for the printing of all the opinions about Louis XVI that had not been read orally: 'Je demande l'impression de toutes les opinions qui restent encore à prononcer'; *Archives parlementaires de 1787 à 1860: recueil complet des débats législatifs et politiques des Chambres françaises*. Imprimé par ordre du Sénat et de la Chambre des Représentants, t. LVI, 265. However he admitted he could not speak French on several occasions, in particular in the letter that he wrote to introduce his first speech on Louis XVI's possible fate, *ibid.*, t. LIII, 498, and in the last of the speeches he wrote on this subject; *Réimpression de l'Ancien Moniteur: depuis la réunion des Etats-Généraux jusqu'au Consulat, mai 1789-novembre 1799* (Paris: au Bureau central, 1840-1843), vol. 15, 249. His speeches were translated by his friends (either Condorcet or Lanthenas) and delivered by other members of the *Convention*.

¹⁸ Jean-Jacques Rousseau. *An inquiry into the nature of the social contract* (London, 1791); Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *A treatise on the social compact: or the principles of*

However the precise moment when he read the latter work is uncertain. Alfred Owen Aldridge argued that Paine's description in *Common Sense* of the 'first parliament' set up in a newly created community convening under 'some convenient tree'¹⁹ was inspired by Rousseau's idea according to which people originally gathered under an 'oak' or a 'big tree'.²⁰ As we shall see, A O Aldridge unknowingly took up an idea already suggested in *Plain truth*, an answer to *Common sense*.²¹ Yet Paine could as well and more likely have used the tradition of liberty trees to write this paragraph, an assumption that may be confirmed by a poem entitled *Liberty tree* and published in September 1775 that has been attributed to him.²² Trees of Liberty were places beneath which American colonists organized meetings and protests against the taxation policy of the mother country.²³ No wonder therefore that Paine should have used this symbol. A O Aldridge also pointed out more convincing verbal similarities between Rousseau's *Social contract* and Paine's *Rights of Man* since what Paine asserted in the second part of it according to which 'freedom had been hunted around the globe'²⁴ is reminiscent of the opening sentence of Rousseau's *Social contract*. The first sentence of the introduction of the second part of *Rights of man* – 'What Archimedes said of the mechanical powers may be applied to Reason and Liberty: "Had we," said he, "a place to stand on, we might raise the world"' – echoes one of Rousseau's

politic law (London, 1791). The former included a preface in which the translator explained why he thought it useful to offer a new translation 'in which care has been taken to give the sense of the author in the plainest language' to enable readers to link Rousseau's principles and the new French Constitution. It also alluded to the tribute paid to Rousseau by the National Assembly to the citizen of Geneva, which may refer to December 21, 1790 when the Assembly decided to erect a statue of Rousseau. It clearly means that the work was published with a view to promote the achievements of the French Revolution and Rousseau's principles.

¹⁹ Mark Philp ed. with intro., *Thomas Paine: Rights of man, Common sense and other political writings* (Oxford, 1995), 6 [hereafter, Philp ed., *Rights of man*...].

²⁰ Aldridge, *Paine's American ideology*, 143. Jean-Jacques Rousseau. *Du contrat social* (edn. Paris, 1992), 33. Jean-Jacques Rousseau. *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* (edn. Paris, 1992), 228. These editions of Rousseau cited hereafter unless otherwise stated.

²¹ *Plain truth* (Philadelphia and London, 1776), 1.

²² Foner ed. *Complete writings of Paine*, vol. 2, 1092.

²³ See for example Arthur M Schlesinger, 'Liberty Tree: A Genealogy', *The New England Quarterly*, 25/4 (1952), 435-36.

²⁴ Aldridge. *Paine's American ideology*, 142; Philp ed., *Rights of man*..., 210. The same phrase was already used in *Common sense*, *ibid.*, 35.

sentences in the *Social contract*.²⁵ Furthermore, in the same work and in his *Letter addressed to the addressers*, he used one of Rousseau's important ideas, that of 'general will'.²⁶ Therefore it seems that Paine tended to employ a more Rousseauist language at the beginning of the 1790s when he stayed in France. There were indeed no such references in his later works. This concentration of references may be easily accounted for by his contacts with Girondin thinkers like Brissot or Condorcet and other revolutionaries.²⁷

Yet does it mean that as regards the content of his political thought, Paine set forward a Rousseauist theory or that, to quote Jack Fruchtman, Rousseau 'profoundly influenced his thinking'²⁸ and 'stimulated him to advocate not only political but social reform'?²⁹ Paine developed his own version of the political contract that was to be the groundwork for a new political system, representative democracy, which should be set up through a political revolution. He also proposed major reforms in other domains, in particular in the treatment of poverty and of military conflicts. These various aspects of Paine's thought should be examined in order to determine whether he may have relied on Rousseau's to define his own.³⁰

²⁵ 'Avec un levier suffisant, d'un doigt, on peut ébranler le monde', Rousseau, *Du contrat social*, 102.

²⁶ Philp, ed., *Rights of man...*, 318, 370 and 376.

²⁷ Numerous critical studies have been published on Rousseau's influence on the French revolutionaries, a topic which has been debated since the French Revolution itself. Some of the most recent ones include: Norman Hampson, *Will and circumstance: Montesquieu, Rousseau and the French Revolution* (London, 1983); Carol Blum, *Rousseau and the republic of virtue: the language of politics in the French Revolution* (Ithaca & London, 1986); Roger Barny, *Le droit naturel à l'épreuve de l'histoire: Jean-Jacques Rousseau dans la Révolution, débats politiques et sociaux; suivi de Montesquieu dans la Révolution* (Besançon: Annales littéraires de l'Université de Besançon; Paris: Les Belles lettres, 1995).

²⁸ Fruchtman Jr., *Political philosophy of Paine*, 23.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 23-24.

³⁰ I will use all Paine's political writings, mainly in the following editions: Foner ed., *Complete writings of Thomas Paine*, see n.15 (which is not as 'complete' as the title proclaims), and Philp ed., *Rights of man...*, see n.19. The following political works of Rousseau will be taken into account here: his essay on peace, the two *Discourses*, *The social contract* and his article on political economy, both in French and in the English translations that were published at the end of the 18th century. The French editions of these texts will be quoted as well as the translations in English published at the time: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes*, ed. Jacques Roger (Paris, 1971); Jean-Jacques

Moreover, this intellectual paternity test should include the several ways in which Rousseau's ideas were perceived at the end of the eighteenth century and how they were exploited through 'Rousseauism' which notably served in Great Britain to denounce what one of Paine's opponents called 'Painism'.³¹

Paine's social contract

Establishing potential connections between Paine's and Rousseau's ideas is made sometimes problematic because both authors changed their minds about some parts of their systems of thought. Paine, moreover, wrote in response to questions raised in specific contexts and one should not expect his publications to display the consistency of systematic treatises. For example, his social contract theory evolved from *Common sense* to his later works. In his *Letter to the Abbe Raynal*, published in 1782, he depicted man in the state of nature as enjoying 'independence', that is as individuals who could satisfy their needs without the assistance of others and living in what was close to a Hobbesian state of war, 'each contending with the other to secure something which he had, or to obtain something which he had not.'³² In *Common sense*,³³ published six years before, and in the second part of *Rights of man*, published in 1792, man in the state of nature appears as unable to survive alone: 'no one man is capable, without the aid of society, of supplying his own wants.'³⁴

This quotation also illustrates another major problem in Paine's thought, i.e. the meaning of the word 'society'. In the first part of his answer to

Rousseau. *Du contrat social*, ed. Pierre Burgelin (Paris, 1992); Jean-Jacques Rousseau. *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 3: *Du contrat social, Ecrits politiques*, ed. Marcel Raymond (Paris, 1991); Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Sur l'économie politique. Considérations sur le gouvernement de Pologne. Projet pour la Corse*, ed. Barbara de Negroni (Paris, 1990). Translations: Jean-Jacques Rousseau. *The Discourse which carried the præmium at the Academy of Dijon*, in MDCCL. *On this question, proposed by the said Academy, whether the re-establishment of arts and sciences has contributed to the refining of manners* (London, 1751). Jean-Jacques Rousseau. *A discourse upon the origin and foundation of the inequality among mankind* (London, 1761). Jean-Jacques Rousseau. *A project for perpetual peace* (London, 1761). Jean-Jacques Rousseau. *Miscellaneous works* (5 vols., London, 1767). Jean-Jacques Rousseau. *An inquiry into the nature of the social contract*, *op. cit.*

³¹ Paine and Burke contrasted (London, 1792), 19.

³² Foner ed., *Complete writings of Paine*, vol. 2, 241.

³³ Philp ed. *Rights of man*..., 6.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 214.

Burke, Paine used the term to refer to the community created by a compact³⁵ in a Lockean way insofar as in *The second treatise* Locke restricts the acceptation of the term ‘society’ to the community that stems from the contract, as is the case in chapter seven.³⁶ In *Common sense*, the word ‘society’ rather meant a form of natural community, which was an intermediary stage between what Paine calls ‘the state of natural liberty’³⁷ and the political community,³⁸ a moment in the hypothetical history of man that exists in Locke’s theory, but which he does not refer to as ‘society’. This shift is rather embarrassing when the reader attempts at interpreting Paine’s declaration in the first volume of *Rights of man* according to which ‘it is extremely easy to distinguish the governments which have arisen out of society, or out of the social compact, from those which have not’.³⁹ It might be understood as suggesting the existence of two contracts, one of which would create an apolitical community. Yet Paine probably intended to define a contract agreed on by and among the members of this societal reunion and that sets up a governing body.⁴⁰ Similarly, in *Dissertation on first principles of government*, which was printed in 1795, he specified that ‘the social contract’ is ‘the principle by which society is held together’.⁴¹ Again it could mean that the political contract agreed on by the people among themselves either produces society and the polity at the same time or only the latter.

Therefore when Harry H Clark concluded that ‘Rousseau and Paine agree that as soon as people began to associate, the resultant wickedness

³⁵ ‘Man did not enter society to become *worse* than he was before, nor to have fewer rights than he had before, but to have those rights better secured’. *Ibid.*, 119.

³⁶ ‘Any number of men in the state of nature enter society to make one people, one body politic under one supreme government’, John Locke. *The second treatise of government*, chap. 7, § 89, in John Locke. *Two treatises of government*, ed. Mark Goldie (London, 1994), 159.

³⁷ Philp ed., *Rights of man...*, 6.

³⁸ ‘Thus necessity, like a gravitating power, would soon form our newly arrived emigrants into society, the reciprocal blessings of which, would supercede, and render the obligations of law and government unnecessary while they remain perfectly just to each other’. *Ibid.*, 6.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 120.

⁴⁰ Paine rejected forms of vertical contracts between the governors and the governed such as the ‘original contract’ that was supposed to be the basis of the British monarchy. He instead defended a form of horizontal contract, but his formulations sometimes tended to cloud the issue as they did not always make it clear whether this vertical contract created society and government at the same time.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 404.

made necessary a social contract',⁴² one should keep in mind Paine's ambiguities and near contradictions on that point. In addition, this idea is not really specifically Rousseau's. It is common to Locke who considered that the transgressions of the natural rights of some members of the natural society made it unavoidable to designate an umpire to apply the right of judging and punishing the transgressors. However, in Rousseau's state of nature, as delineated in the *Discourse on the origin and foundation of inequality among mankind*, man is 'alone', 'idle',⁴³ 'without standing in any shape in need of his fellows' and 'an equal stranger to war'.⁴⁴ This does not look like Paine's description either in his answer to Raynal or in *Common sense* or in *Rights of man*. Even in *Agrarian justice*, he did not praise primitive life in his version of the state of nature historicized through the case of American Indians.⁴⁵ Paine was probably indebted in this regard to philosophers of the Scottish Enlightenment like James Dunbar.⁴⁶

Paine viewed man as a fallen creature whose postlapsarian condition made government necessary, 'a necessary evil'.⁴⁷ In Paine's system, what creates society, that is the initial gathering of men in the state of nature, is need whereas what produces government is man's inability to abide by moral law or by what he calls 'the impulses of conscience'.⁴⁸ In one of the rare studies devoted to a parallel between Paine and Rousseau, Elroy Dupuis asserted that both thinkers considered that men chose to leave the state of nature for the same reason: 'in this state ... men as individuals lacked the power to enforce all their rights and therefore entered into a condition of society, which in turn produced civil government'.⁴⁹ This

⁴² Harry Hayden Clark, 'Thomas Paine's Relation to Voltaire and Rousseau', loc.cit., 400.

⁴³ Rousseau, *Discourse upon the origin and foundation of the inequality among mankind*, 32.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 86 ; Rousseau, *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes*, 180-81 and 218.

⁴⁵ Gregory Claeys, *Thomas Paine's social and political thought* (Boston, 1989), 199.

⁴⁶ James Dunbar, *Essays on the history of mankind in rude and cultivated ages* (London, 1780), 145.

⁴⁷ Philp ed., *Rights of man...*, 5. Alfred Owen Aldridge rather thinks that Paine's vision of man in *Common sense* is ambivalent, although ambiguities might be noticed only later in *Rights of man*. Aldridge, *Thomas Paine's American ideology*, 144.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Dupuis, *A comparison of certain aspects of revolutionary thought in the writings of Thomas Paine and Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, 50.

assessment again comes up against Paine's fluctuating use of the word 'society'. If the latter means a form of natural association, then Elroy Dupuis' assertion is not valid and if it refers to a political community, then this judgment has to be analyzed in relation to Rousseau's vision of society. In the *Discourse on the origin of inequality*, the social state of man can be the result only of a cataclysm obliging men to forsake the state of nature and live together.⁵⁰ In the same year, in 1755, Rousseau's reflections on 'political economy' were published as an article of the *Encyclopédie* of Diderot and D'Alembert. He emphasized that 'the motives which have induced men once united by their common wants into a general society, to unite themselves still more intimately by particular societies' are 'the security of property, life and liberty to each member by means of the protection of all',⁵¹ a rather Lockean definition, although the phrase 'general society' is probably tinged with sarcasm here. Except for the latter tone, it matches what Paine stated in *Common sense* and in *Rights of man*. Yet this connection is undermined by the nearly nonexistent notion of political or civil society in Paine's writings maybe because he envisioned the government as merely 'ingrafted' on society.⁵²

Similarly, and more recently, David Wootton suggested that in *Common sense*, 'Paine's description of the origins of government is remarkably close to that of Rousseau's *Social contract*'.⁵³ It is equally debatable since there is nothing really specifically Rousseauist in the opening pages of his pamphlet of 1776, except perhaps for a passage which appears further down in the work when Paine offers a short summary of the political contract that should be made through a 'charter', or a written form of constitution which should be 'a bond of solemn obligation, which the whole enters into, to support the right of every separate part'.⁵⁴ It may somewhat remind the reader of the way Rousseau expounds the

⁵⁰ Rousseau, *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes*, 227.

⁵¹ Rousseau, *Miscellaneous works*, vol. 2, 11, 'Les motifs qui ont porté les hommes unis par leurs besoins mutuels dans la grande société, à s'unir plus étroitement par des sociétés civiles'; 'celui d'assurer les biens, la vie et la liberté de chaque membre par la protection de tous'. Ibid., *Sur l'économie politique*, 65.

⁵² Philp ed., *Rights of man*..., 216.

⁵³ 'The Republican Tradition: from Commonwealth to *Common Sense*', in David Wootton, *Republicanism and commercial society: from the English Civil War to American Revolution* (Stanford, 1994), 32.

⁵⁴ Philp ed., *Rights of Man*..., 43.

nature of the contract,⁵⁵ except, first, for Rousseau's vision of the post-contractarian individual as being incorporated into a body politic, but keeping his own freedom through the contract (in what verges almost on a mystical view of the political association) and, secondly, except for the role the specific concept of general will plays in his theory.

Such parallels should be handled with care as they rely on what may be called *trompe-l'oeil* comparisons. Another example of such debatable and misleading resemblances is Paine's use of the word 'aggregate' in *Rights of man*. In the first part, he explains that 'civil power, properly considered as such, is made up of the aggregate of that class of the natural rights of man, which becomes defective in point of power',⁵⁶ which might be reminiscent of Rousseau's words in the 1791 translation of the *Social contract*: 'as men cannot create for themselves new forces, but merely unite and direct those which already exist, the only means they can employ for their preservation is to form by aggregation an assemblage of forces'.⁵⁷ Yet it does not mean that Paine's understanding of the procedure leading to the political contract is identical to Rousseau's. Paine may have relied on Rousseau's idea about the need for a scientific principle close to the idea formulated later by the Enlightenment chemist, Lavoisier. One could also argue that Paine did not necessarily borrow this notion of 'aggregation' from Rousseau since radicals who answered Burke's *Reflections* before Paine did also use the same phrase, like George Rous⁵⁸ or Brooke Boothby.⁵⁹ Again it is not certain that Paine read the formula

⁵⁵ Rousseau. *Du Contrat social*, Book I, chapter 6, 39-40.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 120.

⁵⁷ Rousseau. *An inquiry into the nature of the social contract*, 33-34. The translation of 1764 is different as it reads: 'as men cannot create new powers but only compound and direct those which really exist, they have no other means of preservation than of forming by their union an accumulation of forces', Jean-Jacques Rousseau. *A treatise on the social Compact* (London, 1764), 19. 'Comme les hommes ne peuvent engendrer de nouvelles forces, mais seulement unir et diriger celles qui existent, ils n'ont plus d'autres moyens pour se conserver que de former par agrégation une somme de forces', Rousseau, *Du contrat social*, liv. I, chap. 6, 38.

⁵⁸ 'The aggregate of these rights the community delegate to their rulers', Gregory Claeys ed., *Political writings of the 1790s* (London, 1995), vol. 2, 13.

⁵⁹ 'All political power consists of an aggregate sum of the natural rights ... No more liberty will be taken from the individual than is necessary to form an aggregate of power sufficient to protect the whole against each and each against the other', *ibid.*, 69.

in those texts since in the thirteenth issue of his *American crisis* published in 1783, he had already used it to explain the nature of the union between the American States.⁶⁰ This shows the limits of such verbal similarities that have been used by those who have tried to turn Paine into a ‘French’ thinker.

On the whole, Paine’s conception of the political compact remained closer to Locke’s if only because it is based on the necessity to delegate ‘the right to judge’ since the ‘power to redress’ that goes with it is imperfect according to Paine.⁶¹ His interpretation of the exchange of rights that should take place in the political contract is different from Rousseau’s. In the second part of *Rights of man*, he nevertheless referred to the ‘general will’ of the people when defining rebellion saying that it could be viewed as acting contrary to the ‘general will of a nation, whether by a party or by a government’.⁶² Paine’s definition of rebellion is rather Lockean,⁶³ but he introduced Rousseau’s phrase in it. He also employed it in his *Letter addressed to the addressers*: ‘it is best that the general WILL should have the full and free opportunity of being publicly ascertained and known’,⁶⁴ adding that the method for ascertaining it was to let ‘the general WILL’ of the people express itself would be through a ‘National Convention’.⁶⁵ The phrase seems to denote the sovereignty of the people in the three quotes but nothing indicates that he used it in a precise Rousseauist sense. In the constitutional plan that Paine presumably wrote with Condorcet in 1793, the phrase also appears in the Declaration of Rights that preceded the project presented by the first constitutional committee of which Paine was a member: ‘the Law, which is the expression of the general will’.⁶⁶ However it is only a repetition of the Declaration of 1789.

The resort to this Rousseauist phrase by Paine is only superficial and is no proof that he agreed with Rousseau’s specific concept as set forward in *The Social contract* despite what Jack Fruchtman concludes when he

⁶⁰ Philp ed., *Rights of man*..., 76.

⁶¹ Ibid., 120.

⁶² Ibid., 318.

⁶³ Locke. *The second treatise of government*, § 227, in Locke. *Two treatises of government*, 230.

⁶⁴ Philp ed., *Rights of man*..., 370.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 376.

⁶⁶ Foner ed., *Complete writings of Paine*, vol. 2, 558.

points out that in *Rights of man* Paine 'drew directly on Rousseau's notion of popular sovereignty' even if he adds that the presence of Rousseau's phrase fits into Paine's 'simpler' theory⁶⁷. It might be surmised that, except in the Declaration plan whose authorship is uncertain, Paine used the phrase 'general will' more as a rhetorical flourish. This phrase was far from being univocally put forward by French revolutionaries⁶⁸ and by the pamphleteers and writers who took part in the controversies of the time in France, Great Britain and in the United States. Rousseau's ideas were variously interpreted in the 1780s and 1790s and unraveling the issue is made all the more problematic by these several readings. It is not really possible to know which meaning Paine did ascribe to the phrase.

What Frederick William Dame claims about Paine's potential debt to Rousseau for the notion of sovereignty as explained in *The Social contract*, which F W Dame says is 'the basis for Paine's distinctions between the different types of government',⁶⁹ does not stand either. Dame does not provide precise evidence grounded in Rousseau's writing. Moreover Paine never really probed the concept of sovereignty in his writings. In reality most of Paine's social contract theory had been elaborated before he published *Rights of man*, first in 1776 in *Common sense* and *Four letters on interesting subjects* and then in 1786 in *Dissertations on government*. By 1791-1792 Paine already had his own vision of what popular sovereignty was and *Rights of man*, except for a few arguments, was on the whole rather a synthesis of his ideas on the subject than a fully new theoretical development. It would therefore seem more accurate to say that Paine took up a Rousseauist phrase to refer to his own conception of popular sovereignty, which meant to him that the people were the natural seat of power and that democracy was the natural regime that they would set up without the intervention of monarchical usurpers. His handling of Rousseau's language does not imply that he used it in the same sense as Rousseau. Paine did think that this primary power was 'inalienable' to quote Rousseau's idea in *The Social contract*,⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Fruchtmann Jr., *Political philosophy of Thomas Paine*, 98 and 123. F W Dame does not take into account the specificity of the concept of general will and considers it means the 'majority will'. Frederick William Dame. *Jean-Jacques Rousseau and political literature in colonial America*, 18.

⁶⁸ As Roger Barny and Gordon H McNeil have notably shown. Gordon H McNeil, 'The Anti-Revolutionary Rousseau', *The American Historical Review*, vol. 58 (1953), 808-23.

⁶⁹ Frederick William Dame. *Jean-Jacques Rousseau and political literature in colonial America*, 23.

⁷⁰ Rousseau, *Du contrat social*, Book II, chapter 1, 51.

but not in the same way since Paine believed that representation was essential to a republican regime.

Contract and democracy

One of Paine's major contribution to political thought or at least what was among the most original aspects of his thought was that only a democratic regime could be legitimate and that the political contract was inherently democratic in a twofold manner: it should be agreed on by all and the result of it was to be democracy. Both Paine and Rousseau shared a theoretical preference for 'simple governments'⁷¹ and for democracy, even if the latter believed it infeasible on earth.⁷² Paine called for a republican regime, *i.e.* a representative democracy,⁷³ and he did not share Rousseau's mistrust of representation that was precluded in the latter's system of thought by the nature of the general will itself.⁷⁴ In contrast to Rousseau, Paine moved away from the 'republican' tradition in the Pocockian acceptance of the term, as Pocock himself admitted.⁷⁵ Yet one of the features of this tradition to which Paine was partially an heir is the

⁷¹ Ibid., 105.

⁷² They were both close and maybe indebted to Spinoza's ideas on the subject. Spinoza considered democracy as 'the most natural regime' Baruch de Spinoza, *Traité théologico-politique*, ed. Charles Appuhn (Paris, 1965), chap. 16, 268, and his way of depicting the political contract probably inspired Rousseau, a connection that has often been commented on. See for example Fatma Haddad-Chamakh, *Philosophie systématique et système de philosophie politique chez Spinoza* (Tunis: 1980), 416.

⁷³ Paine pleaded in favour of representative democracy as early as *Common sense*. He then developed his theory of the republican regime in his following writings, especially in *Dissertations on government* (1786), which is often overlooked in Paine studies. In the first part of *Rights of man*, he did not call for the abolition of monarchy in France. It is the blind spot of the book. It does not prevent him from expressing his preference for the republican regime. See the conclusion of the *Rights of man*, Philp ed., *Rights of man...*, 190-92. He also called for the setting up of a republic in France as soon as he heard of the Varennes episode a few months after the publication of *Rights of man*. As regards universal suffrage, he defended it (with a few exceptions) as early as 1778 in 'A Serious Address to the People of Pennsylvania', Foner ed. *Complete writings of Paine*, vol. 2, 287-88.

⁷⁴ Rousseau, *Du contrat social*, 122-23.

⁷⁵ John G A Pocock. *Virtue, commerce and history* (Cambridge, 1985), 288. This idea has been confirmed by Paine scholars since then. See for example, Claeys, *Paine: social and political thought*, 5-6.

advocacy of civic virtue, as Karen M Ford argues relying on Joyce Appleby's distinction between an old and a new republicanism.⁷⁶ Rousseau insisted on the necessity for citizens to take part in the life of the city for the democratic regime to be able to survive,⁷⁷ but Paine understood participation rather as a right than as a virtue.⁷⁸ In addition, Rousseau still expressed the commonplace idea of the time that the best regime for a country depended on its size and climate, whereas Paine demonstrated, in the second part of *Rights of man*, that representative democracy was the best government whatever the extent of the country.⁷⁹

Albeit they diverged on the nature of the best democratic regime, Paine and Rousseau both rejected hereditary monarchy.⁸⁰ In the final lines of the *Discourse on the origin of inequality*, the citizen of Geneva argued that 'it is evidently against the law of nature that infancy should command old age, folly conduct wisdom, and a handful of men should be ready to choak (*sic*) with superfluities while the famished multitude want the commonest necessities of life',⁸¹ a diatribe repeated in the chapter on monarchy in the *Social contract* in which hereditary monarchy appears as enabling 'children, monsters and fools' to rule.⁸² This kind of criticism levelled at hereditary monarchy, that Paine refused to distinguish from tyranny and despotism, is part and parcel of Paine's symbolical regicide. As early as *Common sense*, he denounced the hereditary mode of transmission of power as 'open[ing] the door to the foolish, the wicked, and the improper' and to 'the follies of age or infancy'.⁸³ In contrast,

⁷⁶ Karen M Ford ed., *Property, welfare and freedom in the thought of Thomas Paine: a critical edition*, (Lewiston, N.Y. & Lampeter, 2001), 32.

⁷⁷ Rousseau, *Du contrat social*, 96.

⁷⁸ 'The right of voting for representatives is the primary right by which other rights are protected', Philp ed., *Rights of Man...*, 398.

⁷⁹ Philp ed., *Rights of Man...*, 233.

⁸⁰ As Frederick William Dame has suggested in a brief paragraph: *Rousseau and political literature in Colonial America*, 20.

⁸¹ Rousseau. *A discourse upon the origin and foundation of the inequality among mankind*, 182-183. 'Il est manifestement contre la loi de nature (...) qu'un enfant commande à un vieillard, qu'un imbécile conduise un homme sage et qu'une poignée de gens regorgent de superfluités, tandis que la multitude affamée manque du nécessaire.' Rousseau, *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes*, 257.

⁸² Rousseau, *An inquiry into the nature of the social contract*, 212. 'On a mieux aimé risquer d'avoir pour chefs des enfants, des monstres, des imbéciles que d'avoir à disputer sur le choix des bons rois', Rousseau, *Du contrat social*, liv. III, chap. 6, 103.

⁸³ Philp ed., *Rights of Man...*, 17.

democracy and especially representative democracy was ‘never young, never old ... subject neither to nonage, nor dotage ... never in the cradle, nor on crutches’⁸⁴ as Paine made it clear in *Rights of man*, transferring to representative democracy the characteristics of the mystic body of the king that E Kantorowicz helped identify. This kind of denunciation was, before Rousseau, voiced amongst others by Algernon Sidney in his *Discourses concerning government*⁸⁵ and by George Buchanan to whom Paine referred later in his life.⁸⁶

Yet it is not those passages from Rousseau’s works that Paine quoted in his ‘Essay for the Use of New Republicans’, an article he published in French in the fall of 1792 and whose English version is only a translation. I will quote here Philip Foner’s: ‘The men who take the foremost place in monarchies are often simply base marplots, ordinary rogues, mean intriguers. The trivial intellectual qualities that have raised these people to high positions in courts but serve to make more apparent to the public their real insignificance’.⁸⁷ This account of the origin of monarchical regimes is also Paine’s. He even invented a fictive etymology for ‘nobility’ whose primary form could have been ‘no-ability’⁸⁸ to quote one of his most striking witticisms on the subject. Paine’s quotation of Rousseau in Brissot’s newspaper was political insofar as it was determined by French politics at a time when a republican regime had just been set up. Paine’s Girondin associates used his fame as a revolutionary to give more credit to their own arguments. It does not mean, however, that this quote was suggested by Brissot for example.

More generally Paine viewed monarchy and especially hereditary monarchy as having an illegitimate foundation that monarchs had tried to

⁸⁴ Ibid., 233.

⁸⁵ Algernon Sidney. *Discourses concerning government*, ed. Thomas G West (Indianapolis, 1996), chap.I, section 6, 23. Rousseau probably read Sidney.

⁸⁶ Alfred Owen Aldridge. ‘Thomas Paine and the *New York Public Advertiser*’, loc. cit., 380.

⁸⁷ Foner ed., *Complete writings of Paine*, vol. 2, 543. ‘Mais ceux qui parviennent dans les monarchies ne sont, le plus souvent, que de petits brouillons, de petits fripons, de petits intrigants, à qui de petits talents font arriver aux grandes places, ne servent qu’à montrer au public leur ineptie, aussitôt qu’ils y sont parvenus’, ‘Essai anti-monarchique à l’usage des nouveaux républicains’, Jacques-Pierre Brissot de Warville, *Le patriote français* (Frankfurt am Main, 1989), n°1167, 20 octobre 1792, 453-54. Rousseau. *Du contrat social*, Liv. III, chap. 6, 101.

⁸⁸ Philp ed., *Rights of man...*, 158.

conceal through the fiction of 'divine right'. He turned William the Conqueror into the archetype of this mystification which he described in the same *Essai anti-monarchique* as a phenonemon that regularly happened in history as a constant series of causes and effects.⁸⁹ In the first lines of the third chapter of *The social contract*, Rousseau stated that in order to hold power in the long term, if illegitimately obtained, a ruler always needed to transform 'might into right and obedience into duty'.⁹⁰ Such a reasoning is the basis of Paine's argument against monarchy. One of his major disagreements with Burke was whether such a process of legitimitization was acceptable or not. Yet one cannot conclude that Paine's own thought is based on Rousseau's in this regard since the date when Paine read the latter work is not known for certain.

In addition to proving that hereditary monarchy led incapable men to the throne, Paine based his harsh criticism of the regime on the original equality of the natural rights of all men whose individual wills could not be foreclosed and preempted by the previous generation. In other words, the 'will' (volition) of the people could not be turned into their 'will' (legacy).⁹¹ Such is likewise Rousseau's assertion in *The social contract* in which he posits this fundamental principle several times.⁹² Thus monarchy appears as doubly illegitimate in Paine's thought. It corresponds to Rousseau's definition of slavery as being an anti-contract, which he describes at the end of chapter 4 of Book I of the same work.⁹³ Up to a certain extent, one could therefore argue that Paine's assault against hereditary monarchy was Rousseauian.

Although Paine agreed with Rousseau that European political history had gone wrong from the very start, and although both condemned monarchy, the corollaries in practice of Rousseau's condemnation differed

⁸⁹ 'Des bandes de brigands s'assemblent pour bouleverser un pays, pour le mettre à contribution, pour s'y emparer des terres, pour rendre les habitants esclaves. L'expédition faite, le chef des voleurs prend le nom de monarque ou de roi. Telle est l'origine de la royauté chez tous les peuples'. ('*Essai anti-monarchique à l'usage des nouveaux républicains*', Jacques-Pierre Brissot de Warville. *Le patriote français*, 453-54.) 'Bands of brigands unite to subvert a country, place it under tribute, seize its lands, enslave its inhabitants. The expedition completed, the chieftain of the robbers adopts the title of monarch or king', Moncure Daniel Conway ed., *The writings of Thomas Paine* (4 vols., New York, 1894-1896), vol. 3, 102.

⁹⁰ Rousseau, *Du contrat social*, 32.

⁹¹ Philp ed., *Rights of Man*..., 174.

⁹² Rousseau, *Du contrat social*, Book I, chap. 4, 34 and Book II, chap. 1, 52.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 37.

from Paine's.⁹⁴ In his *Discourse on the origin of inequality*, Rousseau's aim was to account for the state of the society of his time and recount the steps that might have led to its birth. According to him, the right form of government should not be based on any agreement among wealthy landowners⁹⁵ and in the *Social contract* he undertook to define what the foundations of a legitimate political contract ought to be. In contrast, in *Common sense*, Paine began with what should have been before showing that hereditary monarchical regimes, especially that of his native country, were in complete contradiction with this natural political evolution that monarchs had prevented from taking place and that only a revolution could re-establish.

The inherent link between the contract and the ensuing regime that Paine had defined led him to alter the meaning of the notion of revolution, which could at that time be a change from any regime to any other or even simply a change of persons.⁹⁶ A genuine revolution would henceforth be that which overthrew illegitimate governments, monarchy being akin to tyranny in all cases in Paine's mind, and that which established a representative democracy.⁹⁷ In this regard, Paine's conception of revolution may be said to be more Rousseauian than Lockean.⁹⁸ In the last paragraph of the *Second treatise*, Locke defined revolution, without using the term, as including several possibilities: 'the people have a right to act as supreme, and continue the legislative in

⁹⁴ Rousseau. *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes*, 241.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 238-39.

⁹⁶ See Johnson's definition of revolution: 'change in the state of a government or country', Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language* (2nd edn., London, 1755-56, vol. 2). See also Jean-Marie Goulemot, *Discours, révolutions et histoire: représentations de l'histoire et discours sur les révolutions de l'Age classique aux Lumières* (Paris, 1975), 210 and Alain Rey, 'Révolution', *histoire d'un mot* (Paris, 1989).

⁹⁷ Ilan Rachum argued that Paine changed the meaning of the word in 1782 when he published his *Letter to the Abbe Raynal*. Ilan Rachum. 'Revolution': *the entrance of a new word into Western political discourse* (Lanham, Md, 1999), 209, but Paine had been developing his conception of revolution as a process through which monarchy is overthrown and replaced by a representative democracy since 1776.

⁹⁸ My argument is different from what Louise-Marcel Lacoste tries to demonstrate when she compares Paine's and Rousseau's conceptions of revolution in relation to the notion of common sense since she insists on their divergence of opinion as regards the nature of revolution that the former viewed as the result of the free will of free historical agents and the latter as being part of an inevitable process that came close to a deterministic historical law. Louise Marciel-Lacoste, 'Paine et Rousseau : sens commun

themselves, or erect a new form, or under the old form place it in new hands, as they think good'.⁹⁹ However, Rousseau at the end of the second section of the *Discourse on the origin of inequality* explained that:

In spite of all the labours of the wisest legislators, the political state still continued imperfect because it was in a manner the work of chance; and, as the foundations of it were ill laid, time, tho' sufficient to discover its defects and suggest the remedies for them, could never mend its original vices. Men were continually repairing; whereas, to erect a good edifice, they should have begun as Lycurgus did at Sparta, by cleaning the area, and removing the old materials.¹⁰⁰

Despite this statement which comes closest to the modern conception of revolution, Rousseau was more a thinker of 'the impossible revolution', to use a phrase by a French scholar¹⁰¹, since the relation between theory and practice is aporetic in his system of thought.¹⁰² It is a point made by Paine himself in the first part of *Rights of man*, in which he praised Rousseau's 'loveliness of sentiment in favor of liberty', but reproached him with failing to specify 'the means of possessing it'.¹⁰³

et révolution', loc. cit., 243. She also underlined a convergence in their vision of revolution as an event whose organizing principle should be moderation. Ibid., 245. Rousseau's comment in the opening paragraphs of the *Discourse on the arts and sciences* according to which 'a revolution was necessary to lead people back into common sense' (*The discourse which carried the præmium at the Academy of Dijon, in MDCCL. On this question, proposed by the said Academy, whether the re-establishment of arts and sciences has contributed to the refining of manners*, 11-12) sounds as the opposite of Paine's argument in his pamphlet of 1776 as he used common sense to encourage and legitimize a revolution.

⁹⁹ Locke, *Two treatises of government*, § 243, 240.

¹⁰⁰ Rousseau, *Discourse upon the origin and foundation of the inequality among mankind*, 143-144. 'Malgré tous les travaux des plus sages législateurs, l'état politique demeura toujours imparfait, parce qu'il était presque toujours l'ouvrage du hasard, et que, mal commencé, le temps en découvrant les défauts et suggérant des remèdes, ne put jamais réparer les vices de la constitution. On raccommodait sans cesse, au lieu qu'il eût fallu commencer par nettoyer l'aire et écarter tous les vieux matériaux, comme fit Lycurgue à Sparte, pour élever ensuite un bon édifice', Rousseau. *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes*, 241-42.

¹⁰¹ Gérard Demouge, *Rousseau ou la révolution impossible* (Paris, 2002).

¹⁰² See Equipe Rousseau. *Politique et révolution chez Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth-century*, no. 324 (Oxford, 1994).

¹⁰³ Philp ed., *Rights of man*..., 145.

What has sometimes been retrospectively viewed as a prophecy, that is Rousseau's declaration in his *Emilius*, published in the same year as *The social contract*, that 'we are approaching the crisis of human establishments, the age of political revolutions'¹⁰⁴ and that the era of monarchical governments would soon be over, did not mean that he expected that good would come out of this revolution. Likewise what he asserts in the latter work about the exceptional nature of a revolution that enables the people to have their liberty back shows his pessimism regarding the possibilities of change in political affairs.¹⁰⁵ Yet, although the history of ideas should not be viewed as a teleological process, one may say that Rousseau stopped on the threshold of the modern concept of revolution and that Paine stepped across it.

Theory and practice

Whereas a political revolution such as Paine defined it was nearly out of reach for Rousseau, the latter considered that other fields needed to be reformed. In his *Discourse on political economy*, Rousseau outlined a principle that may have inspired Paine: 'to prevent an extreme inequality of fortunes; not by taking away the wealth of the possessors, but in depriving them of means to accumulate them; not by building hospitals for the poor, but by preventing citizens from becoming poor'.¹⁰⁶ Paine applied it in *Agrarian justice*. At least two of his assertions in this writing published in 1797 remind the reader of Rousseau's precept: 'the fault can be made to reform itself by successive generations, without diminishing or deranging the property of any of the present possessors'¹⁰⁷ and 'would it not as a matter of economy, be far better, to devise means to prevent

¹⁰⁴ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emilius and Sophia, or a new system of education* (London, 1762), 89. 'Nous approchons de l'état de crise et du siècle des révolutions', Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile ou de l'éducation* (Paris, 1966), 252.

¹⁰⁵ Rousseau, *Du contrat social*, Book II, chapter 8, 69-70. Some of these passages were used by French conservative writers at the time of the French Revolution to prove that Rousseau should not be used to support 1789. McNeil, 'The Anti-Revolutionary Rousseau', loc.cit, 815-17.

¹⁰⁶ Rousseau, *Miscellaneous works*, vol. 2, 28. 'Prévenir l'extrême inégalité des fortunes, non en enlevant les trésors à leurs possesseurs mais en ôtant à tous les moyens d'en accumuler, ni en bâtissant des hôpitaux pour les pauvres, mais en garantissant les citoyens de le devenir', Rousseau, *Sur l'économie politique*, loc.cit., 77.

¹⁰⁷ Philp ed., *Rights of man...*, 420.

their becoming poor'.¹⁰⁸ Contrary to Rousseau, Paine looked for concrete means to achieve this goal for example through the sum of money he wished to give poor young people to make up for their lack of inherited property, a measure he advocated in *Agrarian justice*.¹⁰⁹ As Gregory Claeys underlined, Paine was among the radicals who turned over the leaf of the 'classical republican, and especially Rousseauesque, solution to the need to reconcile inequality of property with political virtue by resisting refinement and luxury'.¹¹⁰ Yet, if one considers Rousseau's text of 1755, it can be said that Paine substituted another Rousseauist answer to the question of the inequality of property.

Nevertheless, Rousseau's fluctuating position regarding the importance and role of property in society makes the assessment of his potential influence on Paine more complex. Therefore it does not seem legitimate to assert, as Jack Fruchtman does, that 'Rousseau's pervasive influence on Paine's economic and social thought runs through' *Agrarian Justice* without taking these ambiguities into account.¹¹¹ While in his article on 'political economy' Rousseau asserted the sacredness of the right of property, even saying that it is more sacred than freedom,¹¹² in his *Discourse on the origin*, he seemed to deny the legitimacy of property.¹¹³ Later, in 1762, in *The social contract*, he explained, in a rather Lockean development, that a piece of land could be appropriated through work provided no one owned it already and provided its extent should be limited to the satisfaction of man's needs.¹¹⁴ Paine's ideas were not compatible with Rousseau's assertion in his article of 1755 and he even stated the opposite in *Dissertation on first principles of government* in which he defended universal suffrage against the property-based franchise that the Thermidorians wished to impose in the new French Constitution of 1795.¹¹⁵ Paine neither considered all property as illegitimate, as he

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 426.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 419.

¹¹⁰ Gregory Claeys, *The French Revolution debate in Britain: the origins of modern politics* (Basingstoke, 2007), 138.

¹¹¹ Fruchtman Jr., *Political philosophy of Thomas Paine*, 131.

¹¹² Rousseau, *Sur l'économie politique*, 82.

¹¹³ Rousseau, *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes*, 222.

¹¹⁴ Rousseau, *Du contrat social*, liv. I, chap. IX, 45.

¹¹⁵ 'The protection of a man's person is more sacred than the protection of property', Philp ed., *Rights of man...*, 400.

made it clear in *Agrarian justice*,¹¹⁶ in which his theory is nearer to what Rousseau explains in the *Social contract*, both being more or less indebted to Locke in this regard. Paine thought that what men could legitimately possess as ‘personal property’ was the product of their labour, whereas the surplus should be redistributed by means of benefits to compensate for the inequality existing in ‘landed property’ whose owners had appropriated the medium, land, thanks to which goods were produced.¹¹⁷ Moreover it is also reasonable to assume that Paine was inspired by the *Comité de Mendicité* created in France during the first years of the Revolution and which proposed concrete measures to try to remedy poverty. The first *Comité* was headed by La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, the cousin of La Rochefoucauld d’Enville who was in touch with many Americans in Paris including Paine who probably met the former too.¹¹⁸ The *Comité* based its measures on the same rejection of ‘charity’ for which they substituted the ‘right of the poor’ to be helped¹¹⁹ and on the same vision of property.¹²⁰

The other part of Paine’s project of a regeneration of civilization on which Rousseau may have had a clearer sway is Paine’s plan to limit the outbreak of wars. As already said before, he mentioned Rousseau on this topic very early in his writings. In the third of the articles he published in the American colonies as ‘the Forester’ in 1776, he explained to his reader that Rousseau called for the creation of an institution made up of ‘ambassadors’ the function of which would be to serve as a mediator among European countries. According to Paine, this would lead to ‘a kind

¹¹⁶ ‘I equally defend the right of the possessor to the part which is his’, *ibid.*, 419.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 417-18.

¹¹⁸ R Galliani, ‘Le Duc de La Rochefoucauld et Thomas Paine’, *Annales Historiques de la Révolution française*, 52 (1980), 425-36.

¹¹⁹ Camille Bloch et Alexandre Tuetey ed., *Procès verbaux et rapports du Comité de mendicité de la Constituante, 1790-1791* (Paris, 1911), 369.

¹²⁰ ‘Nous savons tous que si la propriété est la base des associations politiques, si le devoir sacré des lois est d’en faire religieusement observer le culte et d’en assurer le maintien, le culte de l’humanité est plus sacré encore’, *ibid.*, 384. Then the *Comité de secours public*, established after October 1791, moved away from those principles. Ian Dyck has argued that Paine moved away from a ‘Girondin’ position in 1791 to one that he thinks closer to the *Montagnards* in the second part of *Rights of man*. Ian Dyck, ‘Local Attachments, National Identities and World Citizenship in the Thought of Thomas Paine’, *History Workshop Journal*, 35 (1993), 128.

of European republic',¹²¹ a phrase used by Rousseau.¹²² In *Rights of man*, 'delegates' were supposed to be sent to an international pacifying institution.¹²³ Paine described it as a 'Congress', thus referring to the American organ, but the word can also be read in Rousseau's work.¹²⁴

Paine's project was different from Rousseau's and from most plans for perpetual peace set forward at the time¹²⁵ as Paine thought that republican regimes should be established first and that once this political revolution had swept over Europe from West to East, as he said in *Rights of man*, peace would necessarily ensue since Paine considered, like the thinker from Geneva,¹²⁶ that wars were due to the invention of States and more specifically of monarchies which used wars to impoverish their subjects.¹²⁷ Again the question of the possibility of a political revolution kept them apart. Yet Rousseau believed that if fewer military conflicts took place among nations, the savings it would trigger off in the budgets of States would benefit the governed both through possible corresponding tax cuts and through a greater latitude of action for governments to encourage the economy.¹²⁸ This might have influenced Paine, especially

¹²¹ Foner ed., *Complete writings of Thomas Paine*, vol. 2, 79.

¹²² Rousseau, *Écrits politiques*, 576-577. The phrase 'European Republic' was used in the translations of Rousseau's text. Jean-Jacques Rousseau. *Miscellaneous works*, vol. 5, 140 and 143 for example. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *A project for perpetual peace* (London, 1761), *passim*.

¹²³ Philp ed., *Rights of man...*, 195.

¹²⁴ Rousseau, *Écrits politiques*, 574. In the eighteenth-century translation, the word 'congress' appears. Rousseau, *Miscellaneous works*, vol. 5, 137 and 139, 'European Congress', *ibid.*, 145.

¹²⁵ See Thomas Schlereth. *The cosmopolitan ideal in Enlightenment thought: its form and function in the ideas of Franklin, Hume and Voltaire, 1694-1790* (Notre Dame et Londres, 1977). Dyck, 'Local Attachments, National Identities and World Citizenship in the Thought of Thomas Paine', 117-135. Bernard Vincent, 'From Social to International Peace: the Realistic Utopias of Thomas Paine', in Joyce Chumbley & Leo Zonneveld eds., *Thomas Paine in search of the common good. Proceedings of a colloquium held at the United Nations in New York on December 10, 1987* (Nottingham, 2009), 64-69.

¹²⁶ 'La guerre fournit un prétexte aux exactions pécuniaires' et 'que les Princes conquérants font pour le moins autant la guerre à leurs sujets qu'à leurs ennemis.' Rousseau, *Écrits politiques*, 593.

¹²⁷ Philp ed., *Rights of man...*, 11 and 128. The only exception is Paine's *Letter to the Abbe Raynal* in which he envisions a form of natural war, as the quote reproduced above shows. Foner ed., *Complete writings of Paine*, vol. 2, 241.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 586. Rousseau. *Miscellaneous works*, vol. 5, 157-158.

for the second part of *Rights of man* in which he proposed similar measures.

Paine, Rousseau and ‘Rousseauism’

In the first part of the *Rights of man* (1791), Paine included Rousseau in the short list he drew of the thinkers of the Enlightenment who were supposed to have paved the way for the French Revolution, among whom Voltaire and Montesquieu also appear.¹²⁹ Paine, therefore, had a positive opinion of Rousseau, which is worth underscoring since the author of the *Social contract* was a controversial figure of the Enlightenment.¹³⁰ Rousseau himself in the second edition of the *Discourse on the origin of inequality* refuted what has come to be called ‘Rousseauism’¹³¹ in a well-known footnote, whose addressee was Voltaire. He denied that the solution to the flaws of civilized life was to go back to the state of nature.¹³² As a consequence, it is quite surprising to read in H H Clark’s article, published in the 1930s, that Paine and Rousseau both shared the conclusion that ‘contemporary civilization is indescribably bad’,¹³³ which is a gross oversimplification of the thought of both of them. In reality, Paine had a contrasting vision of the ‘civilization’ he lived in and that he wished to improve. In *Agrarian justice* he weighed the qualities and flaws of this supposed ‘civilization’ and concluded that it had enabled the development of agriculture and culture but had on the other hand created poverty.¹³⁴ Rousseau emphasized the price that men had to pay for civilization as corruption was the companion of knowledge, as science

¹²⁹ Philp ed., *Rights of man*..., 145.

¹³⁰ See for example, Mark Hulliung, *The autocritique of the Enlightenment: Rousseau and the Philosophes* (Cambridge & London: 1994); Margaret L Ranald, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the 18th-century political philosophers* (New York, 1965), Raymond Trousson, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau jugé par ses contemporains: du ‘Discours sur les sciences et les arts’ aux ‘Confessions’, Les Dix-huitièmes Siècles* (Paris, 2000).

¹³¹ For a sample of the reactions to Rousseau’s ideas in England, see H.V.S. Ogden, ‘The State of Nature and the Decline of Lockian Political Theory in England, 1760-1800’, *American Historical Review*, 46 (1940-41), 21-44 and James H Warner, ‘The Reaction in Eighteenth-Century England to Rousseau’s Two Discours’, *PMLA*, 48 (1933), 471-87.

¹³² Rousseau. *Discours sur l’origine et les fondements de l’inégalité parmi les hommes*, 188-189.

¹³³ Hayden Clark, ‘Thomas Paine’s Relation to Voltaire and Rousseau’, loc. cit, 398.

¹³⁴ Philp ed., *Rights of man*, 416.

and arts were postlapsarian. He compromised and was prepared to suffer bad governments that could only be slightly reformed.¹³⁵ His 'impossible revolution' again precludes too close a connection with Paine.

Yet the idea that Rousseau believed that 'a state of nature is preferable to civilization',¹³⁶ to quote Mary Wollstonecraft, was common during the second half of the eighteenth century. William Godwin also stated that according to Rousseau, 'the savage state was the genuine and proper condition of man'.¹³⁷ In the same footnote of his *Enquiry concerning political justice*, Rousseau and Paine are linked and said to have both a negative vision of government. However, Godwin made it clear that according to him Paine had not been influenced by Rousseau when he wrote *Common sense* and that the two thinkers had reached the same conclusion by following their own paths of reflection separately.¹³⁸

Godwin's comparison is nonetheless based on a questionable understanding of the ideas of both thinkers. On the one hand, it is not true, as Godwin suggests, that according to Paine, 'government, however reformed, was little capable of affording solid benefit to mankind'¹³⁹ as is easily contradicted by the second part of *Rights of man* and then by *Agrarian justice*.¹⁴⁰ On the other hand, in the *Discourse on the origin of inequality*, what corrupts man according to Rousseau are not bad governments, but the contact of one man with another and the fact that individuals live under the gaze of others.¹⁴¹ Therefore, Godwin misinterpreted Rousseau when he said that the citizen of Geneva 'was the first to teach that the imperfections of government were the only

¹³⁵ Rousseau, *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes*, 189.

¹³⁶ Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the rights of men with a vindication of the rights of woman and hints* (Cambridge, 1995), 81.

¹³⁷ William Godwin, *An enquiry concerning political justice* (1793). In M Philp ed., *The political and philosophical writings of William Godwin* (6 vols., London, 1993), vol. 3, 273, n*.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Some commentators of Paine's writings have underlined this tension between his definition of government in *Common sense* as 'a necessary evil' and his later advocacy of reform plans through government action. Isaac Kramnick, for example, considers that Paine was at the same time a 'radical egalitarian' and 'a bourgeois liberal', Kramnick, *Republicanism and bourgeois radicalism: political ideology in late eighteenth-century England and America* (Ithaca, 1990), 154.

¹⁴¹ Rousseau. *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes*, 228.

permanent source of the vices of mankind'.¹⁴² In this regard, Rousseau might even have been the target of Paine's opening remark in *Common sense* that 'some writers have ... confounded society with government'¹⁴³ since Paine put forward the idea that society was always beneficial to men, which is not Rousseau's vision.

More recently, at the beginning of the twentieth century, Franck Alengry, in a footnote of a book devoted to Condorcet, made the same remark as Godwin. According to him Paine's famous formula in *Common sense* about the positive nature of society and the negative character of government was a combination of Rousseau's and Aristotle's conceptions,¹⁴⁴ a conclusion based on a misconstruction of both as the former did not blame all social ills on ill-managed governments and as the latter thought that political society actualizes man's humanity, in contrast to the usual distortion of his thought which describes man as a social animal and not as a political one.

In the replies and controversies that followed the publication of his two most well-known works, *Rights of man* and *Common sense*, Paine's opponents suggested connections between Paine and Rousseau.¹⁴⁵ The author of *Plain truth*, an answer to *Common sense*, commenting on the latter's opening idea, had already hinted at the previous parallel between Paine and Rousseau concerning their vision of government through what seems to be an antiphrasis: 'I do not say that our author is indebted to Burgh's *Political Disquisitions* or to Rousseau's *Social Compact* for his

¹⁴² Godwin, *Enquiry concerning political justice*, vol. 3, 273 n.*. Alfred Owen Aldridge also compared Paine and Rousseau in this regard, underscoring that the latter thought that 'governments bring out the worst in mankind'. Aldridge, *Thomas Paine's American ideology*, 19.

¹⁴³ Philp ed., *Rights of man*..., 5.

¹⁴⁴ Franck Alengry, *Condorcet: guide de la Révolution française* (1904; Genève, 1971), 210.

¹⁴⁵ In France in 1793 Jean-Étienne-Judith Forestier Boinvilliers, a Frenchman who later wrote many treatises on French and Latin grammar, published a short book containing two texts by Paine and Rousseau and entitled, *L'esprit du Contrat social suivi de l'esprit du sens commun, L'Esprit du Contrat social, suivi de l'Esprit du sens commun, de Th. Paine, présenté à la Convention par le citoyen Boinvilliers* (Paris: Cailleau, an II.), whose existence has been dug out by Alfred Owen Aldridge (*Thomas Paine's American ideology*, 146). Yet there is nowhere in this writing any explicit connection made between the two thinkers. Their texts are merely juxtaposed and to my knowledge this book was not used by Paine's critics in the great controversy of the 1790s in Great Britain.

definition on government.’¹⁴⁶ In reality the connection between Paine and Burgh, whose *Disquisitions* are mentioned in *Common sense*, was more relevant insofar as the first pages of *Common sense* have many similarities with the first chapters of Burgh’s book. For example, Burgh’s assertion that ‘did reason govern mankind, there would be little occasion for any other government’¹⁴⁷ may have influenced Paine who expressed a quite similar idea in the second paragraph of his pamphlet.¹⁴⁸

Among the answers to *Rights of man* in which links were made between Paine and Rousseau, some only briefly alluded to them, like *Considerations on Mr. Paine's pamphlet*, in which its author said that Paine’s ‘sentiments on the rights of man, when he understands Rousseau, seem perfectly just’.¹⁴⁹ He did not provide the reader with more than that clue, although the word ‘sentiments’ may have been carefully chosen to undermine the rationality of Paine’s ideas by describing them as feelings rather than thoughts. Others like William Cusack Smith, a friend of Burke’s, attempted to refute Paine in the light of Rousseau’s ideas in a more precise way. In *Rights of citizens*, he quoted a passage from the *Social contract* in which Rousseau explains that through the contract, each individual ‘loses ... his natural liberty’ and ‘wins ... civil liberty’,¹⁵⁰ an assertion which Smith judges as being in contradiction with what Paine asserts in *Rights of man* when he says that ‘society grants ... [man] nothing’.¹⁵¹ He then endeavoured to show that Paine betrayed both Rousseau and Locke, but as he did not understand their theories properly, he went off the track in his demonstration, in particular on the subject of the origin of civil society. According to Smith, Paine was wrong when he said that the right to judge should not have been part of the contract insofar as it was not an imperfect right. Smith asserted that the true reason

¹⁴⁶ *Plain truth*, 1.

¹⁴⁷ James Burgh, *Political disquisitions* (3 vols., London, 1774-75; New York, 1971), vol. 1, book I, chap. 1, 1.

¹⁴⁸ Philp ed., *Rights of man*..., 5.

¹⁴⁹ Claeys ed., *Political writings of the 1790s*, vol. 5, 92.

¹⁵⁰ ‘Ce que l’homme perd par le contrat social, c’est sa liberté naturelle et un droit illimité à tout ce qui le tente et qu’il peut atteindre; ce qu’il gagne c’est la liberté civile et la propriété de tout ce qu’il possède’, Rousseau, *Du contrat social*, liv. I, chap. 8, 43. Claeys ed., *Political writings of the 1790s*, vol. 5, 249. The quote in French is not fully accurate since William Cusack Smith wrote ‘illuminé’ instead of ‘illimité’.

¹⁵¹ Philp ed., *Rights of man*..., 120.

why this right should be exchanged is man's will to avoid other people's exercise of the right to judge. He also wished to demonstrate that the right of redress in case of a violation of the natural rights by others was not a natural right. He then relied on Locke to underlay his point of view and remarked that in the *Second treatise*, Locke showed that these transgressions existed only if property did, which is based in reality on a point made by Rousseau in his second *Discourse* in which he emphasizes that 'the wise Locke' showed that there was no 'injury' without 'property'.¹⁵² Yet, it is Rousseau who states, in the *Social contract*, that there is no permanent property in the state of nature¹⁵³ for in Locke's thought, property, whether understood in the restricted or in the broad sense that Locke gives to the term, exists in the state of nature. In an even more problematic way William Cusack Smith eventually tried to refute Paine's reliance on the right to redress by referring to both thinkers at the same time: 'admitting (in the face of Locke's assertion to the contrary) that in a state of nature there would be injury, and admitting (in contradiction to Rousseau's doctrine of the omnipotence of natural pity) that the quiet of such a state would be troubled by revenge ...'.¹⁵⁴ This double treatment of the issues turns out to be confused as W C Smith wished to demonstrate that Paine's theory was neither Lockean nor Rousseauian but in an inaccurate way.

In another answer to *Rights of man*, its author claimed that France, 'that once generous and gallant nation, unhappily sophisticated by the late-forged philosophy of ingenious, immoral vagabonds, such as *Rousseau* and *Paine*, as devoid of principle as of property, assumed the impenetrable breastplate of *republicanism*'.¹⁵⁵ More generally, Paine was perceived by his opponents in the great controversy of the 1790s in England as belonging to a group of Utopians alongside Plato, Rousseau and sometimes Hume, as opposed to the realistic wise philosophers that Montesquieu and Blackstone were considered to be.¹⁵⁶ Such attacks were part of the anti-Revolution, anti-Paine and anti-Rousseau narrative that

¹⁵² Rousseau, *A discourse upon the origin and foundation of the inequality among mankind*, 116; Rousseau, *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes*, 229.

¹⁵³ Rousseau, *Du contrat social*, liv. I, chap. 4, 35.

¹⁵⁴ Claeys ed., *Political writings of the 1790s*, vol. 5, 273.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., vol. 5, 327.

¹⁵⁶ For example see, *A defence of the Constitution of England*, ibid., vol. 5, 24-25.

Burke had started to develop in his *Reflections*.¹⁵⁷ He enlarged more on the latter topic in his *Letter to a member of the National Assembly* in which he blamed the French Revolution on Rousseau who encouraged depravity and who is, in Burke's words, 'the great professor and founder of the philosophy of vanity'.¹⁵⁸ Thus Rousseauism became a byword for Jacobinism which was synonymous with demagogic anarchism. Burke again played a major role in this linguistic distortion as 'Jacobinism' came to be used to refer to all French revolutionaries, like Robespierre, Danton, Condorcet or Siéyès, or to all those who had taken part in the event, such as Paine.¹⁵⁹ Burke viewed what he called 'Jacobinism' as a form of Painism since it 'subverts the whole fabric of ... ancient laws and usages, political, civil, and religious, to introduce a system founded on the supposed *rights of man, and the absolute equality of the human race*'.¹⁶⁰ Although Burke did not explicitly link Paine and Rousseau, his rejection of them had common grounds and was based on the same principle. In his eyes both of them and their disciples defended an unnatural form of social and political organization which destroys family and aristocratic values in order to introduce 'levelling' and 'establish ... [the lowest orders'] rights of men'.¹⁶¹ The connection between Rousseauism and Painism is quite transparent here.

In the United States, the Paine-Burke controversy had a more limited scope as it was deflected and transformed by the opposition between Federalists and Jeffersonians as Julian P Boyd has shown.¹⁶² In his *Answer to Paine's Rights of man*, published in 1793, John Quincy Adams argued that Paine's contention that constitutional conventions had a special status was based on Rousseau's idea: 'Mr. Paine's ideas upon this subject seem to have been formed by a partial adoption of the principle upon which Rousseau founds the social contract', i.e., according to J Q Adams the inalienability of the general will of those who unanimously commit

¹⁵⁷ See Peter James Stanlis, *Edmund Burke: the Enlightenment and revolution* (New Brunswick, N.J. & London, 1991), 159-92.

¹⁵⁸ Isaac Kramnick ed., *The portable Edmund Burke* (Harmondsworth, 1999), 512.

¹⁵⁹ See Burke's *Remarks on the policy of the allies with respect to France*: *The project Gutenberg EBook of The works of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke, Vol. IV*, 414, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/15700/15700-h/15700-h.htm#REMARKS>.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ Kramnick ed., *The portable Edmund Burke*, 515.

¹⁶² Thomas Jefferson, *The papers of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Julian P Boyd (Princeton, 1950-), vol. 20, 270.

themselves to the contract.¹⁶³ He wished to defend the principle of the sovereignty of the legislative power and the notion that constitutions could be legitimate even if they had not been written by an assembly elected for that purpose. The future American president did not enlarge much on this connection between Paine and Rousseau and did not specify the exact reference of the text in which Rousseau set forward this idea. The passage he meant may have been in *The social contract* in which Rousseau distinguished the constituting power of the convention from the legislative power which passes ordinary laws.¹⁶⁴ Paine had established the procedure of constitutional foundation on this basis as early as 1776 in *Common sense*, his 'Forester's Letters' and *Four letters on interesting subjects*¹⁶⁵ and he used it again in *Rights of man*. However, no evidence substantiates the fact that Paine had read Rousseau's *Social contract* in 1776 and had borrowed this principle from the citizen of Geneva either for *Common sense* or *Rights of man*.

John Quincy Adams' reference to Rousseau may have been a way of undermining Paine's credibility by presenting him as trying to spread foreign theories to the United States. J Q Adams did not explicitly accuse Rousseau of all the evils of the French Revolution though and did not criticize him as an apologist of immorality and sentiment, but he must have had Burke's diatribe in mind when he wrote those lines, all the more so as Rousseau's reputation in the United States began to fade among Federalists at the time of the French Revolution.¹⁶⁶ He may also have thought of William Cusack Smith who, like many of Paine's critics, challenged his vision of the procedure that was to produce a constitution and who quoted another passage of Rousseau's writing against Paine this

¹⁶³ John Quincy Adams. *An answer to Pain's 'Rights of Man'* (London, 1793), 13. In contrast to what Louise Marciel Lacoste claims, relying on her reading of Spurlin, J Q Adams did not really use Rousseau to refute Paine. Louise Marciel Lacoste, 'Paine et Rousseau: sens commun et révolution', loc.cit, 228. The comment made by the future president according to which he appealed to 'the authority of Rousseau, a name still more respectable than that of Mr. Paine, because death has given the ultimate sanction to his reputation' (Spurlin. *Rousseau in America, 1760-1809*, 62) is quite sarcastic.

¹⁶⁴ Rousseau, *Du contrat social*, liv. II, chap. 7, 67.

¹⁶⁵ Philp ed., *Rights of man*..., 33; Foner ed., *Complete writings of Paine*, vol. 2, 84-85. Gordon S Wood ed., *Common sense and other writings* (New York, 2003), 74-80.

¹⁶⁶ Spurlin, *Rousseau in America, 1760-1809*, 69 and 93-98.

time,¹⁶⁷ a way of using Rousseau which is not really relevant since Rousseau does not separate ordinary and constitutional law in this case.

Conclusion

During the controversy of the 1790s, Paine and Rousseau were both turned into symbols of what conservative English writers wished to fight: a greater social equality (vs. social hierarchy), political participation (vs. a restricted franchise), passion and sentiment (vs. reason), contract (vs. family). Both were leading instruments in their loyalist propaganda. At the time a French image of Paine was then constructed as part of the anti-Revolution narrative told by anti-Painite or pro-Burkean writers in England and in the United States where Paine was denounced by Federalists. Because Paine's thought was felt to be non-American or non-English, he was described as 'French' or as alien to an Anglo-Saxon tradition, which was a way for Paine's adversaries of getting rid of him as he did not fit in their vision of Great Britain or of the United States. Even thinkers who endorsed some of Paine's ideas, like Godwin, contributed to this vision of a Rousseauian Paine which has survived until the present day and which sometimes prevents scholars from venturing off the beaten track when studying Paine's thought. Such a starting point needs to be explored to clear the way for further research.

Evaluating Rousseau's influence on Paine turns out not to be as easy as Paine's supposed reputation as a French-type thinker seems to imply, but it is not as 'unsolvable' or as 'unsolved' as Paul Merrill Spurlin suggested forty years ago.¹⁶⁸ As far as the precise contract-making procedure is concerned, Paine's theory cannot be described as specifically Rousseauist.

¹⁶⁷ Claey's ed., *Political writings of the 1790s*, vol. 5, 255-256. W C Smith quoted Rousseau in French: 'Pourquoi donc porte-t-on tant de respect aux anciennes lois ? C'est pour cela même. On doit croire qu'il n'y a que l'excellence des volontés antiques qui les ait pu conserver si longtemps ; si le souverain ne les eût reconnues constamment salutaires, il les eût mille fois révoquées'. Rousseau. *Du contrat social*, liv. III, chap. 11, 117.

¹⁶⁸ Spurlin, *Rousseau in America, 1760-1809*, 12.

Paine's and Rousseau's conceptions of the state of nature and of political society are dissimilar. Paine's belief in the capacity of revolution to regenerate political regimes and existing societies made him less pessimistic than Rousseau. Their hatred of monarchy and the need for the citizens' involvement in politics are their most plausible common grounds. Paine's hallmark is a redefinition of the republican regime as a representative democracy through a political contract whose form is democratic, which is different from Rousseau's procrastinating relation to politics. The reforms that Rousseau outlined to reach a better economic or social justice and his wish to limit wars may have been more directly influential.

Yet both Rousseau's and Paine's shifting positions make comparisons sometimes problematic. Other stumbling blocks are the various and sometimes debatable interpretations of each writer, especially of Rousseau's ideas. Even if Paine read Rousseau and even if his stay in France led him to use Rousseauian phrases like 'the general will', it does not mean that he endorsed Rousseau's theory. Politically, socially and economically Paine worked out his own system of thought, which is not always coherent. He himself publicly denied being an heir, intellectually in particular, a characterization (in both senses of the word) which was part of his pedagogic strategy. He nonetheless read other French thinkers including Voltaire, Montesquieu, Raynal and Condorcet who was his close collaborator and friend. However, it is not really possible to say whether these French authors had a decisive influence on Paine's political thought, the roots of which are numerous, and even the fact that he spent a whole decade in France from 1792 to 1802 did not fundamentally change that, although his experience of the French Revolution played a part in the evolution of his positions, for example, on the possible positive role that governments could have on the state of society.

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WILLIAM PRIESTLEY VINDICATED, WITH A PREVIOUSLY UNPUBLISHED LETTER

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In June 1801, William Priestley, the second son of Dr Joseph Priestley, wrote a poignant letter to John Vaughan in Philadelphia.¹ William had just returned from Louisiana having spent ten months following the lengths of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers from the home of his parents-in-law in Middle Paxton, Pennsylvania, to New Orleans. On his return, William received a letter from his brother Joseph, containing an account of the monies due him. William now wrote to Vaughan to seek advice, support, and, it would seem, friendship, for there had been a marked falling out between William and his father since his mother's death in 1796. Discomfited by his father and brother's recent excursions into political controversy, and not trusting the postal system, William wrote in shorthand, and left the letter unsigned.² Publishing William's letter provides an opportunity to review the causes of this family rift, to

* The author expresses his gratitude to Beryl Thomas for collaborating in the translation of the shorthand, and for her medical opinion on a food poisoning incident; to Susan Worrall (Director of Special Collections, Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham) for granting permission to publish William Priestley's letter, and to the assistance of her colleague Helen Fisher. The author thanks the Librarians of the American Philosophical Society, Bibliothèque municipale de Nantes, Birmingham Archives and Heritage, Dickinson College, Dr Williams's Library, John Rylands University Library, Penn State University Library, Warrington Library; and the Marquis of Lansdowne, for permission to quote from materials in their respective collections.

¹ William Priestley was born at Leeds, 7 May 1771. John Vaughan (1756-1841) was Treasurer and Librarian of the American Philosophical Society. He was one of eleven children of Samuel Vaughan, a London merchant and West Indian planter, and Sarah Hallowell, daughter of the founder of Hallowell, Maine. He was probably educated at Warrington Academy. Vaughan migrated to the United States in 1782, settled in Philadelphia, and became a prosperous wine merchant. Following the riots in Birmingham, England, 1791, Dr Priestley sent substantial sums of money for Vaughan to invest in American and French Funds. F W Gibbs, *Joseph Priestley, adventurer in science and champion of truth* (London, 1965), 221.

² The letter was subsequently endorsed with William Priestley's name and date of receipt.

question William's supposed 'black-sheep status,'³ and to finally put to rest an absurd and evidentially unfounded allegation that William once attempted to poison his father, sister-in-law, nephew and niece.

The character of William Priestley

William Priestley was both a Yorkshireman and a middle child; not that these attributes are reprehensible in themselves, nor indeed was either of them his fault. It was his lot to be the second of three brothers, though they had an elder sister, Sarah, born at Warrington in 1763. Now, if an eldest son receives the greater attention from his father and is given the greater responsibility and opportunity to work alongside his father, and the youngest child is the most loved, encouraged, and therethrough the most self-confident of the three, then the middle son, who is inevitably left more to his own devices, necessarily develops a comparatively independent and reasonably rebellious character.⁴ If the father inherited patience and Christian resignation from his forebears, he may also have retained too much Puritan piety and rigidity in his domestic life.⁵ By contrast, though well-mannered,⁶ when young, William was rarely accused of excessive regularity in the conduct of either his social or financial affairs. We know from William's letter that sometimes he enjoyed to spend an evening jawing over a jar or two of ale with the friendly landlord of a tavern; and that when it was time to fetch his horse for the ride home, it didn't take a lot of arm-twisting to persuade him to stay in town overnight so he could have another drink, though, we must add to his credit, he wasn't slow to step up to pay his round. He was probably good company, and, certainly his uncle William Wilkinson was

³ A term used of William by James J Hoecker, 'Priestley pedigree', *Price-Priestley Newsletter*, no.4 (1980), 75-8.

⁴ For 'middle-child syndrome', see: Alfred Adler, *Understanding human nature* (London, 1927).

⁵ Priestley outlined his early life in his *Memoirs*. John Towill Rutt ed., *Theological and miscellaneous works of Joseph Priestley* (25 vols. in 26, London, 1817-32), I (i), 1-28.

⁶ William was brought up to be well-mannered, in the sense of the stuffy supercilious formality of the English middle-classes of the period. It was a characteristic which didn't go down well with Americans, who, when he first arrived, found his manners 'forbidding', 'austere', and 'reserved'. *The diary of William Bentley* (4 vols., Salem, 1905-14), vol.2, 97.

happy for William to accompany him on a business trip through northern Europe and France in the heady summer of 1789.⁷

In his mid-teens, William had spent much of each long holiday with the Quaker family of Samuel Galton at Great Barr, where he acted as companion and summer-tutor to their daughter Mary-Anne. Seven years his junior, Mary-Anne recollected a ‘clever youth, full of drollery and acuteness;’ a bohemian with ‘long brown hair thrown back over his shoulders’, who had a passion for nature and music. She adored listening as William played soft melodies on his beloved flute; they wandered the garden while he recounted anecdotes on natural history. He taught her to carve chessmen out of wood, to bind books, and to construct charts. On rainy days he read the *Arabian Nights* to her. He helped her read Anglo-Saxon, and they discussed Viking mythology. William read from Charles Rollin’s *History of the arts and sciences of the antients*, and helped Mary-Anne sculpt clay models of ancient temples to illustrate what they’d read.⁸ At Christmas, too, they read Maizeroy’s *Tactics*, setting out ranks of opposing forces with hazel-nuts and holly-berries.⁹

⁷ ‘A long hard journey though Sweden, Denmark, Poland, and Germany, has finally brought me to Paris, where my stay can not be long. Truly, there are few pleasures to be had during these disturbances; though they have greatly decreased this past six days, and shortly all will be calm and the people far happier than previously. Having my nephew with me, I shall take him to Frankfort for him to learn German as well as he already knows French. This is the brother of the one you already know.’ (trans, TR). William Wilkinson to Mons Martin at the Soleil Royal [Inn], Couches-les-mines, Burgundy (Nine miles from Montcenis Creusot ironworks, to which Joseph Priestley Jr had accompanied Wilkinson in 1784), 29 Jul 1789, cit. Léon Griveau, ‘Sur les débuts de la révolution industrielle’, *Revue d’histoire économique et sociale*, XLIX (Paris, 1971), 343-58). On Wilkinson’s return, he ‘brought a good account of [William].’ Dr Priestley to Theophilus Lindsey, 12 Oct 1789 Simon Mills, ed., *The letters of Joseph Priestley to Theophilus Lindsey, 1769-1794*, at <http://www.english.qmul.ac.uk/drwilliams/pubs/content.html>, hereafter, Mills.

⁸ William taught Mary-Anne Galton to coat their clay models with wax and gum mastic, to give them the appearance of marble. *Life of Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck* (2 vols, London, 1858), I, 132-5, 156-8. Mary-Anne and William used Edward Lye’s *Dictionarium Saxonicum et Gothico-Latinum* (London, 1772) to decipher books they borrowed from Lichfield Cathedral.

⁹ Paul-Gédéon Joly de Maizeroy, *A system of tactics* (2 vols, London, 1781).

William was a musician, an artist, a naturalist, and a lover of languages and ancient civilizations; of course he didn't have a head for business.¹⁰ It was William's linguistic proficiency rather than his commercial acumen that motivated William Russell at Christmas 1790 to take the youngster on as an articulated accounts clerk for three years, with a view to him looking after the Russell brothers' interests in America or France.¹¹ In America, William was unable to turn a profit on the agriculturally challenging farm he had part-purchased and temporarily inherited from his younger brother Henry; and when he quit the farm, he recklessly 'burnt all [his] accounts and papers.' Neither was this quietly-spoken youth cut out to be a preacher.¹² His father perhaps envisaged a teaching career for him, for

¹⁰ When William was still a teenager, his father believed that: 'his temper [*frame of mind*], I fear, and high spirit, will hardly suit trade.' Priestley to Lindsey, 13 Oct 1790 (Mills). Robert Schofield mistakes eighteenth-century usage of the word *temper*, and wrongly accuses William of being 'too high-spirited and *hot-tempered* for trade'. Robert E Schofield, *The enlightened Joseph Priestley* (Pennsylvania, 2004), 317. There is every reason to believe that William was mild-mannered and even-tempered. Dr Priestley could scarcely have blamed William for his 'high spirit', for there was a time when he had the same attribute. At Needham Market, his congregation objected to Priestley's 'gay and airy disposition;' and at Nantwich he had a habit of vaulting over the counter of the grocer's shop at which he lodged. Anne Holt, *A life of Joseph Priestley* (Oxford, 1931), 19.

¹¹ Priestley to Lindsey, '15? Oct 1790' (Mills). This undated letter, which refers to Timothy Hollis's death on 14 Dec 1790, was probably written Dec 1790. William had worked for the Russells previously. Priestley to Lindsey, 13 Oct 1790 (Mills). Late Oct 1790, William clerked for John Wilkinson at the Bradley ironworks in Bilston, though the situation was unsatisfactory. Priestley to Lindsey '17 Oct 1790' & 2 Nov 1790 (Mills). The '17 Oct 1790' letter was more likely written 9 Oct 1790, the day after Dr & Mrs Priestley arrived back home from a trip to Buxton and Leeds. The arrangement with the Russells was disrupted by the Birmingham riots. Finding suitable situations for Priestley's two elder boys had proven surprisingly difficult. Priestley had agreed – through the generosity of Mrs Rayner – to find £2,000 towards Joseph buying into a partnership, and was prepared to pay for William to be articulated, though he balked at the £1,000 Benjamin Vaughan had wanted. Priestley to Lindsey, 27 Oct 1790 (Mills).

¹² As well as having an 'extremely weak voice' (*infra* n.25), William may have sympathized with his mother, who, as Dr Priestley later reflected: 'had to the last, the most rooted aversion to me preaching, or doing any thing in the way of my profession, so that I had more difficulty on that account than you can well conceive.' Priestley to Lindsey, 20 Feb 1797, DWL Mss, cit. Jenny Graham, "This unhappy country of

when visiting Frankfurt with William Wilkinson in August 1789, young Priestley decided to stay on for a few months as tutor to a local family.¹³ On William's return, his father asked him to teach their fourteen-year-old servant boy Isaac Whitehouse 'to write, arithmetic, and the use of the globes.'¹⁴

William Priestley was still working for Russell at the time of the notorious Birmingham riots, July 1791, where his steely courage in the face of an uncontrolled mob, merits the approbation of history. Insisting that he stay behind at 'Fairhill' as his parents fled, initially to ensure that the kitchen fire and candles were fully extinguished, William helped round up numerous young volunteers, with whom he laboured several hours to remove as many of Priestley's books and manuscripts as they could, continuing to carry books and furniture down the staircase even as the handrails, banisters and treads were being systematically demolished by the leading rioters.¹⁵ After the riots, William remained in Birmingham, gathering up such of his father's books and manuscripts as had survived.¹⁶

ours;" Extracts of letters, 1793-1801, of Theophilus Lindsey', *Enlightenment and Dissent*, no.18 (1999), 124-62, at 148.

¹³ 'It was very fortunate that Mr Friend met my son at Frankfort (*supra* n.7). His account of him is very grateful to his parents.... He is, however, very happily situated, in an agreeable family, and with agreeable acquaintance.' Priestley to Lindsey, 18 Nov 1789 (Mills). For William Friend, see Frida Knight, *University Rebel* (London, 1971).

¹⁴ Alan Ruston, 'A servant's view of Joseph Priestley', *Enlightenment and Dissent*, no.8 (1989), 115-9, at 116.

¹⁵ Information from witnesses and Examinations of suspects (TNA, HO 42/19/418-421, 438).

¹⁶ Also saved, was a Boulton and Watt Letter-copying Press, consisting of two brass rollers housed in a mahogany case. Priestley's enemies preferred to call it a 'printing press': 'Some doubt having been entertained whether Doctor Priestley had a Printing Press in his house at the time of the Riots, I take the liberty of observing that I was yesterday informed by a lady to whose house many of the Doctor's goods were received, that upon the Doctor's son calling a few days after to enquire whether any papers were brought there, she took the opportunity of informing him that there was a mahogany frame which she imagined was a Mangle for Stockings, to which he replied that "he knew what it was, it was the printing Press"', John Brooke [at Birmingham] to Evan Nepean [Under-Secretary of State at the Home Department], 20 Sep 1791 (TNA, HO 42/19/619).

Dr Priestley was put up by various friends in and around London,¹⁷ but at the end of September he moved into a house in Lower Clapton in the parish of Hackney.¹⁸ It is likely that William joined his father at this time, where, being his father's only relative in London,¹⁹ his help would have been needed in moving in, managing the workmen who were carrying out numerous repairs and works, and in helping his father to arrange his library and set up his laboratory.²⁰ He would also have been his father's companion, perhaps spending evenings with him playing the three games of chess and backgammon that Dr Priestley enjoyed when his wife was at home. Nearness to his father would have given William a closer insight into the delicacy of his father's digestive system, which

¹⁷ Particularly William Vaughan at Great Missenden, and Samuel Salte at Tottenham (Rutt), I(ii), 118.

¹⁸ 'The Dr has taken a house at Clapton, next door to Mr G. Morgan and not far from the College.' Lindsey to Samuel Shore, 26 Sept 1791; '[Dr Priestley] is very busy in fitting up his laboratory and the house he has taken at lower Clapton'. Lindsey to William Tayleur, 15 Oct 1791: G M Ditchfield ed., *The letters of Theophilus Lindsey: vol. II: 1789-1808* (Woodbridge, 2012), 152-53.

¹⁹ Whilst Dr Priestley travelled to London, Mary Priestley went to her son-in-law William Finch's home in Heath-forge, Wombourne, Staffs (nr. Dudley, Worcs), to care for her daughter Sarah, who was pregnant with her third child, John. Mary, who had been unwell herself, remained for the birth, and the baptism at Old Meeting Dudley on 4 Nov 1791, not proceeding to London until late November. Dr Priestley indicated her continued absence, but improved health, in his letter to William Russell, 11 Nov 1791 (Rutt), I(ii), 173-4. After an unsuccessful period with his uncles John and William Wilkinson, Joseph Priestley Jr had formed a partnership with a fustian manufacturer in Manchester, where he remained until 1793. Henry continued at John Prior Estlin's school at Bristol until the end of Michaelmas term 1791. In December, Priestley wrote to Estlin: 'Harry will not be too young to attend some lectures [at Hackney College], and I shall attend to the rest of his education myself.' Priestley to Lindsey, 18 Feb 1791 (Mills); Priestley to Rev J P Estlin, 10 Dec 1791 (Rutt), I(ii), 175-6.

²⁰ By mid-October Priestley was 'very busy in fitting up his laboratory and the house', William Hutton to Sarah Hutton, 23 Oct 1791 Birmingham Archives and Heritage (hereafter BAH), *Hutton Mss*, cit. David L Wykes, 'Joseph Priestley at Hackney', *Transactions Unitarian Historical Society*, vol.23, no.2 (2004), 515. He 'expended a considerable sum in improving' the house. Joseph Priestley, *The present state of Europe* (London, 1794), vii.

may have deteriorated during the anxieties of autumn 1791.²¹ William would have assisted in managing the household, such as it was, and, in his mother's absence, may have helped with his father's dietetic needs. There is a silent witness to William's conduct at this time, by the will of Mrs Elizabeth Rayner, in which William is singled out for particular mention.²² It can only have been during the closing months of 1791 that Mrs Rayner could have had an opportunity to become so acquainted with William, and have witnessed such meritorious conduct – such as his practical care and filial concern for his father, whom Mrs Rayner so esteemed – as could have prompted her to make such a bequest.

²¹ In Oct 1791, perhaps because he couldn't stand for long in the pulpit, Priestley failed to take a sermon with him to Essex Street Chapel when Lindsey was recovering from an accident. Lindsey to Tayleur, 15 Oct 1791 (Ditchfield, II). Dr Priestley suffered a bilious and bowel condition throughout his adult life, with severe diarrhoea and the appearance of gallstones. 'He had often to suffer much pain and sickness, as well as from other circumstances of a very afflictive nature,' viz. diarrhoea, which prevented him making 'a small excursion or two,' in the summer of 1775. Priestley to Joshua Toulmin, 29 Sep 1775. Priestley had relapses at the time of his separation from Lord Shelburne, when his wife had to rush to London to nurse him. Priestley to Scholefield, 1 Jun 1780 (Rutt), I(i), 343n, 275, 334-5. After this, he spent an ineffectual three weeks taking the waters at Bath: Lindsey to Tayleur, 18 Jul 1780, G M Ditchfield ed., *The letters of Theophilus Lindsey: I: 1747-1788* (Woodbridge, 2007), 318-19. Following his arrival in America: 'it is only of late that I have got the better of a violent diarrhoea which I have had more or less since my landing.' Priestley to Lindsey, 24 Aug 1794, Jenny Graham, 'A hitherto unpublished letter of Joseph Priestley', *Enlightenment and Dissent*, no.14 (1995), 88-104 at 98. Priestley frequently kept to a vegetable diet to manage his symptoms. Priestley to Joseph Bretland, 4 Jul 1786 (Rutt), I(i), 390; Priestley to Lindsey, 14 July 1786 (Mills).

²² Elizabeth Rayner (1714-1800) was a wealthy widow and benefactress. (She was the daughter of Jonathan Collier of Dalston [1676-1751], mercer and a Director of the South Sea Company. She married widower John Rayner [d. 1777] in 1754. Through her sister Susanna Collier, Mrs John Lewis, Mrs Rayner was the great aunt of Peter Burrell Jr [1724-75], whose third daughter, Frances, married Hugh Percy, Duke of Northumberland.) In her will she bequeathed £2,000 in Public 4% Annuities to Dr Priestley, but also a separate legacy to William Priestley. When her husband died Mrs Rayner had deposited £10,000 in Annuities to cover particular bequests for his grandchildren. The interest and surplus from this, she bequeathed 'to William Priestley one of the younger sons of Dr Joseph Priestley.' (PCC copy of will dated 19 Oct 1795, TNA PROB 11/1345). Earlier, at Dr Priestley's request, Mrs Rayner had set aside some stocks for Joseph Jr to purchase a partnership. (Priestley to Lindsey, 28 Feb & 7 Mar 1791 (Mills).

William was at home for his brother's marriage in April 1792,²³ before travelling to Paris, at the behest of William Russell,²⁴ who was rebuilding his mercantile business from Gloucester. At Paris on 8 June 1792, President François-Alexandre Tardiveau introduced William to the Assemblée législative. M. Français read out William's brief address, because William had 'la voix extrêmement faible'. After a long speech by Tardiveau extolling the virtues of Dr Priestley, interrupted fourteen times by applause, the Assemblée conferred letters of naturalization, and declared William an adopted son of France.²⁵ Although news of this caused quite a furore in England, William's parents wrote him a very friendly letter on 25 June 1792:

Remember you are to be a *man of business*, and I hope you will not let the attention that has been paid to you by the National Assembly hurt your mind, or lead you to expect any particular advantage farther than a good introduction and good connection.... I am much interested in what is now passing at Paris, and wish you wo'd write often and fully. I am glad that M^r

²³ Joseph Priestley Jr married Elizabeth Ryland (1769-1816), elder daughter of Samuel Ryland and Hannah Jefferys, at Hackney parish church, 13 Apr 1792. William Priestley, Elizabeth's sister Anne, and Dr Priestley, signed the register as witnesses. London Metropolitan Archives, P79/JN1, *Saint John at Hackney, Register of marriages*.

²⁴ A suggestion (Schofield, 318) that William visited Paris in 1792 in company with William Wilkinson, appears mistaken.

²⁵ M Français de Nantes, formerly Le comte Français Antoine, told the Assemblée that William 'spoke and wrote French with great fluency,' but 'had an extremely weak voice.' He continued: 'William Priestley is eager to pay his just respects to the first magistrates of a people who are celebrated not only in England, but amongst all nations that value liberty, energy [*l'énergie* had been a rallying cry of the revolution], and virtue. 'Go,' said his father, 'live amongst this brave and welcoming people; learn from them to detest tyranny, and to love liberty.' William Priestley therefore comes to this land of France. He proposes to make his home here, and seeks to enjoy the rights of a *citizen* of France (a title which he prefers a hundred times to that of a *king* of an arbitrary state) – a member of a sovereign people that will greatly honour him by his adoption. In the exercise of his duties as citizen and soldier, he will always keep in mind, and in his heart, the public spirit of the nation, the energy of its magistrates, and the lessons of his father.' [trans. TR] Jérôme Mavidal & Emile Laurent, *Archives parlementaires de 1787 à 1860*, ser.1, XLIV (Paris, 1894), 692-4.

Francois [Français] and M^r Rochfocaulf [Rochefoucauld] think well of your affairs.²⁶

William Priestley in America

In September 1793, Dr Priestley received some compensation for his losses in the Birmingham riots, and promptly sent £2,000 to John Vaughan in America, for settlement on William and Henry.²⁷ William had already gone directly to America from France, probably early 1793. He visited Boston, and spent some time in Brattleboro, Vermont, with the also newly-arrived family of William Wells, who was looking to buy a farm there.²⁸ William's brothers Joseph and Henry, together with Thomas

²⁶ Bibliothèque municipale de Nantes, Ms 674-169; also, *Notes and Queries*, ser.3, vol.11 (1867), 186. The letter is addressed to M^r Peregaux's [Jean Frédéric Perregeaux (1744-1808)] home in rue de Mirabeau. Priestley also gave his son a couple of business commissions: 'M^r B Vaughan is not now in England. Perhaps he may find you at Paris. However, I believe he has employed M^r Peregaux, the banker (No 19, Rue de Sentier), about my money in the Funds, as I had a letter from him about it. You will therefore call on M^r Peregaux (he is your uncle's banker); and if it be so, shew him this letter, to authorize him to pay you the interest as it comes due. If any other forms be necessary, it shall be complied with as soon as I know it....I have seen your uncle John [Wilkinson]. He seems most pleased with your reception in France. I wish you would write to him soon, and be particular about the state of the country. He is at No 2 Thaves [Thavies] Inn, Holborn.' By 1810, the value of Dr Priestley's French funds was some \$11,000, not reckoning interest which had not been paid since 1792. Penn State University Library, *The Joseph Priestley Collection*. <http://www.libraries.psu.edu/psul/digital/priestley.html>, hereafter PSUL, *Property inventory assets and debts account book, 1807-1810*, pp. 7, 24.

²⁷ Gibbs, 220; Schofield, 300.

²⁸ Rev William Wells (1744-1827), educated at Daventry Academy, had been pastor at Bromsgrove, Worcs, since 1770, near to which he ran a farm. His home and chapel having been threatened during the Birmingham riots, he took his family to America, arriving at Boston June 1793. He became a farmer, and subsequently minister at Brattleboro, VT. William Priestley to William Bentley, 31 Dec 94, Mary R Crowninshield, 'Correspondence of Dr William Bentley,' *New-England Historical and Genealogical Register*, vol.27 (Boston, 1873), 356-7; William B Sprague, *Annals of the American Unitarian Pulpit* (New York, 1865), 254-61; Henry Burnham, *Brattleboro* (Brattleboro, VT, 1880), 25, 71-5.

Cooper,²⁹ left for America in August. Dr and Mary Priestley sailed 8 April 1794, being met at New York by their son and daughter-in-law Joseph and Elizabeth, and visited a little later by William.³⁰ That autumn, William stayed for a while in Boston, spending time with the Unitarian minister Dr James Freeman (1759-1835), and visiting Freeman's Harvard classmate Dr William Bentley (1759-1819), Unitarian pastor of East Church, Salem; though, for several weeks at a time, in October and December, William was ill with a feverish 'ague'.³¹

In December 1794, Priestley told Lindsey that 'Joseph has taken a house in this town [Point],³² but has not yet got any farm of consequence.' Harry, on the other hand, had taken a fancy to a plot of about 300 acres his father had bought, which he started to clear.³³ The Priestleys vastly underestimated the effort of bringing the woodland under cultivation.³⁴

²⁹ Thomas Cooper (1759-1839) studied science, medicine and law in Oxford and London. An unbeliever, it was for him that Priestley wrote *Observations on the cause of ... infidelity*, prefixed to *Letters addressed to the philosophers ... of France* (Philadelphia, 1794). Priestley to Lindsey, 11 Apr 1794 (Mills). Cooper was a leading radical, travelling to France in 1792 with James Watt Jr. He became an American citizen in 1795; and was later admitted to the Northumberland bar, being elected district president judge in 1804. In 1811, he was appointed to the Chair of Natural Philosophy and Chemistry at Dickinson College. He later served as Professor of Applied Chemistry at the University of Pennsylvania (1816-19), and in 1820 Professor of Chemistry at South Carolina College, being elected the College's President the following year. Dumas Malone, *The public life of Thomas Cooper, 1783-1839* (New Haven, CT, 1926).

³⁰ Gibbs, 223-6. For Priestley's life in America, see Schofield, and Jenny Graham, *Revolutionary in exile, the emigration of Joseph Priestley to America, 1794-1804* (Philadelphia, 1995).

³¹ *The diary of William Bentley*, vol.2, 112-4, 127; Crowninshield. 'William, who had the ague all last winter, has had nothing of it this summer'. Priestley to John Wilkinson, 17 Dec 1795 (Warrington Library, WMS2/mf8; hereafter WL).

³² *The diary of William Bentley*, vol.2, 112-4, 127; Crowninshield. 'William, who had the ague all last winter, has had nothing of it this summer'. Priestley to John Wilkinson, 17 Dec 1795 (Warrington Library, WMS2/mf8; hereafter WL).

³³ Graham, *Revolutionary in exile*, 80. This farm of Harry and William's may be the 284 acre *Fairhill farm*, Northumberland, referred to in (PSUL), *Property inventory*.

³⁴ The fertility of freshly cleared woodland is always problematical; fermenting leaf litter renders a soil acidic, low in nutrient, low in humus and prone to drying out. By 1810, only 100 acres of *Fairhill farm* had been cleared, and replanted with 200 bearing apple trees and 120 younger trees, for cider-making. (PSUL), *Property inventory*, 27.

When William arrived in Point in February, observing the difficulty of clearing the land, he chose to buy a third share of Henry's farm rather than start on a separate plot. By April 1795, Dr Priestley felt optimistic enough to write: 'my sons will soon raise every thing we want of provisions within themselves.... Even I sometimes take my axe or mattock, and work, as long as I can, along with them'.³⁵ To supply the lime needed to enrich and sweeten the soil, William and Henry built their own lime kilns; but as a consequence of tending the kilns at night, so it appeared, on 11 December 1795, Harry died, 'a sacrifice to want of care for himself, exposing himself to cold and wet'.³⁶ William now took over the entire farm, though when he later quit the farm the property reverted to his father.³⁷ Harry, who had been 'admired by every body for his unremitting labour, as well as good judgement in the management of his business, though only eighteen years old',³⁸ must have been hard to keep up with while he was alive. Now he was dead, he had become an impossible act to follow. William had neither the patient resolution, nor the business insight, properly to honour his brother's legacy.

'A most agreeable and excellent woman'

William's engagement to Margaret Foulke of Middle Paxton, held a glim of hope for the farm. '[William] is about to be married to an amiable and sensible young woman who had been used to the management of a farm,' Priestley wrote, 'I hope he will do well.'³⁹ Because of Henry's death, William and Margaret's wedding had to be postponed, but went ahead at Paxtang Presbyterian Church, Harrisburg, 3 February 1796.⁴⁰ A few days

³⁵ Priestley to Lindsey, 5 Apr 1795 (Rutt), I(ii), 300-1.

³⁶ Priestley to Russell, 30 Dec 1795 (Rutt), I(ii), 330.

³⁷ '[Harry] had divided his farm with William, who now takes the whole.' Priestley to Lindsey, 17 Dec 1795 Graham, 'This unhappy country', 144n. Henry died an unmarried minor.

³⁸ Priestley to Lindsey, 17 Dec 1795 (Rutt), I(ii), 328.

³⁹ Priestley to Lindsey, 17 Dec 1795 Graham, 'This unhappy country', 144n. Suggestions (e.g. John Ruskin Clark, *Joseph Priestley: a comet in the system* [San Diego, 1990] 226) that Dr Priestley considered Margaret Foulke to be an 'unsuitable' bride, are mistaken.

⁴⁰ 'Married, on Wednesday evening the 3d inst. at Harrisburg, by the Rev. Nathaniel [Randolph] Snowden, Mr William Priestley, second son of the celebrated Dr Joseph Priestley, to the agreeable Miss Peggy Foulke, a young lady possessed with every quality to render the marriage state happy.' *Philadelphia Minerva*, 13 Feb 1796. Margaret was born 7 Jan 1771, to William Foulke (1745-1812) and Jane Chambers (1745-1830).

later, Dr Priestley travelled alone to Philadelphia, Mrs Priestley having fallen ill. Mary's continuing ill-health forced the doctor to cancel planned excursions to New York and Boston, and return home early, at the end of May.⁴¹ During the doctor's absence, Margaret Priestley came to know and form a close relationship with her mother-in-law and near neighbour. With Mary's health steadily worsening throughout that summer, Margaret, a frontierswoman not slow to roll up her sleeves, spent an increasing amount of time nursing Mary at the Priestley's home. She must have taken over many of the household duties – for Dr Priestley could not have done it. These would have included dealing with Dr Priestley's dietary needs. It may have been Margaret who introduced the Priestleys to the benefits of *Indian meal*, even suggesting advantages for Dr Priestley's health. Priestley's assessment of his new daughter-in-law was that she had 'a meek and placid temper'; he and Mary were 'much pleased with her'.⁴² Margaret moved into the Priestley's home, caring for Mrs Priestley and spending evenings with the Doctor. Elizabeth, Joseph Jr's wife, visited when she could, but she had the care of her three-year-old son; for it was nigh on impossible to get servants, let alone a nursery nurse.⁴³ During Mary Priestley's last few weeks, Margaret had to call in her own sister, so that between the two of them they could nurse Mary twenty-four hours a day.⁴⁴

Mary Priestley died Saturday 17 October 1796. Dr Priestley thanked Margaret for her kindness, and immediately moved in with Elizabeth and Joseph.⁴⁵ Whilst William would have seen this as a natural and reasonable

⁴¹ 'If [my wife] be able and willing to come hither, we shall probably make an excursion as far as Boston, but she has had a return of the ague since I have been here, and I fear will not contrive to leave home, in which case I must go back as soon as I have delivered my sermons.' Dr Priestley [at Philadelphia] to John Fellows [1759-1844, bookseller at New York], 11 April 1796, Bibliothèque municipale de Nantes, Ms 674-170.

⁴² Priestley to Lindsey, 12 Sep 1799, Graham, 'This unhappy country', 147n. We now know that 'Indian meal' or 'maize flour' (US 'corn flour' or 'cornmeal') is gluten-free, more easily digested than wheat, and is richer in plant proteins. Margaret may have thought it beneficial for people with digestive and bowel conditions.

⁴³ Joseph Rayner Priestley had been born in Manchester 23 Mar 1793; a sister, Elizabeth Rayner Priestley, 28 Aug 1797.

⁴⁴ Priestley to Lindsey, 19 Sep 1796, cit. Graham, 'This unhappy country', 147n.

⁴⁵ Joseph was the elder son. (There may have been some primogenitary prejudice about Priestley. In his will, he left his estate entirely to Joseph, with only annuities to William and Sarah's families. Priestley, himself, had inherited nothing from his father or from

decision – his father could never have managed on his own – Margaret may not have viewed it in the same light. It is from this period that we must date a growing hostility between the two sisters-in-law, and a resultant falling out between William and his father, in which, as we shall see, the family's choice of flour would play a significant role.

‘Priestley and his Gang’

Following his wife's death, Dr Priestley's home became a meeting place for what William Cobbett called the Priestley ‘Gang’, a principle member of which was Thomas Cooper, a virulent anti-Federalist, who was active in the agitation against the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798.⁴⁶ Cooper had associated with Joseph Jr in Manchester, and, initially at least, had been welcomed more by Joseph and Elizabeth, than by Dr Priestley. As one of his trades was lawyer, though he couldn't practise before 1797, he may have assisted Joseph Jr in dealing with his extensive land-holdings.⁴⁷ Cooper's second son, Tom,⁴⁸ actually moved into the Priestley household,

the aunt who had adopted him.) Priestley wrote to Lindsey, 19 Sep 1796, of his new house: ‘As it will be made very convenient for me, as well as for family uses, I shall live in it, and Joseph [and his family] will live with me. For I am not capable of managing a house.’ Graham, ‘This unhappy country’, 147. The new house was ready for the Priestleys to move in by summer 1797, the library and laboratory being completed later that year. *Memoirs* (London, 1809), 175.

⁴⁶ *Porcupine's Gazette* (Philadelphia), 23 Dec 1797. For the antagonism between ‘the Priestley circle’ and Federalists, see Jenny Graham, ‘Joseph Priestley in America,’ in Isabel Rivers and David L Wykes eds., *Joseph Priestley, scientist, philosopher, and theologian* (Oxford, 2008), 203-30; and Schofield, 333-9.

⁴⁷ ‘I am very sorry that he [Cooper] is with us, on more accounts than one....No person can practice [law] till they have been in the country four years.’ Priestley to Lindsey, 14 Sep 1795 (Rutt), I(ii), 318. Joseph Priestley Jr, using monies from the sale of his Manchester partnership, and perhaps a dowry from Samuel Ryland, with numerous friends and associates bought some 300,000 acres of virgin woodland between the forks of Loyalsock Creek in Lycoming County. This they planned to lease or sell in 400 acre plots, with payment deferred to seven annual instalments, with interest. Mary Cathryne Park, *Joseph Priestley and the problem of Pantisocracy* (Philadelphia, 1947), 14-24, 52-57.

⁴⁸ Thomas and Alice Cooper had five children: John (1784-1863), Tom (1788-ca.1810), Charles, Eliza, Eleanor. Alice died 30 Oct 1800, while her husband was still in prison. Cooper remarried Elizabeth Pratt Heming in 1812, with whom he had a further two daughters and a son: Frances Heming (1813-1900), Thomas Priestley (1818-57), Ellen (1820-58).

probably both assisting the two Josephs, and being tutored by them. Thomas Cooper senior discussed chemistry and materialism with the elder Priestley,⁴⁹ and politics with the younger. In 1797, following the Pinckney affair,⁵⁰ a belligerent President Adams sought to enlarge the navy and mobilize the militia into what Priestley and Cooper saw as a 'standing army'. This prompted Priestley to publish an anonymous newspaper article: *Maxims of political arithmetic*, which defended free trade on the Adam Smith model, but advocated a form of Jeffersonian isolationism through which America's resources were invested internally. Priestley argued that protecting international trade carried out by American merchants was expensive; money would be better used in building 'roads, bridges and canals.' Furthermore, by not having a navy, except to protect coastal traffic, 'the country would be in no danger of quarrelling with any of its neighbours.'⁵¹

Meanwhile, bad feeling had arisen between Margaret and Elizabeth. Margaret Priestley had had the care of the Doctor and his wife in the summer and autumn of 1796, earning the commendation from Dr Priestley of being 'a most agreeable and excellent woman.'⁵² If, as is suggested, Margaret Priestley had introduced a new dietary regimen, which she thought beneficial to Dr Priestley's health; and if Elizabeth Priestley, when she took over, reverted to the use of wheat flour; then Margaret may have criticized Elizabeth's household management, may even have suggested that Elizabeth's cooking was injurious to Dr Priestley's health. No house can have two mistresses, and if Margaret was too forthright in her criticisms, or Elizabeth too sensitive, that could easily explain the growing discord.

⁴⁹ Cooper was later the author of *A Scripture doctrine of materialism* (Philadelphia, 1823).

⁵⁰ Adams sent C C Pinckney, later joined by Marshall and Gerry, to Paris to negotiate a new treaty. It was hinted that Talleyrand required a bribe before talks could begin. Pinckney and Marshall returned home, leaving Gerry behind, as they were told that unless one of them stayed, France would declare war.

⁵¹ Rutt, XXV, 175-82. Signed 'A Quaker in politics,' the *Maxims* were printed over two days in the *Aurora General Advertiser*, 26 & 27 Feb 1798, and reprinted in both the *Aurora* and *Carey's United States' Recorder*, 31 Mar & 1 Apr 1799. Washington, and Thomas Paine in his *Common sense*, also advocated isolationist policies. Shelburne had supported free trade principles.

⁵² Priestley to Lindsey, 19 Sep 1796, Graham, 'This unhappy country', 147.

‘Ticklish times’

Dr Priestley had depended totally on his wife’s management of domestic affairs.⁵³ When he moved into his daughter-in-law’s following his wife’s death, it was inevitable that he would similarly rely on Elizabeth’s household management. Dr Priestley had known Elizabeth since she was eleven years old. She was the daughter of Samuel Ryland and niece of William Ryland, his old friends and leading members of New Meeting chapel in Birmingham.⁵⁴

In late summer 1798, many newspapers referred to, and some reprinted in their entirety, some ‘intercepted letters’ sent to Priestley by John Hurford Stone at Paris.⁵⁵ One of the letters was addressed to ‘MBP’. A paragraph in another letter explained: ‘I inclose a note for our friend MBP – but, as ignorant of the name he bears at present among you, I must beg you to seal and address it. We have heard nothing of him since his departure, and know but vaguely that he is secreted at present at Kennebeck.’ This gave the letters a tinge of intrigue, and, fearful lest they be taken as evidence of him being a ‘spy in the interest of France,’ Priestley sent a clumsy letter to numerous newspaper editors, in which he naively named ‘MBP’, which as he explained meant ‘member of the British parliament’:

The letter inclosed to me is for Mr Benjamin Vaughan, formerly a pupil of mine, and son to Mr Samuel Vaughan, who

⁵³ ‘I always said I was only a lodger in her house.’ Priestley to John Wilkinson, 19 Sep 1796, (WL).

⁵⁴ It had been William’s son, Elizabeth’s cousin, Thomas Ryland who had rescued the Priestley’s from the rioters, in William Russell’s chaise. Thomas’s younger brother, John, had occasionally assisted Priestley in his laboratory. *The Inquirer*, 25 Jul 1891, 481-4. From this perspective, Margaret Foulke may have been regarded as an outsider.

⁵⁵ The package addressed vaguely ‘Dr Priestley in America,’ was seized by the Royal Navy on board a neutral Danish boat. The letters were published in London (1798), and copied, amongst others in the *Federal Gazette* (Baltimore, MD), 27 Aug 1798. William Cobbett published the *Intercepted letters* in his *Porcupine’s Gazette*, 20 Aug 1798, but didn’t write an editorial at the time, having fled an outbreak of yellow fever in Philadelphia. However, he did write that Priestley ‘has told us who Mr MBP is, and has confirmed me in the opinion of their both being spies in the interest of France.’ For John Hurford Stone, see Tony Rail, ‘Looted letters to Priestley’, *Transactions Unitarian Historical Society*, xx, no.3 (1993), 190-1.

some time ago resided in Philadelphia. He, like me, thought it necessary to leave England, and for some time is said to have *assumed a feigned name*.⁵⁶ This he does not do here, and he is a man that any country may be proud to possess; having for ability, knowledge of almost every kind, and the most approved integrity, very few equals. He is well known to, and probably corresponds with, the president, who will smile at the surmises that have been thrown out on the subject. He has fixed his residence at Kennebeck, because his family has large property there.⁵⁷

At the end of 1798, Joseph Jr set out for England to visit his sick sister, Sarah. He would be gone for twenty months. On his way, he stopped off at Philadelphia long enough to become naturalized and to acquire an American passport.⁵⁸ Quiet family evenings at Northumberland, now comprised the Doctor, Elizabeth, eleven-year-old Tom Cooper, and the two young grandchildren. When Cooper called, Elizabeth was free to take a more active part in political discussion. Though there is no reason to suspect a romantic liaison, Elizabeth did collaborate with Cooper in writing a series of political essays for the locally published *Northumberland Gazette*, of which Cooper was short-time editor.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Vaughan had fled to France in May 1794, when John Hurford Stone's brother, William, was arrested and found to have a letter from Vaughan. In France, to avoid arrest as an Englishman, he assumed the name of Jean Martin, and lived quietly at Passy. John G Alger, *Englishmen in the French Revolution* (London, 1889), 93.

⁵⁷ *Farmer's Register* (Philadelphia) 26 Sep 1798. Benjamin Vaughan, MD, LLD (1751-1835) was briefly MP for Calne, Wilts. Prime Minister Shelburne sent Vaughan to Paris, where he played an important, if unofficial, role in settling the British recognition of American independence (Treaty of Paris 1783). In America, Vaughan lived near his mother's family at Hallowell, Kennebec County, Maine.

⁵⁸ Joseph's departure is noticed in *Porcupine's Gazette*, 15 Jan 1799, and intimated in Priestley to Barbauld, 23 Dec 1798 (Rutt), I(ii), 411. Joseph's petition for naturalization, supported by John Vaughan, was heard 1 Jan 1799.

⁵⁹ Cooper edited the *Sunbury and Northumberland Gazette* from 20 Apr to 29 June 1799. In December, two of Elizabeth Ryland-Priestley's essays, *On the propriety and expediency of unlimited enquiry*, and *A Reply to [Thomas Cooper's] Observations on the Fast Day* [Cooper had challenged the power of a President to declare a day of fasting and prayer], were published as part of *Political essays* (Northumberland, PA, 1799). Both essays are credited to 'E. P.', and, in his preface to Elizabeth's *On the propriety*, Cooper credits 'Mrs Priestley'. (Elizabeth Priestley's authorship was recently noticed by Eugene Volokh: 'Elizabeth Ryland Priestley, Early American author on free speech'; *New York University Journal of Law & Liberty*, 4[2] [2009],

Throughout 1799, Dr Priestley had suffered a barrage of vile attacks in the Pennsylvania press.⁶⁰ In August, Cobbett reprinted Stone's 'intercepted letters' together with Priestley's disclosure of Benjamin Vaughan's name.⁶¹ Dispossessed of his late wife's restraining influence, and now deprived of Joseph Jr's counsel, Priestley allowed himself to fall too heavily under the influences of Elizabeth and Cooper, leading to such 'errors of judgement' as helping distribute a handbill Cooper had printed, around Point and across the river at Sunbury. In September, Cobbett's *Porcupine's Gazette* printed extracts from this handbill,⁶² under the headline 'PRIESTLEY', with the prefatory assertion that: 'Dr Priestley has taken great pains to circulate this address, has travelled through the country for the purpose, and is in fact the patron of it.' Cobbett continued: 'Dr Priestly stands charged before the great tribunal of the American people, with having an agency in this publication,' and challenged Priestley to 'clear himself of the accusation' or face prosecution.⁶³ Barely

382-5). One of Cooper's essays: *Observations on commerce*, reprised Priestley's views on isolationism: 'If wars are necessarily attendant upon commerce, it is far wiser to dispense with it; to imitate the Chinese and other nations, who have flourished without foreign trade ... but if your merchants choose this mode of investing their capital, do not forbid them; let them do it, like other adventurers, at their own risk.'

⁶⁰ With epithets such as 'the Hackney Saint' and 'the spy in the service of France', Priestley was vulgarly vilified in William Cobbett's scurrilous evening newspaper *Porcupine's Gazette*, and regularly attacked in other Federalist papers such as Gottlob Jungmann's *The Weekly Advertiser of Reading*, and John Ward Fenno's *The Gazette of the United States*.

⁶¹ *Porcupine's Gazette*, 26 & 28 Aug 1799.

⁶² *Porcupine's Gazette* (Bustleton, PA), 20 Sep 1799, told its readers that Cooper had listed eight steps to be taken by a President who wanted 'to encrease the authority and prerogative of the executive, and to reduce by degrees to a mere name, the influence of the people': 1. Undermine the Constitution, by twisting the wording to claim additional powers; 2. Restrict free speech and the liberty of the press; 3. Attack the rights of man; 4. Give advancement to those who concur with his views; 5. Promote religion to win over the clergy [Cooper was an 'unbeliever in Christianity']; 6. Favour rich merchants at the expense of poor farmers; 7. Create a standing army; 8. Enlarge the armed navy. Cooper made similar points in his attack on President Adams published in the *Weekly Advertiser* (Reading, PA), 26 Oct 1799, for which he was tried for seditious libel in April 1800, and sentenced to six months imprisonment.

⁶³ Vaughan complained that by 'unguardedly and publicly patronizing the most obnoxious' of Cooper's publications, Priestley had 'subjected himself to remarks which do not tend to render his Situation the most pleasant.' John Vaughan to

a month later, in November and December 1799, when the 1800 presidential election contest was becoming heated, at the very time when the Vaughans and others thought he should have kept his head down, Priestley stepped forward in his own defence, with his *Letters to the inhabitants of Northumberland*. He appended his *Maxims of political arithmetic*, thereby identifying himself as their author.⁶⁴

This was embarrassing for the Vaughan brothers, but more so for William Priestley. The Pinckney affair and the passing of the Aliens and Sedition Acts in 1798 had raised anti-French feeling. Although William had quickly taken American citizenship,⁶⁵ his previous French citizenship, and his earlier fondness for France were widely-known. Now, having a room in Philadelphia, he found it difficult to walk out in public. John Vaughan bemoaned Dr Priestley's behaviour, but, hidden away in the backwoods of Northumberland County, Priestley was unrepentant: 'You must allow me to follow my own judgement Whatever you may think of Porcupine's abuse, it made a great impression to my prejudice in these parts.'⁶⁶ In regard to the embarrassment he had caused Benjamin Vaughan, Priestley's apology was grudging to the point of petulance:

I cannot help being much concerned at the injury to which your brother B will *imagine* that he is exposed by my means. He should have told me his plan on his arrival in this country, and then I would have conformed to it. As things are, and I find he has a suspicion of the *post*, I think it best to forbear all farther correspondence with him, tho' there is no person on this continent with whom I should have so much satisfaction in a frequent intercourse of any kind. If you have any opportunity, let

Benjamin Vaughan, 8 Oct 1799, American Philosophical Society, hereafter APS, *Benjamin Vaughan papers*. See also Graham, 'Joseph Priestley in America,' 218, 226.

⁶⁴ Published in two parts, Northumberland-town PA, 1799; printed by Andrew Kennedy who printed the *Sunbury and Northumberland Gazette*. A pirate edition seems to have been published at Albany NY for Samuel Campbell of New York. Robert E Schofield, *A scientific autobiography of Joseph Priestley*, (Cambridge, MS, 1966), 303).

⁶⁵ At Sunbury, 8 Oct 1798. John Humphreys, had become an American citizen 24 May, but now there was a rush by most of the British émigrés who had accompanied or followed the Priestleys to America, to take the oath of citizenship. Some Frenchmen, notably le comte de Volney, chose to quit America voluntarily rather than risk deportation.

⁶⁶ Priestley to John Vaughan, 12 Dec 1799 (APS), *Joseph Priestley papers*.

him know the reason of my violence [i.e. *vehemence*].⁶⁷
In his postscript to the first part of his *Letters*, Priestley suggests that before publishing the second part:

these being ticklish times, it may be prudent to have a consultation with my lawyers....Poor as is the shed which Mr Cobbett says I dignify with the name of a house, I should be sorry to exchange it for such lodgings as the liberality of this country assigned to Mr Lyon.⁶⁸

Since Cooper was Priestley's principal lawyer, there is a double irony here, but the Vaughans were not amused. They saw only too clearly that the reason Priestley was now styled by his enemies as the 'journeyman of discontent and sedition,'⁶⁹ was because he had allowed himself to fall too much under the influence of a man who 'has a game to play':

[Cooper's] violence creates Violence in the neighbourhood, the Dr has got himself into the Vortex insensibly, & been (by those who want the sanction of his name) urged to Measures, he had hitherto avoided.⁷⁰

In the spring of 1800, while William Duane, the editor of the *Aurora*,⁷¹ and Thomas Cooper were each being investigated for sedition, Cooper, issued a second edition of his *Political essays*, and a further pamphlet under the copied title *Political Arithmetic*.⁷² As if to keep up the pressure, from March through May, Priestley's *Letters to the inhabitants of*

⁶⁷ (PSUL), *Priestley to John Vaughan*, 13 Jan 1800. Benjamin Vaughan, writing to his brother, was more tempered: 'Your account of our friend surprises me, notwithstanding what I have known of him. I do not wonder that he cannot comprehend our motives on these delicate subjects, for I never could comprehend his....Happy indeed would it have been for him, had he lived near us, instead of near his present fiery friends.' Cit. Holt, 202.

⁶⁸ Rutt XXV, 147-8. Matthew Lyon, a Vermont congressman, was the first person to be prosecuted under the Sedition Act. Francis Wharton, *State trials of the United States* (Philadelphia, 1849), 333-44.

⁶⁹ *Philadelphia Gazette*, 12 April 1800.

⁷⁰ John Vaughan to Benjamin Vaughan, 29 Dec 1799 (APS), *Benjamin Vaughan papers*.

⁷¹ William Duane (1760-1835) trained as a printer, and edited *The Word* in India and the *General Advertiser* in London, before migrating to America in 1795. Here he became co-editor with Franklin's grandson, Benjamin Franklin Bache, of the *Aurora* in Philadelphia. After Bache's death in 1798, Duane became sole editor. See Nigel Little, *Transoceanic radical: William Duane* (London, 2007).

⁷² Advertised in the *New York Gazette* 13 Mar 1800. The first edition of *Political essays* (Northumberland, PA, 1799), had been published the previous December.

Northumberland were serialized every Wednesday in the *Carlisle Gazette*.⁷³

Without the calming presence of Joseph Jr, the disagreement between Elizabeth and Margaret intensified to a total estrangement. Perversely, Dr Priestley criticised William for siding with Margaret, without appreciating how strongly he himself had taken Elizabeth's side.⁷⁴ William had never been part of the political wrangling of the 'Priestley gang', but now Margaret and William felt so cut off, that they even took to writing letters to Dr Priestley, and to William's sister Sarah Finch and uncle John Wilkinson in England, complaining about Elizabeth's adverse political and dietetic influences. Putting it on paper was a mistake. Words spoken in anger may be retracted, may be forgiven, may even be forgotten; words coldly written in black and white, which are stored to be read and re-read, cut far deeper wounds. Dr Priestley sent copies of the letters to England.⁷⁵

As he had no secretary, the copies must have been made by Elizabeth Priestley or young Tom Cooper; the one the very object of the dispute, the other an interested party who would embroil his father in the quarrel.

Since there seemed no prospect of reconciliation between Margaret and Elizabeth, there was little point in William and Margaret remaining in Pennsylvania. The extraordinary first sentence of William's letter to John Vaughan, in which William complains of his wife being 'very comfortably situated,' hints that Margaret may have been happier at their

⁷³ Kline's *Carlisle Weekly Gazette*. Letters 1-10, omitting Letter 6: *Of the style of abuse in the writing of Mr Cobbett*, were published from 12 Mar through 28 May 1800, excepting 21 May.

⁷⁴ '[William] has the greatest concern for his wife and children. This, indeed, was that which overpowered every other consideration.' Priestley to Lindsey, 16 Oct 1800, Graham, 'This unhappy country', 159. An indication of how much Dr Priestley had come to depend on his daughter-in-law, is given by the fact that when he wrote his final will on 18 Jan 1802, he referred to his natural daughter five times as 'Elizabeth Finch' instead of Sarah Finch; and it was only when his will was checked the day before he died that the error was emended. (PSUL), *Priestley's last will and testament*.

⁷⁵ '[Margaret] has a long time appeared to be envious, jealous and malignant to an extraordinary degree towards Joseph's wife, and has so drawn her husband into her views, that we are at open variance. The women never see one another, and I see him very seldom. As Wm has written to his sister to complain of Joseph [A polite way of referencing *Joseph's wife*. – How else could William in his letter, say of his brother: "I believe he is yet my first friend." I shall send her copies of all the letters that have passed on the occasion.' 'I hope his uncle will not abandon him.' Priestley to Lindsey, 12 & 16 Oct 1800, Graham, 'This unhappy country', 158-59n.

removal than William was. By the autumn of 1799, the problem of farming the land, and his poor financial management, had left William floundering in debt, relying on his father for basic supplies, and 'a good deal embarrassed' but 'wiser for what he had suffered.'⁷⁶ Although the abandonment of 'Harry's farm' must have felt a betrayal of his memory, Dr Priestley would not necessarily have blamed William for the farm's failure. Thomas Cooper had given up any attempt to cultivate his farm, back in 1796, and, as late as 1810, most occupied plots on Joseph Jr's lands were still only about one-third cleared of trees.⁷⁷ Packing Margaret and baby William off to her parents' in Middle Paxton,⁷⁸ William took a room in Philadelphia while he explored his options; not wishing to hide his mistakes, but seeking a chance to make a fresh start. Despite the bad feeling between Elizabeth and Margaret, Dr Priestley still sought to do all he could to assist his son, though he had no liquidity, and was in debt himself. In January 1800, he asked John Vaughan to lend him \$500 to give to William.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ (PSUL), *Priestley to John Vaughan, 13 Jan 1800*.

⁷⁷ (PSUL), *Property inventory* (which includes Joseph Jr's Loyalsock lands in Lycoming County, and nine farms and numerous other properties in Northumberland County). In an oblique reference to William and Henry, Cooper wrote to James Watt Jr, 4 Apr 1796: 'I soon found that altho' farming was profitable to a man who cd steadily follow up his Servants & be among them, that it did not suit me otherwise than a very healthy & pleasant employment.' (BAH), Ms 3219/6/2/C/127.

⁷⁸ A second child, Lucy, was born at Middle Paxton 30 Nov 1800.

⁷⁹ 'Dr Franklin used to say that a man's debts and his sins are generally more than he takes them to be. This I now find to be my own case. Mr DeGruchy informs me that Mr Humphrey has paid Mr Vanburan on my account more than I had in his (Mr D's) hands, and that Mr Vanburan has a farther demand upon me of 38 dollars 40 cents. Part of this, I imagine, is on the account of the package of books sent to England. If so it must be taken to Mr Campbell, who agrees to take upon himself every expence attending that work. However, please to take of Mr Cooper a piece of gold that remains from what I had for my experiment, and after satisfying Mr Vanburan, deliver the rest to Mr Humphrey to be placed to the account of Mr DeGruchy. I hope you will succeed in procuring me the 500 dollars you were so good as to solicit for me. Without them I shall be unable to pay what I owe here. I also wish to give some assistance to my son William, who, I find, is a good deal embarrassed, and I hope the wiser for what he has suffered. At all events, I must be at some expence on his account.' (PSUL), *Joseph Priestley to John Vaughan, 13 Jan 1800*. John Humphreys, son of one of the sufferers from the Birmingham riots, had settled at Point township, purchasing substantial lands in Lycoming County. 'Act ... Guardians of Jane Humphreys.' *Laws of the commonwealth of Pennsylvania* VII (Octoraro, 1806), 553.

While William was staying in Philadelphia, John Vaughan and Thomas Cooper visited him to discuss the financial arrangements following his quitting the farm. When his brother Henry died, his father had given William the entire farm, 'if he would live on it'. Now, a new settlement recognized William's one-third share in the current value of the farm, being that portion of land he had bought off his brother. Other details of the finances were not discussed until Joseph returned from England in August 1800. William visited his father on Tuesday 8 April 1800, to discuss his future plans and the financial settlement he would receive. William, who was fluent in French and German, had decided on establishing a school where he would teach these languages, and also the flute. Initially, he would settle his family temporarily, perhaps at Johnstown on the river Conemaugh, while his financial affairs were sorted out, and then set up home somewhere along the Ohio or Mississippi rivers.

We cannot know what else passed between William and his father and sister-in-law, except that it was set against the background of Cooper and Elizabeth's influence on Priestley, and the conflict between Elizabeth and Margaret, which itself turned on Elizabeth's influence. Two months earlier, Benjamin Vaughan had written to Shelburne, saying that he would write to Priestley, 'but with little hope of doing good to one so decided upon doing himself harm.'

He constantly represented to me his tranquil life & his abstinence from politics, & has suddenly adopted the acts & sentiments of the most imprudent zealots in politics. He has no turn for discretion himself; indeed his system [is] against it; & he is surrounded by persons who are crafty knaves or hot-headed firebrands.⁸⁰

When William visited his father, it is likely he had an informal commission from the Vaughan brothers to try to talk some sense into him.⁸¹ As Thomas Cooper was still at liberty, though his trial was imminent,⁸² William may also have spoken to him, remonstrating at his adverse influence. This is unlikely to have been received with good

⁸⁰ Sarah [née Manning] & Benjamin Vaughan to Marquis of Lansdowne, 25 Jan 1800, Bowood Mss; cit. Graham, *Revolutionary in exile*, 131.

⁸¹ John Vaughan may have visited Northumberland himself, earlier, with the same intention (Holt, 201-2).

⁸² For Cooper's trial for a seditious libel on the President, see Peter Charles Hoffer, *The free press crisis of 1800* (Lawrence, KS, 2011).

grace.⁸³ William seems to have been set an assignment by Margaret too, for some time during the day, William strolled into the kitchen, and, whilst absent-mindedly lifting the lids of the two flour boxes, enquired of the servant-girl which type of flour her mistress used for Dr Priestley's meals. No doubt this rekindled the dispute about the efficacy of Dr Priestley's diet. It appears that harsh words were exchanged, and maybe William exhibited too much of the Yorkshire character of speaking one's mind freely and plainly. When William left that Tuesday evening, it seems to have been the last time he ever saw his father. Dr Priestley clearly felt indignant, and eight months later could still write stubbornly and petulantly that:

he is gone to seek a settlement in the Western territory, and I do not expect, or wish, to see him any more; but I shall continue to write to him, and give him my best advice.⁸⁴

Despite this mulish severity, written in a private letter to his brother-in-law, Dr Priestley still 'intended that what had passed should be no prejudice to' William's financial settlement.⁸⁵ To William, he continued to sign himself 'your affectionate father,' and there is no reason to doubt that William continued to be an affectionate son. Dr Priestley's final judgement on William is perhaps given in another letter to Lindsey, in which he appears to accuse his son of *stubbornness* and *unkindness*, which sins are surely not irredeemable:

It follows, with a force that gives me in my present situation a satisfaction I cannot describe, that the most *refractory* tempers must be rectified, some time or other, and in the mean time they are not without their use here, and the *worst dispositions* must be reclaimed.⁸⁶

⁸³ Later, Thomas Cooper deliberately misstated it, when he wrote to James Watt Jr, 1 Feb 1801, accusing William of 'jealousy of Joseph's influence with the Doctor.' (BAH), Ms 3219/6/2/C/132. For one thing, Joseph had been in England, and hardly in contact with his father since December 1798, and for another, there is no hint of it in William's letter. What Cooper described as 'a jealousy of Joseph's influence,' was in truth, William's continued exasperation at both Cooper's and Elizabeth's destructive sway over his father.

⁸⁴ Priestley to John Wilkinson, 15 Dec 1800 (WL).

⁸⁵ *Infra* William's letter to John Vaughan.

⁸⁶ Priestley to Lindsey, 2 Oct 1801 (Rutt), I(ii), 469.

Incident of food poisoning

Six days after William left his father, on Monday 14 April 1800 in the afternoon after dinner and into the evening, various members of Dr Priestley's household fell ill, some with more severe symptoms than others, until all the household, except for young Tom Cooper, who displayed no symptoms, fell ill.⁸⁷ The symptoms clearly included vomiting, presumably abdominal cramps, and one would expect diarrhoea. We may assume that there was no high fever or sweating, since that would have been mentioned. We don't know what the family ate on that or previous days, except that on that Monday the meal included a 'pudding'. By this time in his life, Dr Priestley kept to a largely vegetable diet, though the family may have had roast chicken on a Sunday, from the brood of hens they kept for the purpose. The pudding, which is mentioned in the account of the incident may have been a savoury pudding such as a vegetable stew in a chicken stock, with a pastry or suet crust; but it is more likely to have been a milk pudding, typically made from fresh breadcrumbs, eggs, milk and cream. We cannot know the cause of the communal illness. It may have been produced, as Theophilus Lindsey supposed, 'by some poisonous herb being boiled by mistake or from the copper vessel that was made use of.'⁸⁸ More likely causes are 'Puking Sickness', Mycotoxicosis, Salmonella enterocolitis, or Campylobacteriosis.⁸⁹ Certainly, for so many members of one family to

⁸⁷ Incidents of food poisoning was not uncommon. In 1798, seventeen people in Goffstown fell ill after drinking from a mill-race, and in 1805 the Minchin family of Philadelphia started vomiting after eating some buckwheat cakes. *Vergennes Gazette*, 18 Oct 1798; *Connecticut Herald*, 26 Feb 1805. For an attempt at an history of food poisoning, see Morton Satin, *Death in the pot* (Amherst, NY, 2007).

⁸⁸ Lindsey to Robert Millar, 7 July 1800 (Ditchfield, II).

⁸⁹ The Priestleys would certainly have kept a milking cow, on a small-holding which consisted largely of woodland. 'Milk Sickness,' also known as 'Puking Sickness,' unknown in Europe, was common in the United States during the nineteenth century. (Abraham Lincoln's mother, Nancy, is said to have died from the disease.) The poison comes from milk and milk products from cows that have strayed into woodland and grazed on white snakeroot. The effect of fungal toxins in flour products is well documented. Salmonella poisoning could have arisen from poorly cooked eggs in a milk pudding, or from poorly made chicken stock from the giblets and bones from Sunday's chicken, and used, say, in a vegetable stew. Campylobacter bacteria are often carried by poultry, and generally involve an incubation period before symptoms present; so if the family ate an undercooked chicken on Sunday, they might exhibit symptoms on Monday evening. All these diseases share symptoms of stomach cramps, vomiting, and diarrhoea.

fall ill at the same time suggests the common ingestion of a vegetable poison, or of a toxic fungal or bacterial agent. The fact that a healthy young member of the family escaped infection,⁹⁰ though having eaten the same food, argues strongly against a noxious substance, as opposed to a pathogen. Tom may well have had some resistance to the particular pathogen, or his portion of food may by happen chance have been better cooked: – perhaps he was only served leg-meat from Sunday's roast chicken.

Elizabeth, referring back to William's interest in the family's flour, contrived to believe that William had poisoned the flour. We cannot know whether Elizabeth's initial motive might merely have been to divert attention away from her cooking. However, having thrown blame upon William, the substance she immediately thought of was arsenic.⁹¹ Had Joseph been at home, he would have quashed such a spiteful and ridiculous idea; but in his absence, Elizabeth gave voice to her frenzied notion. She afterwards denied to Dr Priestley that she had seriously intended to accuse *William*, but her hysterical insistence that the family's illness was the result of *poisoning*, put sufficient doubt in Dr Priestley's mind for him to carry out a chemical analysis of the flour, and, presumably, the oral discharge. Although it appears that Dr Priestley never considered the possibility of natural or accidental contamination of the food, which may reflect on his impressionable state of mind at this time, it is clear that he never fell thrall to Elizabeth's preposterous idea that William had played a part, not even temporarily.⁹²

Elizabeth's outburst was a godsend to the pro-Federalist press. The servant girl heard, gossiped, and was interrogated by Priestley's neighbours. Her account, at third or fourth hand, edited and embellished along the way, was written up by a violently anti-Priestleian pro-

⁹⁰ Confirmed in Cooper to James Watt Jr, Feb 1801 (BAH), Ms 3219/6/2/C/132.

⁹¹ In the newspapers, malicious poisoning and arsenic were almost synonymous terms. The English were said to have used arsenic fatally to treat American prisoners who had contracted small-pox. In 1799, Sarah Clarke was hanged for poisoning the family of a love rival with arsenic. The week before the Priestleys fell ill, a letter compared a trial by the US Senate with ancient *witch* trials where suspects were forced to eat arsenic. *Carey's United States' Recorder*, 3 May 1798; *Gazette of the United States*, 11 Nov 1799; *Herald of Liberty*, 7 Apr 1800.

⁹² This is clear from Dr Priestley's private letter to William, 13 May 1800, which William published in the newspapers; and is supported by subsequent correspondence.

Federalist, who appended his account with vile extracts from William Cobbett's *The Bloody Buoy*, reciting in gory detail cases of parricide in France, by children anxious to demonstrate their revolutionary zeal.⁹³ The account was published in the *Reading Advertiser* on Saturday 26 April 1800.⁹⁴ No copies of this edition have been located, but, what seems to be an almost complete copy, omitting the extracts from the *Bloody Buoy*, was printed in the pro-Federalist *Philadelphia Gazette* on 29 April.⁹⁵

Extract of a letter from a respectable gentleman in Northumberland, dated April 17th, 1800, to his friend in this place [Reading]. On Monday last, Doctor Priestley, Mrs Priestley, (wife of Mr Joseph Priestley, jun.) her two children, a hired girl, and a little bound girl, all of them were poisoned; they are however so far recovered, with their own exertions, (by drinking warm water) and the assistance of the medical gentlemen of this place, that they are supposed to have overcome the most imminent [*sic*] danger. The hired girl made a pudding for dinner, took the flower [*sic*] as usual out of the meal chest, but discovered some shining particles of some substance intermixed with the flower – she acquainted Mrs. Priestly thereof, who thought little or nothing of it – the girl however, and a hired man, went to the chest, and took off the top which appeared to have most, and threw it away; otherwise they all must have inevitably fallen an instantaneous sacrifice. The poison intermixed with the flower is said to be arsenic, and was so strong, that after the Doctor and Family had discharged a quantity from their stomach by

⁹³ *The bloody buoy thrown out as a warning to the political pilots of America* (Philadelphia, 1796). The work consists of fifty-three gory, sensationalist accounts of vile atrocities, including explicit details of massacres of priests, naked women and children; examples of cannibalism; and several cases of parricide, including a man who displayed the decapitated heads of his parents to his local Committee, and a M. Gouillon who drank a glass of his murdered father's blood in order to show his support for the revolution. Gotlobb Jungmann published a German edition: *Die Blut-Fahne* (Reading PA, 1797).

⁹⁴ *The Weekly Advertiser of Reading*, was published every Saturday morning by Jungmann, who also edited a German language newspaper in Reading. From 1800, Jungmann was partnered by Carl Andreas Bruckmann.

⁹⁵ *The Reading Advertiser* and *Philadelphia Gazette* appear to be the only newspapers who alluded to William Priestley. Other newspapers printed substantially abbreviated reports of the 'poisoning' incident.

vomiting, the poultry eating thereof almost instantly died.

This horrid deed of the person, that is supposed to have committed it, did not surprize me in the least when related to me, as the opinion I entertain of the Doctor accords with the principles of true Democracy –and his S—’s (one of the family) are the same – this ordinary drunken wretch⁹⁶ is supposed to be the perpetrator – Mrs. Priestley has said it was him; the hired girl, for several days before seen him about the meal chests, opening them, asking her who eats Indian meal, and who eats wheat meal, &c.? The Doctor and his S—, are so full of French principles, that nothing appears strange in this affair.

Of this account, the greater fullness of detail of William Priestley enquiring about the flour carries the ring of truth. Elizabeth having accused William of poisoning the flour with arsenic, we know to be true by Thomas Cooper repeating the allegation to James Watt Jr.⁹⁷ However, the other points are muddled embellishments. The servant-girl seeing ‘shining particles’ in the flour, sounds like an after-thought prompted by an interrogator. It is likely that Elizabeth Priestley herself, rather than the kitchen-maid, made the bread and pastry in the household,⁹⁸ in which case it is difficult to understand why the servant-girl would have looked inside the flour boxes. In any case, if she had seen something strange, her natural reaction would have been to touch a little to her tongue, which she clearly didn’t. Once she had brought up the subject of ‘shining particles’ she was

⁹⁶ The anti-Priestleian press frequently accused so-called ‘Jacobins’ or ‘anti-Federalists’ of drunkenness.

⁹⁷ Cooper’s unfounded but strongly-worded and prejudiced letter offers nothing but hearsay, and contains not a shred of evidence: ‘You have probably heard of the most wicked attempt of WP to poison the family, from a jealousy of Joseph’s influence with the Doctor....My second son who lives with the Doctor, narrowly escaped the fate of the family. There is no doubt of the substance employed being Arsenic. William has pretended to compunction of conscience.’ Cooper to J Watt, Jr, 1 Feb 1801, (BAH), Ms 3219/6/2/C/132. William’s ‘compunction of conscience’ is nothing more than embarrassment at his intemperance and debts. Cooper subsequently made a particular study of arsenic poisoning, devising his own test using potassium chromate. Thomas Cooper, *A discourse on ... chemistry and medicine* (Philadelphia, 1818), 42; *A treatise of domestic medicine ... system of domestic cookery* (Reading PA, 1824), 20.

⁹⁸ In England, Mary Priestley had always made the family’s pastry (Ruston, 117).

obliged to invent the nonsense about telling her mistress. Likewise, her throwing away a layer of the flour, and feeling it necessary to claim a witness to the fact, seems a phoney elaboration. Had it been true, the natural thing to have done would have been to feed the flour to the chickens, in which case she would have been able to comment on how the flour affected them. The deliberately ambiguous clause 'the poultry eating thereof almost immediately died' is blatant journalistic flimflam;⁹⁹ no other source mentions chickens. Dr Priestley subsequently declared that there had been no poison, that no tangible mischief had been done, nor was there any evidence that anyone had ever intended any mischief. He could hardly have made these assertions if any chickens had died.

Later, when William had quit Pennsylvania, Dr Priestley wrote to Theophilus Lindsey about the rift. He described a 'deep wound', but stated that he felt 'more of compassion than resentment' for William's behaviour. This is but a declaration from a stubborn father who has been stung by filial criticism, for, had William been guilty of anything worse, his father would have described something more than remitted *resentment*.¹⁰⁰ In any case, William Priestley, the even-tempered if perhaps plain-speaking Yorkshireman, does not fit the profile of a poisoner. He had no motive. Indeed, the evidence of the flour is rather that he was concerned to promote his father's health than to cause him injury, and we know that his father had recently borrowed \$500 on his behalf towards his resettlement. He had no opportunity. Flour would have

⁹⁹ The phrase 'almost immediately died,' could be interpreted as 'died almost immediately,' which if verified would be diagnostically significant; or as 'almost died, immediately,' which is evidentially meaningless.

¹⁰⁰ 'In my last I gave you some hints of the afflicting story of my son Wm. This was a deep wound; but the belief that the hand of God is in every thing makes it easier for me. He is gone to seek a settlement on the Ohio....I feel more of compassion than resentment, and hope that his uncle will not abandon him.' Priestley to Lindsey, 16 Oct 1800, DWL Mss, cit. Jenny Graham, 'This unhappy country', 159. The last page of Priestley's preceding letter of 13 Aug, where it seems William's situation and attitude were outlined, has been lost. This has led to speculation that the letter implicated William in the alleged poisoning four months before; but the evidence better suggests that on the missing page, Dr Priestley bemoaned his son's insolvency and intemperance, and bitterly complained of William daring to criticize both his father's political pugnacity and abject surrender to Cooper and Elizabeth's influences, and the latter's dietetic care.

been scooped from the box every day, it is inconceivable that a substance added to the flour on 8 April would have affected the family on the 14th, without affecting them during the intervening five days; but, then, throughout this business, the flour was a red herring, prompted only by William having enquired about its use.

Upon reading the article in the *Reading Advertiser*, William Priestley wrote to John Wyeth of Harrisburg, editor of *The Oracle of Dauphin*, asking him to forward his letter to Jungmann for publication. Nothing appeared, so William wrote again on 30 May 1800, imploring Wyeth to try to get his letter published:

Messrs Jungman & Bruckman. Gentlemen, As the charge contained in your paper of the 26th April, was founded merely on the conjecture of one of the servants, (my sister not having said what is there stated – being incapable of it, and Dr Priestley, after an examination of the circumstances, declaring that he gave no credit to it) I shall only state as to the absurdity of it, that six days had elapsed from the time of my appearance at the house, till the accident happened, during which they baked and used the flour as usual. Had my father's income been independent of his life, or had I any thing to expect from an inheritance, there might, probably, in the breast of an assassin, be some grounds for suspicion; but even in that case, my only brother and sister are in England.¹⁰¹

Below this, William printed a letter he had received from his father which, when written, may not have been intended for publication:

Dear William, The malignity of party spirit, is so apparent in the letter, printed in the Reading news-paper, and the object of it is so evidently to add to my affliction, that all persons who have any sense of decency, or feeling of common humanity, must be shock'd at it. The writer is well known, and one who cannot say

¹⁰¹ Printed in *The Oracle of Dauphin*, 21 Jun 1800. William Priestley continued: 'However, the fact is that for this year past I have depended upon him for supplies, and shall continue to do so probably for some time, so that any accident befalling him at this time, instead of benefiting, would prove my ruin. Absurd and shocking to humanity as is the insinuation, persons actuated by party motives, and mistaking my father's principles and character, will propagate it to give him pain, but for myself, while I enjoy his esteem and affection undiminished, and the approbation of my conscience, I shall despise as I abhor it.'

that I ever offended him in thought, word or deed; and what he asserts of your sister,¹⁰² saying that SHE suspected you of being concerned in the affair, is altogether unfounded.

I examined what remain'd of the flour, and cannot say that I found any appearance of ARSENIC in it;¹⁰³ and Dr Cosins¹⁰⁴ always said he was confident from what he observed of the operation of it, that there was nothing besides TARTAR EMETIC¹⁰⁵ in what we had taken. Since therefore no real mischief has been done, and it cannot be proved that any was intended, I shall not make any further enquiry into the business. It is well known that leaving your farm was a measure that had been determined some time ago. – Your sister desires her kind remembrance to you and all your family. I am as ever, your affectionate father, J. Priestley. Northumberland, May 13, 1800.¹⁰⁶

The reference to tartar emetic, has led some writers to mistakenly suppose that tartar emetic had actually been ingested, or had certainly been added to the flour;¹⁰⁷ but it simply indicates Dr Cozens's opinion that *if* a foreign substance had been consumed by the family, it may have been such as to produce an emetic effect, such as, but nothing worse than, by tartar emetic. Cozens couldn't have tested for tartar emetic. The truth is that William was nothing but a victim of the cruel rivalry between two sisters-in-law, and a sacrificial lamb for a salacious and partisan tabloid press. When William wrote to John Vaughan a year later, he didn't seek absolution for a felony, but asked Vaughan to accept his 'resolution,

¹⁰² *Sister* is used in an informal sense for *sister-in-law*.

¹⁰³ Priestley would have used Scheele's test for arsenic by which the addition of copper sulphate solution to arsenious oxide or one of its derivatives, produces a precipitate of Scheele's Green.

¹⁰⁴ Dr William Cozens (1760-1836), who also lived in Point township.

¹⁰⁵ Potassium antimonyl tartrate demihydrate, used as a mordant in the dyeing industry, and in medicine as an emetic and antiparasitic. It has a sweet metallic taste.

¹⁰⁶ John Wyeth added a footnote: 'The editor of the Oracle has received other letters, which tend to prove, were it necessary, the inconsistency and improbability of Dr Priestley's son being concerned in a deed so unnatural and shocking to the human understanding.'

¹⁰⁷ William Carlton ed., *The Impartial Register* (Salem, MS) 16 Jun 1800, and Schofield, 406, respectively.

renewed and strengthened,' to better and more temperately attend to his business and financial affairs.

William may have been guilty of enjoying the easy companionship of the tavern, guilty of standing his round, guilty of Yorkshire plain-speaking, guilty of siding with his wife, guilty of not having a head for business, guilty of being short-sighted,¹⁰⁸ guilty of being a middle child; but he was innocent of wishing his father any harm, and unreservedly and absolutely innocent of ever seeking to injure his family.

Whilst modern historians have noticed the food poisoning incident, at the time it was a dead letter. William knew he was innocent; he knew there was no poison; and he knew that Elizabeth had never accused him – because that is what his father had told him. He probably gave the matter no further thought. William hadn't seen Thomas Cooper since before his trial and imprisonment. (By the time Cooper was released from gaol, William had already left on his tour of the southern states.) It seems, he hadn't been back to Northumberland since the fateful quarrel of 8 April 1800. In any case, it was never mentioned again. William didn't know, and perhaps to the end of his life he never knew, that Elizabeth really had accused *him* of putting arsenic in the flour, and that she later convinced Thomas Cooper of it.

Dr Priestley continued to care for his son, and to do all he could to assist him. On 18 January 1802, Dr Priestley drew up a will, leaving the bulk of his small estate to his eldest son Joseph, perhaps because he regarded him as the only capable steward. He treated his daughter and his younger son equally, after a fashion, leaving the wives, Sarah Finch and Margaret Priestley, each an annuity of £60 (ca \$270) a year, provided that their respective husbands, whom he perceived as lacking sound financial judgment, had no control over the money.¹⁰⁹

'Copious draughts of hot whiskey'

Joseph Priestley Jr returned from England in August 1800, stopping off at Philadelphia, where John Vaughan and he met with William. The two brothers could hardly have helped but mention the continuing disagreement between their two wives. They certainly talked about

¹⁰⁸ William wore spectacles, perhaps for reading (Ruston, 117).

¹⁰⁹ (PSUL), *Priestley's last will and testament*. William Finch had been declared bankrupt in 1797.

William's falling out with their father, because William needed Joseph to intercede on his behalf in regard to his financial settlement. We know they talked about how difficult it was for him to go around in public. The brothers parted on good terms, with Joseph agreeing to help William as much as he could, and promising to see him when William got back from the southern states.

After his release from prison, at the end of 1800, Cooper again embroiled Joseph Jr in political controversy. Together, they issued for signature *A Petition for an alteration in the Constitution of Pennsylvania, to abridge the power of the Senate*. The accompanying *Address* 'insinuated that the Senate is a useless body and might be dispensed with altogether.' Andrew Brown, in his *Philadelphia Gazette* of 10 January 1801, caustically contended that,

One Thomas Cooper and a certain Joseph Priestly jun. lately from Great Britain, have very kindly undertaken to amend both our manners and our form of government, gratis. The first thing they do by example is swallowing copious draughts of hot whiskey, which we denominate the spirit of Democracy. – With their brains thus charged, they sally forth with furious zeal; with a petition, or rather a remonstrance, against the existence of a senate in Pennsylvania; and when they have succeeded in this, we are told they mean to propose the annihilation of the state governments, that hereafter, like France, we may become one and indivisible.

William Priestley spent ten months trying to find a suitable place at which to settle. For a while he had decided on Louisville, where he had received an invitation to establish a school; but even here he was pursued by the canard that all the Priestleys were 'Jacobins' and 'drunkards' – conjoined sins as far as the pro-Federalist press were concerned.¹¹⁰ Early

¹¹⁰ In the 23 Oct 1800 edition of the *Philadelphia Gazette*, Andrew Brown commented on the election: 'It is no wonder that Federalism is triumphant in New-Jersey. Were the ladies permitted to vote generally in Pennsylvania, we should have on the federal side the suffrages of all wives and children of every drunken Jacobin in the state, – and were the ladies permitted to legislate, every beer house, every gin shop, would soon be deprived of its licence. – These hot-beds of Jacobinism once eradicated, an attachment to order and to our excellent government, would be the immediate consequence of returning sobriety.' [The New Jersey Constitution of 1776 had given suffrage to 'all inhabitants of this Colony, of full age, who are worth fifty pounds proclamation money;' which included maidens, non-whites and widows, but not wives

in 1801, John Vaughan wrote to William, suggesting that he buy a cotton plantation on the Mississippi, and giving him an introduction to William Dunbar, a celebrated naturalist, inventor and explorer who owned a large cotton plantation at Natchez in the Eastern Territories, as well as others near Baton Rouge in the Western Territories.¹¹¹ William, who had been in Paris at the inauguration of l'âge de liberté, d'égalité, et de fraternité, was horrified with Vaughan's suggestion. When William and Harry were clearing their land together, they had worked alongside their hired labourers, treating them as equals,¹¹² how could he now oversee enslaved labourers? Having received a letter from William, Dr Priestley wrote Vaughan to underline the extent of William's inexorable determination against owning or managing enslaved workers, which Vaughan had not fully appreciated. The doctor wrote to his son on 4 June 1801, saying that he didn't know how best to advise him, and that he should stay at Margaret's parents, to await Joseph Jr's return from Loyalsock.¹¹³ During

who under common law could not own property. Women's suffrage was quietly stifled in 1807].

¹¹¹ William Dunbar (1749-1810) introduced the square baling of cotton, and was the first to suggest the manufacture of cottonseed oil; he built an astronomical observatory at Natchez, and organized the first scientific exploration of the territories of the Louisiana Purchase, carrying out a notable exploration of Ouachita River and a study of the water at Hot Springs, AR. Dunbar was interested in Dr Priestley's work on plants and water mosses, and may have corresponded with him. He and his son, Dr William Dunbar (1793-1847), physician and naturalist, were members of the American Philosophical Society, and correspondents of John Vaughan.

¹¹² 'Harry drives his horses and cart, and works with his men, like one of them, and there is little difference between master and servant. Indeed, those terms are unknown. If there was more subordination, it would be better for them all.' Priestley to Lindsey, 12 Jul 1795 (Rutt), I(ii), 310.

¹¹³ 'Dear Sir, I think myself much obliged to you for your kind attention to my unhappy son, and he is truly sensible of it himself. But I find by his letter to me that you did not understand one another. He is so far from being, as you say, *fully disposed* to follow the plan you allude to that he is *utterly averse* to it. The 400 dollars, he says, would barely carry him and his family to the place, and he could never manage slaves. What he will do, or what he can do, I do not know. I am not able to advise him, and my son is not here. I shall therefore advise him to be with his father-in-law [at Middle Paxton] till he can hear from him. As you have advanced the 400 dollars, I inclose a draught on Mr Humphreys for 300 of them, and shall settle about the other hundred when my son returns. With much gratitude, I am, dear Sir, yours sincerely, J Priestley. P.S. Not knowing how to direct to Wm, I inclose the letter to you.' Priestley to Vaughan, 4 Jun 1801 (APS), *John Vaughan papers*.

William's visit to Natchez, Dunbar had suggested that if William was unwilling to purchase a plantation, then he might do well to set up a school, though teaching a fuller range of subjects. He later suggested a location somewhere in the 'E.T.s', an abbreviation that William did not immediately understand.¹¹⁴

Removal to Louisiana

Had Margaret and Elizabeth not quarrelled, had Dr Priestley curbed his polemical pugnacity, William and Margaret might have remained in Pennsylvania. However, in the end, William resolved to find asylum near New Orleans, the terminus of his Mississippi journey, then a largely French-settled Spanish-owned colony.¹¹⁵ William and Margaret, with their children William Jr and Lucy, left Pennsylvania in autumn 1801, and settled in what would become Louisiana, where Margaret gave William two more daughters, Catherine Caroline and Jane.¹¹⁶ It seems the Priestleys initially settled in Pointe Coupée Parish,¹¹⁷ near to Dunbar's plantation just north of Baton Rouge. It is unclear whether or not Dunbar

¹¹⁴ The *Eastern Territories*, lands east (left bank) of the Mississippi were owned by France and French-settled.

¹¹⁵ The *Western Territories*, together with largely French-speaking New Orleans had been owned by Spain since 1763, though Spain had agreed to return them to France on demand (Treaty of Ildefonso, 1800). On 4 July 1803, USA announced its purchase of the combined Territories, which became the 'Orleans Territory', and later, the State of Louisiana.

¹¹⁶ Of William and Margaret's children: William Priestley Jr never married. Lucy Priestley married Alexander Orme. Catherine Caroline Priestley (ca. 1802-65), married-1 Henry Dickenson Richardson, the couple having five children: Henry Hobson R. the architect (1838-1886); William Priestley R. (1841-1910); Catherine Caroline Priestley R. (1843-1923); Jane R. (ca. 1847-ca. 1852); Margaret Priestley R. (1849-1937). Priestley Toulmin, 'The descendants of Joseph Priestley', *The Northumberland County Historical Society proceedings* xxxii (Sunbury, PA, 1994), app. Catherine's husband died in 1854; on 11 Dec 1856 she married-2 a Scot, John D Bein (1803-63), of Priestley and Bein hardware merchants. Jane Priestley (ca. 1805) married-1 John Woodman Musgrove (1809-31), son of Liverpool merchant Robert Musgrove, 24 Aug 1830; married-2 John Bell Camden, 27 Mar 1851, at her brother-in-law's home.

¹¹⁷ Counties in Louisiana are called Parishes, reflecting old Spanish colonial parish boundaries. William Priestley signed a Petition, November 9, 1804, by the inhabitants of Pointe Coupée to Governor Claiborne, requesting military aid because of fears of a slave revolt.

assisted William's plans for a school,¹¹⁸ but the Priestleys certainly formed a lasting friendship with his son, Dr William Dunbar.¹¹⁹ Some time before 1807, William bought a sugar plantation, some ninety miles down river, at Vacherie, St James Parish, Louisiana.¹²⁰

We have been left no reason for William's change of heart, though, following the Louisiana Purchase, a sugar plantation was a sound investment. Many of the new neighbours who welcomed him to Pointe Coupée, plantation owners themselves, would have expected and encouraged him to buy a plantation. Happier had William worked his farm with hired free-men, except that free labourers were not available in Louisiana at the time, at least not in any number. What honour would William have reaped had he purchased two dozen enslaved workers, and then freed them? But such an example would have raised a slave-insurrection extending from Baton Rouge to New Orleans. Then his neighbours would have effected what a Birmingham mob had failed to do – lynch a Priestley. In any case, enslaved workers were expensive, and William, who had resolved on financial prudence, also had the welfare of

¹¹⁸ Dunbar's own children were educated in New Orleans before being sent to a high school up north. Mrs Dunbar Rowland, *Life of William Dunbar* (Jackson MI, 1930), 361, 391. Following the Louisiana Purchase, plots of land within rapidly-sprouting townships were sometimes offered free to schoolmasters willing to establish a school. E.g. *Orleans Gazette*, 23 Jul 1806: 'Two building lots ... will be given *gratis* in the new city of Monte-sano (Healthy-hill) [nr Baton Rouge].'

¹¹⁹ Following William Priestley's death, Dr Dunbar assisted Margaret with 'three annuities' due from Dr Priestley's will. William Dunbar to Margaret Priestley, Bringiers, 2 Jan 1840, DC, MC 1998.1. (The Post Office for Vacherie was at Bringiers Point). Dr Priestley had left annuities to Margaret Priestley and Sarah Finch, the latter passing in quarters to the three surviving children, John, Lucy and Catherine Finch, and in eighths to the two surviving grandchildren by Eliza Finch. The 'three annuities' thus relate to Margaret Priestley (1771-1857), Gertrude Brown (1826-96) and Isabel Brown (1829-aft.1865).

¹²⁰ Formerly comte d'Acadie, which was divided into two new counties: Ascension Parish and St James Parish, on 31 Mar 1807. The plantation, on the west or right bank of the Mississippi, is officially recorded in *Land claims in the Eastern District of the Orleans Territory, January 9, 1812*: 'No. 339: 'William Priestley claims a tract of land, situate on the west side of the river Mississippi, in the County of Acadia, containing three arpents and one-third in front [195 metres], and eighty-four arpents in depth [4916 metres].' This is some 280 square arpents, or 237 acres. Only the first 40 arpents depth was confirmed, the 44 arpents behind it adjudged as not having been under cultivation on the completion of the Louisiana Purchase, 20 Dec 1803.

a wife and four children to consider. His aversion to slavery may have been tempered by visiting plantations where enslaved workers were treated humanely and with dignity, if that is not a contradiction in terms. He may have felt that, aside from their enslavement, if their enslavement can be put aside, the day to day experience of unfettered, properly fed and decently housed enslaved workers, under a benign master, would not compare unfavourably with that of tied farm-labourers in England;¹²¹ or factory hands housed in crowded and filthy tenements, who worked long hours for insubstantial pay that didn't cover rent and rations, who were subject to a harsh and partial justice system, who faced the hazards of dangerous and poisonous environments, and suffered recurring starvation when wheat prices rose.¹²²

William led a quiet and respectable life alongside the Mississippi, where 'for two hundred miles, plantation touches plantation, a perfectly uniform strip, conforming to the shape of the river.... The mansion houses are spacious and airy ... situated in the midst of orange groves and pretty gardens, in which abound the cape jessamine, multitude of altheas, bowers of the multi-flora rose, and a great variety of vines and flowering shrubs peculiar to this climate of perpetual verdure and loveliness.'¹²³

¹²¹ It was Thomas Jefferson's opinion, when Dr Priestley's grandson John Finch (1791-1854) visited his tobacco plantation 'Monticello' in 1825, that enslaved workers in the United States were 'better fed than agricultural laborers on the continent of Europe....Any planter who treated his negroes cruelly would be shunned by his neighbors.' John Finch, *Travels* (London, 1833), 255. Benjamin Vaughan had made a similar point in the House of Commons in 1792, speaking on Wilberforce's motion to abolish the slave trade. Although his father had owned a plantation in Jamaica, Benjamin Vaughan stuck to his declaration that he himself had never, and would never, own a slave. Anthony Page, 'Rational dissent, enlightenment, and abolition of the British slave trade', *The Historical Journal*, vol.54.3 (2011), 741-72, at 768.

¹²² Thomas Cooper owned a slave in Pennsylvania, and even Dr Priestley, during his wife's illness, 'hired a black slave [girl] by the week,' because they couldn't get a maid. (Priestley to Wilkinson, 17 Dec 1795, [WL].) Back in the comfort of England, Dr Priestley had theorized that slavery is 'an improper state for *man*,' because 'man has the power of reflexion in an eminent degree; and it is this that makes him miserable in a state of servitude.' Christianity was ambiguous on the point, but did require Christians 'to give every individual of the human race equal, at least sufficient, advantages for improving his nature, and preparing for a future state.' Joseph Priestley, *A sermon on the slave trade* (London, 1788), 18-19, 15.

¹²³ Description of a steamboat journey from Pointe Coupée to New Orleans in the spring of 1821. Theodore Clapp, *Autobiographical sketches* (Boston, 1857), 68.

William would have been able to lead the life of a cultured country gentleman. We might imagine him playing his flute, whilst shaded by orange, fig and olive trees; or walking in the garden with his children, enjoying the conversations and delightful activities that Mary-Anne Galton remembered from her childhood.¹²⁴

William and Joseph continued to correspond, though it wasn't until after 1811, when steam paddle-boats opened the Mississippi and Ohio to up-stream travel, that William and Margaret were able to visit their families at Northumberland borough and Middle Paxton.¹²⁵ The family first revisited Pennsylvania in summer 1816, only to learn that Elizabeth Ryland Priestley, whom the children had never met, had died on 8 May. While they were staying at Middle Paxton, Joseph Rayner Priestley (1793-1863) sent William's eldest daughter, Lucy, a two-volume edition of Dr Priestley's *Memoirs*. Having learnt the necessity for discretion, William had never discussed religion with his neighbours, nor even with his children, who grew up not only strangely ignorant of the nature of their grandfather's Christian Unitarianism, but with decidedly Calvinistic views.¹²⁶ Lucy Priestley, not yet sixteen, replied to the gift of Priestley's *Memoirs* with a letter that was disconcertingly forthright:

thank you for the kindness manifested toward me ... for I believe you intended them to give me pleasure, but O! my dear friend, when I deeply consider the dreadful consequences that would

¹²⁴ The practice of sculpting models of ancient temples may have continued to the next generation, inspiring William's grandson Henry Hobson Richardson, who became a distinguished architect in the Romanesque style.

¹²⁵ When William took his family to the Western Territories at the end of 1801, they would have travelled down-stream by flatboat, an oar-steered covered wooden barge that, unable to return, would have been scrapped on its arrival. By 1816, the *Washington*, could steam the 1500 miles from New Orleans to Louisville in only 24 days. William's brother Joseph had returned to England in 1816, following the death of his first wife, but his son, Joseph Rayner Priestley remained to marry and raise a family.

¹²⁶ It may be that the Priestley family in Louisiana came into contact with a German Lutheran or American Methodist group. William had been raised a Unitarian, had helped with his father's translation of Psalms (Priestley to Lindsey, 17 Oct 1790 [Mills]) for a proposed collaborative Unitarian bible, and associated with Unitarians such as Dr James Freeman and William Wells, when he first went to America. While his mother was alive, William, and presumably Margaret too, attended Dr Priestley's Unitarian Sunday services.

follow (if I were to read them), I dare not attempt it, least [*sic*] it should prove my final over throw; as I understand that my Grandfather utterly denied the divinity of Jesus Christ, or that he was the Son of God. And that is aiming at the very foundation of my hopes; for it is through his meritt [*sic*] that I expect to find my way to heaven.

Lucy then exhorted her cousin ‘to come unto my Saviour and taste of his love;’ advised him that ‘we must work out our own Salvation, with fear and trembling;’ warned him that God ‘hath promised to inflict punishment upon them that do not obey him;’ and assured him that she had ‘often petition’d the throne of grace in your behalf.’¹²⁷ William’s family visited Pennsylvania again in 1818 for Lucy’s marriage to Alexander Orme of Middle Paxton.¹²⁸

At the end of 1825, William’s respectability was sealed when the citizens of St James Parish elected his son to the Louisiana legislature, where he gave his time to constituency issues.¹²⁹ In 1835, William’s niece, Eliza Finch (1795-1835) arrived at the Priestley plantation, seeking assistance. Her husband Rev William Steill Brown (1800-1836) had brought his wife and four children to America in 1832, intending to go out West to seek ‘prosperity’ for his children. However, having given some sermons in Channing’s chapel at Boston,¹³⁰ Steill Brown was invited to found a Unitarian church in Buffalo, New York State. Eliza found the winter too harsh and in 1833 moved to Nashville, Tennessee, where her uncle was said to live. Unfortunately, William Priestley of Nashville, who had fought at the battle of New Orleans, was not her uncle, but the son of

¹²⁷ Lucy Priestley to Joseph Rayner Priestley, 18 Sep 1816, (DC), MC 1998.1.

¹²⁸ Lucy Priestley (1800-1882) married Alexander Orme (1795-1840), 21 Dec 1818, and bore him eleven children. G N Mackenzie, *Colonial Families of the USA* (7 vols., New York, 1907), II, 567.

¹²⁹ As a member of the House of Representatives, in which William Priestley Jr served on several committees. On 20 Feb 1826 ‘Mr Priestley submitted to the House the report of the trustees of the public schools in the Parish of St. James. On the motion, the report was ordered to lie on the table for examination by members of the House.’ [trans. TR] *Louisiana State Gazette*, 2 Mar 1826. William Priestley Jr stood again for election to the Louisiana House of Representatives in 1840, but gained only 23% of the vote.

¹³⁰ Dr William Ellery Channing (1780-1842) and Ezra Stiles Gannett (1801-71) were joint pastors at Federal Street Unitarian Church, Boston.

a Dr *James Priestley*. By now impoverished, the Steill Browns eventually located the right William Priestley early 1835. Eliza and one child died soon afterwards. William Steill Brown, still seeking his fortune, took his three remaining children to join the ‘Austin colonists’; but within weeks he and his son died, leaving two orphaned daughters, aged nine and six, stranded in frontier Texas. A friend from Buffalo rescued the two girls and returned them to their great-uncle.¹³¹

After William’s death, about 1838, his nephew Joseph Rayner Priestley visited Margaret in Louisiana.¹³² In February 1839, William Priestley Jr, perhaps using his inheritance, bought property in New Orleans, and invested as a sleeping partner in what became the very successful firm of Priestley & Bein,¹³³ which traded in metal stock, cutlery, ships chandlery, and general hardware; and won several government contracts.¹³⁴ He

¹³¹ William and Margaret Priestley subsequently agreed to their informal adoption by Colonel Isaac Trimble Preston (1793-1852), who owned a plantation in Concordia Parish, LA. Col Preston and William Priestley Jr were both Members of Louisiana House of Representatives. Preston was a noted judge, and Attorney General of Louisiana (1843-6). The two girls, Gertrude and Isabel Brown, each went on to marry, ‘Gertrude Wyoming’, as her father nicknamed her after the title of a Campbell poem, having six children and sixteen grandchildren. (Harris Manchester College Oxford: *Biographical notes for William Steill Brown* (typescript, 2012). <http://archive.org/details/BiographicalNotesForWilliamSteillBrown>). See also James Martineau to Rev Dr G W Hosmer, 14 Jan 1865; cit. ‘FWH’, ‘Rev William S Brown,’ *Monthly Religious Magazine*, xxxv (Boston, 1866), 333-7.

¹³² Following Margaret’s visit to him in autumn 1839, with Catherine Caroline, Henry Dickenson Richardson, and their year-old son Henry Hobson. (Margaret Priestley to Joseph Rayner Priestley, 15 Jan 1840, DC, MC 1998.1).

¹³³ On 12 Jun 1839, he paid \$24,300 for the front block on Magazine St between Robin [now Euterpe] and Basin [now Race] streets, and \$2,700 for a lot in Annunciation. The property was sold after his death. *New Orleans Commercial Bulletin*, 5 Jun 1840; *Courrier de la Louisiane*, 4 Nov 1842; New Orleans Notarial Archives, David Lawson McCay, Acts 119 & 120, 28 & 29 Feb 1839.

¹³⁴ Originally based in Levee and Tehoupitoulas streets, the firm removed to a large warehouse at ‘Nos 89 and 91 Camp Street, opposite the head of Natchez Street.’ *Picayune*, 1 Oct 1848. In 1840, the company was advertising ‘English and American blister steel, single and double shear steel, cast and spring steel, sheet lead, shot, block tin and spelter.’ *Picayune*, 20 Oct 1840. The firm had a contract with the Prison workhouse in New Orleans, buying oakum, segars, and tarpaulin hats from the prison, and supplying steel stock which prisoners manufactured into iron-work for new wharves and bridges in New Orleans. *The Jeffersonian*, 19 Dec 1846. See also New Orleans Notarial Archives, Hilary B Cenas, May-Nov 1854, Acts 33, 41, 69.

never married, and died of cholera, 21 September 1841;¹³⁵ his mother, Margaret, died aged 86 in New Orleans, 1 November 1857.¹³⁶

Letter from William Priestley to John Vaughan, 29 June 1801

When William wrote this letter, he had just returned from Louisiana, having scoured the banks of the Mississippi for a suitable place to settle and start a school. He was anxious to see his brother, whom he had last met the previous August when Joseph was passing through Philadelphia on his way home from England. Yet, now he was back, he had got a letter from Joseph, in which his brother delayed meeting him, and seemed to ask why he hadn't already upped sticks and gone. William still had queries concerning his financial settlement, and still sought his brother's advice on the direction his career should take. Idling at his parents-in-law, William may not have appreciated how busy his brother was with his own affairs, and that, in any case, he didn't know what advice to give, other than the plantation venture that William had refused to consider. 'I want to go as soon as I can,' William wrote, 'I am necessarily losing time. I cannot tell what this change of conduct since I left him can be owing to. I believe he is yet my best friend, but he must be offended with something.'

There is a sense of weariness in the first part of William's letter, written on Saturday, together with a sense of perplexity from his having been unable to get a proper account of the money due him. By Sunday, though, there is a renewed vigour and optimism in his writing; an impression that he wanted to get moving. He asked Vaughan to help him get together the books and equipment he needed to start a school, not just because he was eager to start his new enterprise, but also because he was keen to prove that this time he had the resolution to make it work.

Sudbury, Suffolk

¹³⁵ At 124 Bienville Street, New Orleans. Picayune, 22 Sep 184). Priestley & Bein continued under the ownership of Margaret Priestley, Jane C Musgrove, Catherine C Richardson & John D Bein. *New Orleans Commercial Bulletin*, 9 Nov 1841.

¹³⁶ *Picayune* 3 Nov 1857. The Priestley plantation was sold in March 1858 to Alexis Ferry, and now forms part of the St Joseph plantation.

TEXT¹³⁷

May I entreat your patience in reading this long letter; it grieves me to give you so much trouble, dear Sir.

Saturday [27 June 1801]

On my arrival here, quite contrary to my expectation, I found that Mrs P. had been very comfortably situated in my absence, I mean with regard to the attention paid her by her friends and relations who, on account of the apparent forlornness of her self and the idea of her going soon to such a distance as might perhaps prevent them ever seeing her more, have been kinder to her than ever, and particularly so to the children. This however has not diminished my exertion to remove my family. As I came along the road I enquired of the waggoners every where, and being so busy a time I could get none to go, nor after their then load would they promise unless I would give them as much as they could get for a full load, which would be double of what I should have to give in the fall of the year.¹³⁸ When I came home, I enquired of M^cA¹³⁹ and all the neighbourhood to no purpose; every one's team is engaged at such time in farming, it being the most pressing time, or else in driving to Philadelphia and Baltimore. Last week I agreed with Mr Kittera's tenant who lives opposite us to take me, which he will do as soon as his waggon is made, and he has ordered it some time since, but if I can get any one to do it before him, I shall, as I imagine he cannot go before the beginning of September. If I do not dispose of some of my effects, which I am on the point of doing, one waggon cannot take us without; and two beds that I have sold are not paid

¹³⁷ Transcribed from the original Mss: Ladd/3109, Cadbury Research Library: Special Collections, University of Birmingham. The Ms is unsigned and written almost entirely in shorthand. The address pane is inscribed: 'Mr Jno Vaughan, No. 111 So. Front Street, Philadelphia;' annotated in the top left corner: 'Harrisburg, June 29.' The panel above the address pane is endorsed in another hand, presumably John Vaughan's: 'Harrisburg, Wm Priestley, June 29 1801, Recd July 2nd.' The seal is torn away and absent, with small loss of text. The shorthand follows the scheme of Jeremiah Rich, which William may have learned as a student at Daventry Academy. Dr Priestley used a different shorthand, one of two schemes advanced by Peter Annet.

¹³⁸ A 'full load' would be a train of two or three wagons.

¹³⁹ The 1800 Federal Census shows Archibald McAllister residing in Middle Paxton, Dauphin, PA.

for, and Mr M^cA owes me thirteen dollars! My present situation here is (as I said it would be) very disagreeable, as they must be wondering why I do not resolve on a plan when they think I have a place and money to settle with. I have told them that I wanted to see my brother, who was not come back from Lk,¹⁴⁰ before I could go to Northumberland, which they expect I shall do. But though he promised to see me when I came back, he now refuses to do it. He told my wife when he was here that he must see me, and should before you; that when I came back, he would contrive to get me removed to Pittsburg¹⁴¹ (I mean my paying for it) as he did Holship, as I mentioned the difficulty I had to appear in public I cannot do any thing. *Now* he wonders I don't move instantly, and though I have very pressing reasons to see him, and though he must know that I want to go as soon as I can and that I am necessarily losing time. I cannot tell what this change of conduct since I left him can be owing to. I believe he is yet my first friend, but he must be offended with something. My account he has just sent me, but though my father promised me Interest from the time my brother came back from England, there is nothing of it mentioned in it. Nor is there credit given in it for Mr Hunter's bill of near sixty dollars, which I paid and did not put to account because my father had said that he would not charge me for 500 dollars I had of you (but which was by my brother afterwards put to my account). Mr Cooper when he was at Philadelphia told me it should be paid if he found by his son Tom that I had paid it, which he told me afterwards he did, and that he would answer, for it should be placed to my credit.

¹⁴⁰ Loyalsock, Lycoming County, PA. Joseph would have been at Loyalsock, collecting instalment payments and rents, as well as surveying and reassessing the lands: noting how much land had been cleared, what new buildings had been erected. Substantial tracts of the Loyalsock lands had still not been sold, and during 1801, Joseph Priestley Jr was offering to give 50 acres free to anyone who would lease 400 acres and agree to clear just 10 acres within the first five years. *The True American* (Trenton, NJ) 21 Apr 1801 & 26 May 1801.

¹⁴¹ Pittsburg, PA, the starting point for a journey down the Ohio and Mississippi rivers.

My father, Sir, you know very well, intended that what had passed should be no prejudice to my property as far as it could be helped. Now, when he gave me the farm at Northumberland he did then mean it wholly to myself, saying at the time, if I would live upon it I should have it, and he said upon another occasion that I had more than my brother or sister from him but it could not be helped. This was afterwards forgot, nor do I complain of it. He allowed by my settlement at Philadelphia by you and Mr Cooper that I might claim a third; but I had paid my brother Henry half the sum for $118\frac{1}{3}$ acres at 45 shillings¹⁴² per acre and was to have paid the rest in eighteen months. Besides, when my father gave me the farm he did not charge 183 dollars which I had lent in advance (except that the chair which I had sold my brother for 80 dollars was afterwards in my possession, which would make it about 100). Notwithstanding which, I am charged with work done on the place before I came to it, and have paid by this a good deal but I have burnt all my accounts and papers. However, that I did pay the money for half of 118 acres at 45 shillings, John Smith knows as my brother offered by him to give me back with interest if I would let him have the land again it would amount to 354 drs, 00 p.¹⁴³ This I mentioned to my brother when he was here with you in my room, but jointly with expenses I had been at in buildings that were necessary (but not mentioning it separately) but simply my ‘expenses’.

I thought he seemed rather hurt that I should mention it, for more than one reason; but he said simply that my father would be very glad to sell the place for what it was valued. You would oblige me, Sir, by representing this to my father. It would seem want of consideration in me were it not that Mr Cooper at the settlement told me that it was my father’s and brother’s wish that I should in that settlement overlook the past and make my claim without embarrassment, but (though desired at the time) I did not examine all the particulars of the statement, thinking it would appear ungenerous.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² The colloquial term ‘shilling’, denoted a dime, \$0.10.

¹⁴³ William has used the calculation: $\frac{2}{3} \times 118\frac{1}{3} \times 4.5 \text{ dollars} = \355.00

¹⁴⁴ In 1810, William still had \$1,034 owed him by his brother’s account book. He is the first of the twenty creditors listed, which include John Wilkinson’s heirs, Wm Russell in France and William Vaughan in England. Only Samuel Ryland in England (\$6,622) and John Wragg, superintendent of one of Joseph’s farms, (\$1,354) were owed more than William. PSUL, *Property inventory*, 21-2.

Sunday

What I have underlined above you need not mention as I have done it already; the rest I wish you would. Not that I should expect my father to pay it before it is entirely convenient to him. I have been this morning to see about my moving of a man in the neighbourhood but he was not at home. Nobody, however, can or will take me before harvest at any rate, as the grain must be got in.

You desired me to tell you my plan. It is the same that I told you, though since that time I was in the motion of going to Louisville¹⁴⁵ to keep a French school, I have had an invitation from a gentleman of that place; and I wished my brother to give me some information with regard to what books I should want for that and also [to] teach surveying, as I have nobody to consult with about it. And in that case I wished to know how I should get the balance of my account; but as he will not see me (though he promised to do it when I went, and since to my wife) I have given up the idea, as I cannot go to such a public place; or to Natches without knowing what was the report in Brown's paper and the *Aurora*,¹⁴⁶ which you promised to get me. I was afraid I pester'd you too much, seeing how busy you were, and did not ask you to buy me the books and copperplates necessary to teach school. The books in part I can get here except *Simpson's Geometry*, and *Gibson's Surveying*,¹⁴⁷ which I should be much obliged to you to send to Mr A's with the *Copperplates* for writing,¹⁴⁸ and a *small pair of globes* if they would not cost too much. My [brother] promised me in his letter which I received with yours enclosed [that] I should have the whole of the balance if I move as soon as I can, when my father can draw for Mrs R's legacy.¹⁴⁹ I hope, Sir, you will not think lightly of what I ask as it is a matter of importance. By the globes and those books I shall be able to get double to what I should otherwise.

¹⁴⁵ Louisville, KY, on the widest level of the Ohio.

¹⁴⁶ *The Philadelphia Gazette*, formerly the *Federal Gazette*, published by Andrew Brown and Samuel Relf; and *Aurora General Advertiser*, edited at Philadelphia by William 'Paddy' Duane.

¹⁴⁷ Thomas Simpson (1710-1761), *Elements of geometry* (1760). Robert Gibson (d. 1761), *A treatise of practical surveying* (Philadelphia, 1792); usually bound with John Robertson's *Mathematical* [trigonometric] *tables and tables of differences of latitude*.

¹⁴⁸ Copy-books for practising copper-plate writing.

¹⁴⁹ William is here referring to the £2000 left his father by Elizabeth Rayner, and which his father needs for the liquidity to pay William his due. William may not yet have heard that Mrs Rayner also left him a bequest in his own right.

My brother can pay you, as well as for the three pair of spectacle glasses¹⁵⁰ and microscope and saddlebag lock which I forgot.

With regard to your letter I must say that the person who told you must have considerably exaggerated the matter as I had only partaken of three pints of beer with the landlord, whom I requested to accompany me, and some Cyder royal¹⁵¹ with a German who offered me lodging at his house near Harrisburg, for which liquor I paid, but was obliged to open my fob¹⁵² to get some change under the notes, part of which dropt out. As I had eaten nothing and it was hot, I might have appeared more so than I was. However, Sir, I thank you that you have not entirely abandoned me. At present I am out of danger, and shall be after I have left here, as I shall be in constant employment.¹⁵³ I beg, Sir, you will be so good as not to forget those books and the globes. I shall not have an opportunity again of getting them, particularly the globes. Simpson's *Euclid*¹⁵⁴ would also be of service. I hope, Sir, you will accept my resolution, renewed and strengthened, and that I am gratefully and affectionately yours.

[PS] My plan is to settle first on the Conemaugh¹⁵⁵ till I get the balance of my account, which (my brother promises will be as soon as my father can draw [it]) I expect will be early enough in the fall, for me to move to Orleans or the neighbourhood, where I shall establish an Academy. Mr Cooper thinks I could do well by teaching French and English as a friend of his did. But Mr Dunbar thought I should do well if I could to teach some other branches if I had not forgot. As to going to the E.T.s, I have no idea of what he means.

[PPS] I wish, Sir, you would send me six flutes of Anthony's¹⁵⁶ and six German flute books. After French & Surveying I think from my ability

¹⁵⁰ William wore spectacles, perhaps for reading (Ruston, 117).

¹⁵¹ It was usual practice literally to share a glass or a jug; so saying he had 'three pints of beer with the landlord,' implies that William himself only drank one-and-a-half pints. Cyder-Royal, cider laced with one-fourth distilled cider-spirit, had been popular in America since Colonial times. A similar drink, 'stone-wall', was cider laced with rum.

¹⁵² A concealed pocket in a waist-band.

¹⁵³ The danger of the tavern, which might arise from having too much free time.

¹⁵⁴ Robert Simson's *Elements of Euclid*.

¹⁵⁵ Perhaps at Johnstown PA, on the Conemaugh river.

¹⁵⁶ Jacob Anthony, 1736-1804, was a turner and manufacturer of oboes and flutes at the 'sign of the flute and hautboy', Second Street, Philadelphia. (There is a boxwood oboe of his in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.)

that way, that it would be the most profitable. English grammars & Cyphering books¹⁵⁷ I can get at Pitsburg or here. I had like to have forgot the most important, viz. Nugent's French & English pocket Dictionary and half a dozen French grammars.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁷ CIPHERING books, or mathematics books, were used to teach arithmetical and accounting skills, and also geometric construction and projection for purposes such as basic navigation and surveying.

¹⁵⁸ Thomas Nugent, LL.D., 1700-1772, *A new pocket dictionary of the French and English languages*.

REVIEW ARTICLES

SENSIBLE BRITONS AND THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Anthony Page

Nigel Aston and Clarissa Campbell Orr, eds., *An Enlightenment statesman in Whig Britain: Lord Shelburne in context, 1737-1805*, Woodbridge, Boydell & Brewer, 2011; 288pp., ISBN 978-1843836308; £60.

Troy Bickham, *Making headlines: the American Revolution as seen through the British press*. DeKlab, IL, Northern Illinois University Press, 2009; 287pp., ISBN: 978-0-87580-393-7; £25.50/\$38.

H T Dickinson, ed., *British pamphlets on the American Revolution 1763-1785*, London, Pickering & Chatto, Part I: Volumes 1–4, 2007, 1760pp; ISBN 978 1 85196 886 2. £350.00/\$625.00; Part II: Volumes 5–8, 2008,; 1840pp., ISBN 978 1 85196 887 9; £350.00/\$625.00.

Eliga H Gould, *Among the powers of the Earth: the American Revolution and the making of a new world empire*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2012; 301pp., ISBN978-0-674-04608-5; £33.95/\$45.

Sarah Knott, *Sensibility and the American Revolution*. New Haven, University of North Carolina Press, 2009; xi + 338pp. ISBN 978-0-8078-5918-6; £22.50/ \$69.95.

John Sainsbury, *John Wilkes: the lives of a libertine*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2006; pp. xxiv + 282pp. ISBN 0-7546-5626-8; £55.

James Walvin, *The Zong: a massacre, the law and the end of slavery*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2011, xi + 248pp. ISBN 0300125550. £18.99/\$32.50.; kindle £12.47.

In terms of its impact on Britain, historians have long treated the American Revolution as the poor cousin of the French Revolution.

Following E P Thompson's Marxist emphasis on the 1790s as the start of *The making of the English working class* (1963), scholars have devoted enormous amounts of time and energy to studying British popular politics and intellectual developments in the last decade of the eighteenth century.¹ The American Revolution has traditionally attracted less attention outside American national historiography.

In British history, the American war has been studied mostly as a problem of high politics. British historians have written many fine studies of the complex politics of the 1760s through to the war of 1775-83.² While American historians have searched long and hard for long term social and economic causes of their revolution, British historians have tended to view the war as primarily a failure of politics. Ian Christie argued that 'the Revolution was a human tragedy, for which certain men were responsible, more particularly because, in Great Britain, the politicians who had the common sense and vision were out of power (owing to their own weakness and limitations) and those who were in power lacked the vision'.³ John Cannon has argued that Britain was little affected by the loss of America.⁴ Economic ties reconnected after 1783 and Britons moved on with their lives at the centre of an empire that was still strong in the West Indies and Canada, and expanding in the eastern hemisphere.

There have been some impressive studies of the impact of the American Revolution on British popular politics. H T Dickinson has written a number of influential studies of popular politics in the eighteenth century

¹ For one example among many, see the weighty tome by John Barrell, *Imagining the King's death: figurative treason, fantasies of regicide 1793-1796* (Oxford, 2000).

² The best short introduction to this scholarship is John Derry, 'Government Policy and the American Crisis 1760-1776', in H T Dickinson, *Britain and the American Revolution* (London & New York, 1998), 44-63; see also, John Derry, *English politics and the American Revolution* (London, 1976); the most detailed study is the trilogy by P D G Thomas, *British politics and the Stamp Act crisis 1763-1767* (Oxford, 1975); idem., *The Townshend Duties crisis: the second phase of the American Revolution 1767-1773* (Oxford, 1987); idem., *Tea Party to Independence: the third phase of the American Revolution, 1773-1776* (Oxford, 1991); Lewis Namier, *England in the age of the American Revolution* (London, 1963) should probably win the prize for greatest mismatch between title and content, as most of it focuses on the early 1760s.

³ I R Christie, *Crisis of empire: Great Britain and the American colonies 1754-1783* (London, 1966), 114.

⁴ John Cannon, 'The loss of America', in Dickinson, *Britain and the American Revolution*, 233-57.

and edited an important volume of essays on *Britain and the American Revolution* (1988). James E Bradley has analysed a wealth of empirical detail on Dissenting religion and political agitation during the American crisis.⁵ Eliga H Gould's *The persistence of empire: British political culture in the age of the American Revolution* (2000) has provided an insightful study of the strength of loyalism. While of high quality, however, the quantity of such studies has long been dwarfed by the 1790s industry.

In recent years, however, scholars have begun to emphasise the importance of the period before the French Revolution. The impact of war on the development of state and society in the middle decades of the eighteenth century is now attracting attention.⁶ In *The British Isles and the War of American Independence* (2000) Stephen Conway has detailed the significant impact the war had on state and society in Britain. In British history, according to Sarah Knott, 'where once the French Revolution, and its ricochets, was the fin-de-siècle story of transformation, now the years of the American war are the location of all manner of historical change.'⁷

Recent American scholarship tends to see the rebellion as a result of status anxiety. The American elite were politically active in local government, and becoming more prosperous and culturally British, but felt they were being treated as second-class Britons by an increasingly corrupt metropolitan political elite.⁸ Feeling themselves to be virtuous Britons, they resisted and eventually declared themselves independent from a perceived corrupt parliament. In the influential writings of Dror Wahrman, the conflict between colonies and parliament unsettled identities and helped cause a 'cultural revolution' in the late eighteenth century. In place of an *ancien régime* personhood that was moulded and malleable by Lockean external influences, he argues, there was a shift

⁵ James E Bradley, *Popular politics and the American Revolution in England: petitions, the crown and public opinion* (Cambridge, 1986); idem., *Religion, revolution and English radicalism: non-conformity in eighteenth-century politics and society* (Cambridge, 1990).

⁶ S Conway, *War, state and society in mid-eighteenth century Britain and Ireland* (Oxford, 2006).

⁷ Sarah Knott, 'Sensibility and the American War for Independence', *American Historical Review*, 109 (2004), p. 19.

⁸ See, for example, J P Greene, *Understanding the American Revolution* (Charlottesville, VA, 1995).

toward essentializing identities. People came to be defined as autonomous individual selves possessing innate qualities (such as race and gender) that predetermined and fixed their place in the natural order. The revolutionary era saw ‘the historical birth of that great ideological construct of modernity – the belief in the individual, centered subject with an essentialized, clearly demarcated, and always classifiable self’.⁹

* * * * *

The American War provoked much discussion in the British press and pamphlets. Years of debate over the political status of the North American colonies preceded the outbreak of war in 1775. In his ‘General Introduction’ to *British pamphlets on the American Revolution*, Harry Dickinson provides an admirably clear and concise assessment of how tensions rooted in Britain’s ‘imperial weakness’ led to ‘what should probably be regarded as a civil war’. While there were ‘many causes of the American Revolution, the principle ones were constitutional and ideological and these produced a wealth of printed material’.¹⁰ Opinion was divided on both sides of the Atlantic. While the majority of the British political nation supported coercion of the rebellious colonists, the American ‘Patriots’ had vocal supporters among radical Whigs and Dissenters in Britain. Thus the loyalist and pro-American pamphlets in Dickinson’s collection are roughly balanced in number. Alongside the detailed content of pamphlets, Troy Bickham’s *Making headlines: the American Revolution as seen through the British press* provides a valuable study of the changing nature of the war in the eyes of the British reading public. There was a widespread desire to avoid war, and many were torn between their support for the supremacy of parliament and dismay at the prospect, and unfolding reality, of civil war within the empire. While American opinion was radicalised to the point of broadly welcoming a Declaration of Independence, there remained a significant loyalist

⁹ Dror Wahrman, ‘On queen bees and being queens: a late-eighteenth-century cultural revolution?’, in Colin Jones and Dror Wahrman eds., *The age of cultural revolutions* (Berkeley, CA, 2002), 280; see also, idem., ‘The English problem of identity in the American Revolution’, *American Historical Review*, 106 (2001), 1236-62; idem., *The making of the modern self* (New Haven, 2004).

¹⁰ H T Dickinson, *British pamphlets on the American Revolution, 1763-1785* (8 vols., London, 2007-08), I, xii, ix.

element in the rebellious colonies; and British opinion was riven by anxious debate over how to settle the conflict as a soon as possible.¹¹

Study of British opinion during the American Revolution has arguably been distorted by an over emphasis on the views of pro-American Whig politicians and pamphlets.¹² Bickham joins scholars such as Dickinson, Linda Colley and Eliga Gould in turning our attention to the more popular loyalist responses.¹³ In contrast to the traditional focus on London newspapers, Bickham draws upon both metropolitan and provincial publications. Of the over 100 newspapers and magazines circulating in Britain, he has read through 41, including 14 London and 18 provincial newspapers (11-12). Drawing on recent scholarship on print culture and the commercialisation of politics, Bickham argues that by the late eighteenth century the large size of the market saw a decline in the influence of political purses over newspaper content.¹⁴ Newspapers were affordable for many of the lower orders and were commonly read by, or to, more than one person. While there was political influence and editorial bias, with particular newspapers taking an overtly partisan line, most newspapers were first and foremost business operations that sought to expand their market share by satisfying readers. He estimates that a third of the British population 'had regular access to printed news', and confesses: 'I began this study as an examination of state propaganda in the eighteenth century, but what I found was a relatively free press being driven by market forces' (10). In light of this Bickham argues that the press is the best source for assessing British public opinion during the War of Independence. 'The ramblings of a few members of Parliament or pamphlet authors', he declares, 'have too often been presented as the voice of the nation' (6).

¹¹ For an engaging recent study of the loyalists, see Maya Jasanoff, *Liberty's exiles: loyalists in the revolutionary world* (New York, 2011).

¹² See for example, Colin Bonwick, *English radicals and the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1977), Anthony Page, *John Jebb and the Enlightenment origins of British radicalism* (Westport, CN, 2003).

¹³ H T Dickinson, *The politics of the people in eighteenth-century Britain* (New York, 1994), 255-86; Linda Colley, *Britons: forging the nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven, 1992); Eliga H Gould, *The persistence of empire: British political culture in the age of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2000).

¹⁴ Among others see, Hannah Barker, *Newspapers, politics, and public opinion in late eighteenth-century England* (Oxford, 1998).

Printing of parliamentary speeches is nevertheless a good indicator of the increasing commercialisation of newspapers. As Peter Thomas observed long ago, ‘competition drove the newspapers to venture into the forbidden pastures of parliamentary reporting.’¹⁵ The ‘Wilkes and Liberty’ controversy saw newspapers start to defy the official ban on publishing speeches in 1768, using techniques such as reporting debates among unidentified people in a ‘Great Assembly’. Summoned to appear before the House of Commons in 1771, some printers revealed that when they failed to report debates they attracted complaints and lost readers. After that year prohibition of reporting was not enforced. While ‘competition produced fullness, variety and promptness’, according to Thomas, and ‘political bias in their compilation was rare’, accuracy had to wait until the ban on note-taking in the gallery was lifted in 1783.¹⁶ During the American War parliamentary proceedings were increasingly conducted in public view via the newspapers, marking a fundamental broadening of British politics that broke down the traditional distinction between popular culture and high politics.

Bickham’s book helps to correct the traditional American centric view of the war. It is made abundantly clear that the British press viewed the conflict in a global context. From the 1740s to 1815 Britain found itself repeatedly at war with a numerically superior France, and all political decisions and events were viewed in light of the ongoing Anglo-French struggle. ‘The American Revolution was perhaps the most nationally divisive event in Britain during the eighteenth century’, he argues, marking ‘the first time in modern history that a literate public sustained a major widespread critique of their government’s use of military force as a tool of policy’ (7). This arguably underestimates the amount of heated public discussion of foreign policy during the mid-century wars. Writing of the approximately 100 pamphlets published in 1743–44, Brendan Simms has observed that ‘there was never again to be quite such a sustained discussion of British foreign policy, until perhaps the closing stages of the Seven Years War.’¹⁷ The public sphere had nevertheless

¹⁵ P D G Thomas, ‘The beginnings of Parliamentary reporting in newspapers, 1768–1774’, *English Historical Review*, 74 (1959), 624.

¹⁶ Thomas, ‘The beginnings of Parliamentary reporting’, 632, 634; see also John Brewer, ‘Commercialization and politics’, in Neil McKendrick, John Brewer, and J H Plumb eds., *The birth of a consumer society: the commercialization of eighteenth-century England* (London, 1982), 260.

¹⁷ Brendan Simms, *Three victories and a defeat: the rise and fall of the first British Empire* (London, 2007), 315.

dramatically expanded by the 1770s, and Bickham is probably right to claim that the newspaper and periodical press are the best source for assessing British sentiment on the American war.

From the perspective of those living in Britain ‘The American War of Independence 1775-83’ was in effect two wars. Defeat at Saratoga in the autumn of 1777 effectively ended George III’s chances of winning a British-American Civil War. This encouraged France and Spain to enter the conflict and transform it into a British-Bourbon World War (March 1778–September 1783). The fighting in North America died down following the battle of Yorktown in October 1781, while 1782 saw the British press cheering Admiral Rodney’s victory at the Saints in the West Indies and the successful defence of long besieged Gibraltar. These victories did much to bolster Britain’s bargaining position in the peace negotiations. Gibraltar dominated the press in the summer of 1782: ‘Every paper churned out coverage of unparalleled intensity of the siege that included tables of land forces, estimates of enemy ships, accounts of dwindling supplies, tables of the British relief force, vivid descriptions of the fortifications and weaponry, and, of course, copious commentary.’¹⁸ Bickham’s book is an impressive piece of scholarship that provides an excellent guide to the nature and content of the British press during this pivotal crisis of empire.

If the newspapers and periodicals arguably give us the best sense of the contours of public opinion, pamphlets present us with various detailed arguments in the long debate over the British-American Civil War. Dickinson notes that scholars and students already have access to modern editions of many of the speeches and during this period. The various ‘speech acts’ of America’s Founding Fathers are sacred texts in modern America’s ‘civil religion’, and while many of them were republished in Britain, they are usually easily available in modern editions or online. Dickinson’s *British pamphlets on the American Revolution* concentrates on pamphlets by those living in Britain during the crisis. Given the large volume of pamphlets published, even a large collection must necessarily be selective. The most famous pamphlets, such as Samuel Johnson’s *Taxation no tyranny* (1775) and Richard Price’s *Observations on civil liberty* (1776) are absent from Dickinson’s eight volumes. This is explained thus: ‘The decision of what to select for reprinting in these volumes was guided by what is and is not readily available in modern

¹⁸ Bickham, *Making headlines*, 171.

editions' (vol I, lxxv). This is justifiable, but more could have been done to identify the important pamphlets that have been left out of this collection. Publication of Price's *Observations on civil liberty* is noted in a helpful chronology; and in the introduction to an anonymous *The pamphlet, entitled, 'Taxation no Tyranny', candidly considered* the reader is alerted to 'Dr. Samuel Johnston's celebrated pamphlet, *Taxation no Tyranny*', and the availability of 'an excellent edition' in Yale's *Works of Samuel Johnson* (vol III, 311-12). For students in particular, it would have been good to have a list at the start of this set of the most influential pamphlets that have not been included. Dickinson has worked to identify some authors, while others remain anonymous. Some authors such as Andrew Kippis, Capel Lofft and Joseph Priestley will be familiar to readers of this journal. Read alongside the more famous pamphlets, they provide an excellent guide to the range of views and impressive detail in which Britons debated the nature and significance of the American Revolution. The pamphlets are printed as facsimiles with helpful introductions by Dickinson. In a typically uncharitable review, J C D Clark has complained that access to electronic copies of primary sources, such as the *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, has rendered volumes such as these redundant.¹⁹ The degree to which Pickering & Chatto have sought to diversify their operation into publishing monographs in recent years indicates that there is an element of truth in this point. But it underrates the value of having pamphlets on a theme brought together in a set of volumes with introductions and notes.

The contents of *British pamphlets on the American Revolution* underline the degree to which this conflict was a civil war within Greater Britain.²⁰ One pamphlet in 1776 began: 'At a time when political disputes, between England and America, have involved the State in a civil war; it becomes the duty of every individual, to endeavour to elucidate, and reconcile the matters of public contention.'²¹ John Wilkes was one of those who sympathized with the American Patriots, declaring in 1771: 'As to the Americans, I declare I know no difference between an inhabitant of

¹⁹ J C D Clark, 'British pamphlets on the American Revolution', *English Historical Review*, 124 (2009), 184-89.

²⁰ D Armitage, 'Greater Britain: a Useful Category of Historical Analysis?', *American Historical Review*, 104 (1999), 427-45.

²¹ [O Hulme], *A plan of reconciliation between Great Britain and her colonies* (1776), in Dickinson, *British pamphlets*, IV, 161.

Boston in Lincolnshire, and Boston in New England.’²² In 1774 Joseph Priestley reminded his fellow Dissenters that ‘the old Puritans and Nonconformists’ always defended civil and religious liberty; and their own recent petition for relief from subscription to orthodox doctrine had been defeated by the ‘tricks and artifices of the court, and the influence of the bishops’. As for the Coercive Acts against Massachusetts:

The *pretence* for such outrageous proceedings, conducted with such indecent and unjust precipitation, is much too slight to account for them. The *true cause* of such violent animosity must have existed much earlier, and deeper. In short, it can be nothing but the Americans (particularly those in New-England) being chiefly *dissenters* and *whigs*. ... And can you suppose that those who are so violently hostile to the *offspring* of the English dissenters, should be friendly to the remains of the *parent stock*? (vol. III, pp. 3-5)

We know that in reality Lord North’s government was more Whig than Tory, and that its religious policy was conventional.²³ We also appreciate that the middle class Dissenters like Priestley and Richard Price advocated political reform within the existing constitution and stopped short of advocating republicanism or universal suffrage for Britain. But their rhetoric had a hard edge that could be alarming in an age of revolution. Not surprisingly, many of the champions of coercion of the rebellious Americans were Anglican clergymen.²⁴ Having asserted that the roots of the conflict lay in a Tory Anglican attack on American Whigs and Dissenters, Priestley continued:

Do not imagine, however, that what I have hitherto said is a preamble to a declaration of war, or that I wish you to take arms in defence of your liberties, as your brethren in America will probably be compelled to do (vol. III, p. 5).

²² Cited in Bickham, *Making headlines*, 4.

²³ G M Ditchfield, ‘Ecclesiastical Policy under Lord North’, in John Walsh, Colin Haydon and Stephen Taylor, eds., *The Church of England, c.1689-c.1833: from toleration to Tractarianism* (Cambridge, 1993), 228-46.

²⁴ P Langford, ‘Old Whigs, Old Tories, and the American Revolution’, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 8 (1980), 106-30; idem., ‘The English Clergy and the American Revolution,’ in E Hellmuth ed., *The transformation of political culture: England and Germany in the late eighteenth century* (Oxford & London, 1990), 275-308.

That he needed to make it clear he was not advocating an armed uprising in Britain says something about the polarising nature of debate over the American crisis.

If the American War became only one theatre in a British-Bourbon World War, the Founding Fathers of the USA also had an eye to the global stage. The origins of the revolutionary crisis 'lay in a series of British attempts to make Americans more accountable to the Crown's treaties in Europe'.²⁵ While the importance of the Franco-American alliance that Benjamin Franklin cultivated at Versailles has long been recognised, histories of the American Revolution have focused on developments within the Thirteen Colonies – in particular the evolution of republican and liberal political thought. In another fine study of this period, Eliga Gould shows how 'entangled' the creation of the USA was with international relations. 'Far more than liberalism or republicanism,' Gould argues,

the revolutionaries' emphasis on peace through treaty-worthiness explains why Americans ultimately opted for a national union that could represent 'one people' in the Declaration of Independence over a looser association among the people of different states', which is how the Union was envisioned under the Articles of Confederation.²⁶

To justify independence from the British parliament the American Patriots had to break with historical precedent and claim a universal natural right to establish self-government.²⁷ This raised questions about how social order could be organised, legitimated and preserved within a modern republic built around natural rights. But the creation of a new nation also required recognition of its status and place on this global map. Frontiers on both land and sea of this aspiring new nation were entangled with various established communities and empires. In the 'Model Treaty' John Adams drew up in 1776 the Congress laid claim to all of British North America, including modern Canada and Bermuda. At the birth of the USA the founding fathers 'imagined a nation that has never existed' (2). To a large extent, the founding documents of the USA were constructed with an eye to international relations, and the shape of the

²⁵ E H Gould, *Among the powers of the earth: the American Revolution and the making of a new world empire* (Cambridge, MA, 2012), 6.

²⁶ Gould, *Among the powers of the earth*, 11.

²⁷ David Armitage, *The Declaration of Independence: a global history* (Cambridge, MA, 2007).

USA was contingent on the actions of other political entities. 'In keeping with the ethnogenic myths that still shape the way historians usually write American history', Gould writes, 'we like to see the revolution as the moment when the American people ... began to make their own history. It would be more accurate to say that the revolution enabled Americans to make the history that other people were prepared to let them make' (13).

'Many things have been operating towards a gradual change in our principles', Edmund Burke told the Sheriffs of Bristol in April 1777. 'But this American war has done more in a very few years than all the other causes have effected in a century'.²⁸ Later that year he declared that 'it is this very rage for equality, which had blown up the Flames of this present cursed War in America'.²⁹ While constitutional and natural rights arguments were to the fore in the clash between Parliament and Patriots, there were also other values and cultural changes in play. In *Sensibility and the American Revolution*, Sarah Knott argues that sensibility was at the heart of a cultural revolution that accompanied the transformation from colonies to United States. Sensibility was a notable Enlightenment value rooted in the philosophies of Locke and Shaftesbury, popularised by *The Spectator* and countless other texts, and became a defining feature of European manners.³⁰ It was given a significant boost and intensification by the popularity of Rousseau's works in the 1760s.³¹ Knott defines 'sensibility as a distinctive *mode of self*' in which 'cognition and emotion were understood as necessarily entwined and bound together', and 'the sensible self was simultaneously made and expressed in social interaction by sensations of sympathy and fellow feeling, what I term the socially turned self' (5). Focusing on Philadelphia, the metropolitan heart of the revolution, Knott shows how sensibility was popularised in the colonies via transatlantic links in the book trade and the medical profession. Book sellers imported sentimental novels and physicians promoted new ideas about the nervous system and sensible self. In the maelstrom of revolution and the debates over the new constitution in the 1780s, sensibility was

²⁸ Edmund Burke, *On empire, liberty and reform: speeches and letters*, ed. David Bromwich (New Haven, CT, 2000), 182.

²⁹ Cited in Wahrman, *Making of the modern self*, 236.

³⁰ John Brewer, *Pleasures of the imagination* (Chicago, 1997); Lawrence E Klein, 'Liberty, manners, and politeness in early eighteenth-century England', *Historical Journal*, 32 (1989), 583-605; Paul Langford, *Englishness identified: manners and character, 1650-1850* (Oxford, 2000).

³¹ Edward Duffy, *Rousseau in England* (Berkeley, CA, 1979).

seen as a quality that could help unite the new rights based republic. 'Social renovation and self-transformation were branded with America's name' before the French Revolution, Knott claims: 'nowhere were "new" selves and a "new" society so urgently re-imagined together; nowhere was sensibility endowed with such dizzying optimism as in the American Revolution' (4). Knott challenges the view that the War of Independence was only a political revolution. 'The American Revolution emerges as in part an attempt at social revolution, and sensibility as among its constituent practices,' she argues. 'It thus appears both more like the French Revolution and more distinct. French revolutionaries attempted to use the state to remake society. American revolutionaries sought, with greater suspicion of the state, to use society to remake itself' (20-21).

As a leading Philadelphia physician and promoter of a science of sensibility, Benjamin Rush is prominent in this view of the revolution. Along with metaphorical talk of the body politic, Rush and his fellow Patriot physicians worried about the negative health effects of consumer goods imported from Britain. 'Nervous diseases', it was claimed, had spread in the colonies along with 'luxury', and imported tea became a focus of complaint. In 1773 Rush declared he never saw anyone who drank tea 'freely ... not rendered a weak, effeminate, and creeping valetudinarian for life' (93). In place of the imported stuff he advocated home-grown herbal teas as better for the constitutions of his fellow citizens. Following the end of the war, Knott argues,

suddenly, widely, sensibility was promoted in newspapers public orations, and formal debate. It was expressed in patriotic celebrations on the streets. Sensibility was the word on many lips, and the sentimental was all the rage. The effect of so much talk, and the determination of a few key spokesmen like Benjamin Rush, was the crystalization of an American sentimental project (195).

Rush is centre stage as the author of 'a manifesto of sensibility' (204), in the form of his widely read *An oration, delivered before the American Philosophical Society. Held in Philadelphia on the 27th of February, 1786; containing an enquiry into the influence of physical causes upon the moral faculty* (Philadelphia, 1786). The materialist aspect of Rush's medical moral science was not uncontroversial and provoked some ridicule. But this text was, Knott argues, central to a broad discussion about how to make citizens and the society of the new republic healthy

and virtuous. While a slave owner himself, Rush became an ardent abolitionist and envisaged some emancipated slaves becoming citizens, but denied political participation to women based on their physiology. The sensible USA was to be a republic of male citizens with women put in their domestic place.

Considering the important role Knott accords doctors, it is striking that she does not mention David Hartley, the English physician and philosopher. The profound influence of his *Observations on man* (1749) on British radicals such as Joseph Priestley and John Jebb is now well recognised.³² Late in life Benjamin Rush asked Thomas Jefferson:

Have you found leisure to look into Dr. Hartley's *Observations upon the Frame, Duties, and Expectations of Man* since your retirement to Monticello? I envy the age in which that book will be relished and believed, for it has unfortunately appeared a century or two before the world is prepared for it ... Its illustrious author has established an indissoluble union between physiology, metaphysics, and Christianity. He has so disposed them that they mutually afford not only support but beauty and splendour to each other.³³

In a lecture 'On the Application of Metaphysicks to Medicine' delivered at the University of Pennsylvania in 1794, Rush told students that it was from Hartley's book that 'I derived my system of physiology ... It has like Hershel's telescope opened new discoveries to our senses, & greatly extended our knowledge of the moral & theological as well as the mental and physical worlds'.³⁴ As Donald D'Elia has observed, it was Hartley's system that Rush developed into 'a revolutionary social, moral, and religious philosophy for what he believed to be the world's first Christian republican civilization in America'.³⁵ The neglect of Hartley's influence reflects Knott's tendency to emphasise the secular and American dimension of innovations.

³² Richard C Allen, *David Hartley on human nature* (Albany, NY, 1999); Page, *John Jebb*, 77-103; Anthony Page, 'David Hartley on Human Nature', *Enlightenment and Dissent*, 20 (2001), 126-38; R K Webb, 'Perspectives on David Hartley', *Enlightenment and Dissent*, 17 (1998), 17-47.

³³ Benjamin Rush to Thomas Jefferson, 2 January 1811, cited in Allen, *David Hartley*, 1.

³⁴ Cited in Donald J D'Elia, 'Benjamin Rush, David Hartley, and the revolutionary uses of psychology', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 114 (1970), 110-11.

³⁵ D'Elia, 'Benjamin Rush, David Hartley, and the revolutionary uses of psychology', 110.

As the French Revolution radicalised along Rousseauian lines in the early 1790s, Knott argues, a conservative backlash developed against sensibility in America – with the English migrant William Cobbett leading the charge. While in Britain Edmund Burke drew on refined sentiment to aid his attack on the enthusiasm of the French Revolutionaries, Cobbett used plain language and ridicule to make people laugh at Democrat men of feeling, with their ‘squeezing, and hugging, and kissing one another’ (278). Knott depicts the 1790s ‘backlash’ as a ‘complex of processes’. While ‘sensibility continued to be familiar and appealing’, it also became ‘an object of deliberate critique, the focus of explicit scorn and rejection’ (266-67).

Knott’s is a largely secular interpretation of the American Revolution, and does not engage in any detail with the important religious dimensions of the conflict.³⁶ ‘Evangelical’ and ‘Great Awakening’ are absent from the index. Knott does argue that the ‘perfectibilism’ of ‘sensibilist moral science’ had a broad appeal in part because the strength of the Dissenting tradition ‘made American millennialism mainstream’. In contrast, ‘the handful of millennialist intellectuals on the British scene (Price, Priestley and company) were outside the establishment and on the national margins’ (262). This underestimates the influence of Rational Dissenters and the broad appeal of millennialism in Britain during the age of revolutions.³⁷ Given this, it is not surprising that Knott does not appear to have read the correspondence between Rush and Richard Price. Price thanked Rush for a copy of his *Oration*, and declared that its central thesis:

cannot be deny’d. You have strongly illustrated it; and a due attention to it would teach us more candour and charity to one another than we are apt to entertain. I am persuaded that the irregularities which shock us in the characters and conduct of some men not thought to be insane, ought to be ascribed to a

³⁶ J C D Clark, *The language of liberty* (Cambridge, 1993); idem., ‘The American Revolution: a war of religion?’, *History Today*, 39:12 (1989), 10-16.

³⁷ See for example, Knud Haakonssen ed., *Enlightenment and religion: Rational Dissent in eighteenth-century Britain* (Cambridge, 1996); James K Hopkins, *A woman to deliver her people: Joanna Southcott and English millenarianism in an era of revolution* (Austin, TX, 1982); Deborah Maden, ‘The religious politics of prophecy: Or, Richard Brothers’s *Revealed Knowledge* confuted’, *History of European Ideas*, 34 (2008), 270-84.

derangement of this kind, in the intellectual and consequently in the moral faculties, produced by bodily disorders and physical causes.³⁸

Price's *Observations on the importance of the American Revolution* (1784) was widely read and he anxiously commented on the evolving constitution in letters to his American correspondents.³⁹ Price told Rush:

All that is valuable to the states depends on a just settlement of the federal government. A jealousy of power is necessary to check the tendency of all government to despotism; but it may be carried so far as to defeat its own end and to introduce evils equal to those of despotism.⁴⁰

He worried about potential anarchy in the USA. Rush replied that some were secretly suggesting the formation of three confederacies (of the northern, middle and southern states) rather than a single union. In line with the thrust of Gould's *Among the powers of the earth*, Price warned that:

I dread the thought of such a division of the States into three independent confederacies as you say has been thought of ... At present, the power of Congress is, in Europe an object of derision rather than respect. It has not been able even to prevent an infraction of that treaty of peace to which the United States owe the final establishment of their independence. What encouragement then, is there to enter into a commercial treaty with it? This, I know, is a consideration that influences our ministry.⁴¹

Price was probably referring to the failure to compensate Loyalists, despite the 1783 treaty declaring Congress would 'earnestly recommend'

³⁸ Richard Price to Benjamin Rush, 30 July 1786, in W Bernard Peach ed., *The correspondence of Richard Price, volume III: February 1786-February 1791* (Durham, NC and Cardiff, 1994), 54.

³⁹ D O Thomas, *The honest mind: the thought and work of Richard Price* (Oxford, 1977), 281-83.

⁴⁰ Richard Price to Benjamin Rush, 30 July 1786, in *The correspondence of Richard Price, volume III*, 57.

⁴¹ Richard Price to Benjamin Rush, 26 January 1787, in *The correspondence of Richard Price, volume III*, 115. The British had refused to withdraw from some forts around the Great Lakes frontier. Price is not mentioned in Gould's *Among the powers of the earth*.

the American states address their grievances.⁴² While Price the moral philosopher recognised the importance of sympathy and sensibility, constitutional nuts and bolts and the future of religious liberty were foremost in the mind of this influential advisor to the Americans.

The question of how revolutionary the American Revolution was has long been debated.⁴³ As usual with postmodern scholarship, Knott's book is a complicated tale of identity issues, class, race and gender tensions, and complex readings of a series of case studies. Her book is nevertheless an impressive attempt to weave political and cultural history together. She writes well and it is clear that sensibility was an important component of the patriotism of the emerging republic. Its revolutionary nature, however, is probably overstated. An important part of Knott's thesis is the claim that differing trajectories of sensibility in Britain and America in the 1780s saw 'the beginning of cultural bifurcation' (184). While sensibility was being promoted by the likes of Rush as an essential part of the republican project, 'in Britain sensibility was coming to be seen, not as potentially, but as *inherently* inadequate or problematic' (261). This is questionable. Fashionable and shallow sentimentalism was undoubtedly becoming the subject of caricature and ridicule, but sensibility remained an important element in British culture in the years after the American War. It played a role in the rise of antislavery.⁴⁴ Aside from Burke's use of it in forging British conservatism, British sensibility also morphed into secular romanticism and 'from the fusion of Evangelicalism with sensibility would emerge the flood of reform organizations centred on a middle-class female constituency'.⁴⁵ Knott ends her book positioning it in relation to the work of a friend:

⁴² Gould, *Among the powers of the earth*, 127-29. Price's friend Andrew Kippis observed that the Loyalists were 'undoubtedly an object of great commiseration', but argued that the Congress could do no more than recommend compensation because 'each particular state in America is sovereign and supreme in itself'. He concluded that if they were to be compensated it must be by parliament as 'it was in the cause of Great Britain that they acted'. [Kippis], *Considerations on a provisional treaty with America* (1783), in Dickinson, *British pamphlets on the American Revolution*, VIII, 226-27, 234.

⁴³ Gwenda Morgan, *The debate on the American Revolution* (Manchester, 2007).

⁴⁴ Brycchan Carey, *British abolitionism and the rhetoric of sensibility: writing, sentiment, and slavery, 1760-1807* (Basingstoke, 2005).

⁴⁵ G J Barker-Benfield, 'Sensibility', in Iain McCalman, ed., *An Oxford companion to the Romantic Age* (Oxford, 1999), 113.

The shift to post-Lockean, interior, and romantic models of self was thoroughly under way in Britain and in France before 1800. Wahrman's account – the most culturally capacious – puts the change in England with the American war. The implication of the present study is that it may be exactly a measure of the extraordinary American commitment to sensibility – built on the broad base of Lockean-style malleable self – that the United States lagged behind.⁴⁶

While her (and Wahrman's) impressive efforts to clearly locate and periodise shifts in amorphous cultural values are debatable, Knott's book is nevertheless an important contribution to the history of the revolutionary era and will stimulate further research and debate.

* * * * *

Aspects of the culture of sensibility in Britain during this period are well illustrated by the lives of John Wilkes and Lord Shelburne. James Boswell once exclaimed, 'I have discovered that we may be in some degree whatever character we choose'.⁴⁷ Boswell's fascination with how he could be a different person in different situations – discoursing with Dr Johnson after church compared to being with a prostitute in an alley – is used by Wahrman to illustrate his concept of an *ancien régime* of identity. John Wilkes is another good example – a man who appeared in very different guises in different environments.

The cause of 'Wilkes and Liberty' in the 1760s has long been seen as marking a significant moment in the evolution of British popular politics. The attempt to prosecute him for committing seditious libel in *The North Briton* resulted in an end to the use of arrest by general warrant; and efforts to exclude him from parliament saw 'Wilkes and Liberty' become an organised campaign for political reform and established the right of newspapers to publish parliamentary speeches. In the words of Peter Thomas, 'after Wilkes British politics would never be the same again: his

⁴⁶ Knott, *Sensibility and the American Revolution*, 327. Knott is a lecturer at the University of Indiana where she is a member of the Center for Eighteenth-Century Studies directed by Dror Wahrman, and she thanks him as both friend and colleague in the acknowledgements.

⁴⁷ Cited in Wahrman, *Making of the modern self*, 169.

career permanently widened the political dimension beyond the closed world of Westminster, Whitehall, and Windsor'.⁴⁸

It might sound surprising in light of his status as a rake and political radical, but John Wilkes was in some ways a man of sensibility. With Wilkes's influential political career having been well covered by other scholars, Sainsbury's *John Wilkes: the lives of a libertine* explores the various aspects of this English politician's personal life. Sainsbury provides a short sketch of his political achievements in the introduction and then proceeds to analyze Wilkes's life in chapters titled: family, ambition, sex, religion, class and money. This is a book that discusses Wilkes's attitude toward sex rather than Scotland.

Wilkes was an ambitious man who very much enjoyed a good time. Early in his career he tried to get ahead through the conventional means of serving the Whig establishment. In the early years of George III's reign Wilkes moved into opposition with William Pitt and other leading Whigs – but even then it was rumoured that he asked to be made governor of Canada. According to Sainsbury: 'The question of his motive is a complicated one, because Wilkes always combined an unwavering belief in his own political rectitude with an eye for the main chance. What is clear, though, is that Wilkes's attachment to aristocracy was unshaken by the triumph of Lord Bute' (59). *The North Briton* was first and foremost a champion of the ousted old Whig aristocrats. After more than a decade as a champion of reform, Wilkes was already backing away from radicalism when he secured the lucrative post of City chamberlain in 1779.

One of many tensions in Wilkes's life was that between his domestic and libertine activities. Wilkes had a close relationship with his daughter 'Polly' that took on 'many of the features of the ideal companionate marriage'; and he did what he could to shield her from his rakish behaviour. He was a 'sentimental father' – once sending her a copy of Goethe's *Sorrows of young Werther* (29-30). Polly was an admired hostess during his extravagant stint as Mayor of London. When Wilkes died, the *European Magazine* observed:

With a variety of mental qualifications, Wilkes was reckoned one of the politest men of his time; and, very much to his credit,

⁴⁸ Peter D G Thomas, 'Wilkes, John (1725–1797)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2008; see also idem., *John Wilkes: a friend to liberty* (Oxford, 1996).

this politeness, mixed with a sincere affection, he shewed to his daughter upon all occasions ... Those who knew him most intimately have observed, that the topics of conversation which he introduced in her presence were of the *best* kind, and that he always spoke his *best* upon those occasions.⁴⁹

Sainsbury subjects Wilkes's libertine writings to detailed analysis. In doing so this biography joins Boswell's journals in shedding light on the sexual attitudes of some eighteenth-century gentlemen. Pages discussing the misogynist sexual boasts of Wilkes and his friends are not pleasant reading, but provide an insight into the rakish behaviour the culture of sensibility sought to criticise and curb.

The second earl of Shelburne (from 1784 Marquess of Lansdowne) was a model of polite sensibility – featuring along with his first wife, Sophia Carteret, in Amanda Vickery's BBC documentary *At home with the Georgians* (2011).⁵⁰ If Wilkes's many guises enabled him to play politics with flair, Shelburne's failures as a politician seem rooted in his lordly manor. Shelburne was a self-consciously enlightened politician who had a long career, including a brief stint as prime minister 1782-83. He gathered intellectuals around him at his Bowood estate, and while this has ensured Shelburne appears in many pages of history he has yet to be the subject of a detailed and comprehensive modern biography – owing in part to difficulties in accessing his manuscripts. *An Enlightenment statesman in Whig Britain: Lord Shelburne in context, 1737-1805* is a fine edited collection of essays based on detailed archival work that goes a long way to remedying that deficiency. The essays are uniformly of a high standard and are divided into three parts: 'Family, piety and finance', 'Politics', and 'The Bowood circle revisited'. The essays grew out of a symposium held at Bowood in memory of Derek Jarrett, who placed Shelburne and his circle at the centre of his engaging *The begetters of revolution: England's involvement with France, 1759-1789* (1973).

We learn a lot about both Shelburne and his context in this volume. It is an impressive combination of old and new style scholarship. Shelburne was an independent Whig who had trouble working with people. Frank O'Gorman writes of his 'curious ability to offend and alarm many of his

⁴⁹ *European Magazine*, 33 (1798), 229, cited in Sainsbury, *Wilkes*, 30.

⁵⁰ Lawrence E Klein, 'Sociability, politeness and aristocratic self-formation in the life of the second earl of Shelburne', *Historical Journal*, 55 (2012), 653-77; Amanda Vickery, *Behind closed doors: at home in Georgian England* (2009), 145-56.

contemporaries', he was 'no instinctive team player and came to share Pitt's horror of parties'.⁵¹ In a typically sparkling essay, John Cannon casts a critical eye over Shelbourne's brief ministry. The prime minister had developed, 'rightly or wrongly, a reputation for insincerity and hypocrisy unsurpassed in a not unduly high-minded period', and he 'adopted toward the lower house a lofty and somewhat disdainful attitude, which was strangely outmoded and warped his judgement'. Civil servants found him a difficult man to work for, with the secretary to the Treasury, George Rose, wishing 'never to be in a room with him again while in existence'.⁵²

If Shelbourne was largely a failure as a politician, he was more successful as a promoter of Enlightenment. Grayson Ditchfield demonstrates that Shelbourne was a latitudinarian Anglican, who under the influence of Enlightenment 'espoused a non-dogmatic Protestantism'.⁵³ Following the work of Elaine Chalus, who has revealed the political importance of aristocratic women, Clarissa Campbell Orr provides a detailed discussion of Shelbourne's family and aristocratic connections, with an emphasis on the role of aunts, such as the formidable Lady Arabella Denny, as matchmakers, guides and advisers. In addition to fostering polite sensibility, the ladies of Bowood provided multiple links back to Shelbourne's Irish origin – which was 'never far away, through the continuity of his beloved aunt's long life, or the Irish dimension to both of his wives'.⁵⁴ This is explored by Martyn Powell, whose essay shows how Shelbourne travelled to Ireland several times and worked at improving his estates – earning praise from Arthur Young.⁵⁵ In contrast to his happy marriages, Nigel Aston notes how 'relations with his closest male family members were often awkward and strained' with 'multiple misunderstandings'.⁵⁶ Shelbourne and his younger brother Thomas

⁵¹ Frank O'Gorman, 'Shelbourne: a Chathamite in opposition and in government 1760-82', in Nigel Aston and Clarissa Campbell Orr eds., *An Enlightenment statesman in Whig Britain: Lord Shelbourne in context, 1737-1805* (Woodbridge, 2011), 118, 121.

⁵² John Cannon, 'Lord Shelbourne's ministry, 1782-3: "a very good list"', in Aston and Campbell Orr eds., *Enlightenment statesman*, 162, 172.

⁵³ G M Ditchfield, 'A Christian Whig: Lord Shelbourne and the latitudinarian tradition', in Aston and Campbell Orr, *Enlightenment statesman*, 96.

⁵⁴ Clarissa Campbell Orr, 'Aunts, wives, courtiers: the ladies of Bowood', in Aston and Campbell Orr eds., *Enlightenment statesman*, 78.

⁵⁵ Martyn Powell, 'Shelbourne and Ireland: politician, patriot and absentee', in Aston and Campbell Orr eds., *Enlightenment statesman*, 56.

⁵⁶ Nigel Aston, 'Petty and Fitzmaurice: Lord Shelbourne and his brother', in Aston and Campbell Orr eds., *Enlightenment statesman*, 29.

Fitzmaurice clashed over issues of inheritance and politics, and Aston analyses them as taking two different Anglo-Irish paths toward integration with the British elite – one the Enlightened national politician, the other developing estate and business interests in North Wales.

If Bowood's greatest historical role was in fostering Enlightenment intellectual connections, Shelburne's liberal ideas on commerce and empire did have some direct political impact. While criticism of the treaty helped bring down his government, arguably Shelburne's greatest political achievement was in forging the best peace possible in 1782. Shelburne persisted as long as possible in hoping the thirteen colonies would return to the imperial fold. Realising it was impossible by mid-1782, he decided to make a liberal peace in order to reactivate economic and social ties as soon as possible. With an eye to the impact of the rising Eastern powers on the European balance of power, Shelburne was keen to conclude a cordial compromise peace with France, personally conducting important parts of the negotiation with the French envoy, Rayneval, whom he entertained at Bowood. If many British politicians joined David Hartley in considering Shelburne 'a palaverer beyond description', the French were impressed by his politeness and desire for peace (192). 'Mutual trust and confidence was of critical importance', Stockley notes (185). Aware that once parliament returned a change of ministry might prolong the war, the French foreign minister, Vergennes, encouraged the Spanish to join in concluding a peace in which, aside from the independence of the USA, neither France or Britain had substantial gains or losses. Though he criticised the treaty as a sell-out while bringing down Shelburne's government, Charles James Fox ended up 'agreeing to definitive treaties virtually identical to the terms Shelburne had concluded' (194). Shelburne's enlightened ideas and polite sensibility helped Britain negotiate a peace far better than most had anticipated before 1782.

Sensibility was an important impulse in the British anti-slavery movement that burst forth in the 1780s. Aside from the occasional criticism, slavery was a largely unchallenged pillar of the British Empire until the late eighteenth century. The City of London had many investment links to colonial slavery and the slave trade. This probably explains the quietness of many London based political actors such as Wilkes on this subject – a man who was primarily a champion of the

rights of *English men* on both sides of the Atlantic.⁵⁷ Interestingly, the enlightened Lord Shelburne's interest in progressive reform movements does not seem to have extended to the campaign against the slave trade. This probably reflects the fact that he had many political and financial links to the City of London. His political ally in the City in the 1760s, William Beckford, was a wealthy West India merchant. With the campaign to abolish the slave trade peaking in 1792, via one of his pocket boroughs Shelburne sent Benjamin Vaughan to parliament – member of the West India Committee and a slave owning family of Rational Dissenters (and friend of Price and Priestley).⁵⁸ As John Orbell observes in his essay on Shelburne and Francis Baring, his close friend and banker, the finances of an aristocrat are by no means easy to analyse. Baring spent years trying to sort out Shelburne's tangled finances and 'monstrous' debts.⁵⁹ It is hard to think Shelburne would not have had some investment in the West India trade given its importance in the imperial economy. At the very least, his extensive investments and debts entangled him in the City financial system that underpinned the West India trade. And it is worth noting that like many aristocrats his first wife, Sophia, had a black servant.⁶⁰ Shelburne does not appear to have spoken in parliament on the issue of slave trade abolition, and the only reference to West Indian slavery in *Enlightenment Statesmen* is during a discussion of Shelburne's attitude toward Irish independence. In 1798 he declared 'the mass of the nation incapable of it; you may as well give independence to the slaves on a Jamaica estate'.⁶¹ On its own, sensibility was clearly not enough to foster opposition to the slave trade.

It has long been thought that the impact of the American War of Independence had something to do with causing the end of the British slave trade in 1807. Eric Williams, a West Indian Marxist, influentially argued that the disruptions caused by this war began a decline in the

⁵⁷ There is no discussion of race and slavery in Sainsbury's *Wilkes*.

⁵⁸ Anthony Page, "'A species of slavery': Richard Price's Rational dissent and antislavery", *Slavery & Abolition*, 32 (2011), 57; idem., 'Rational Dissent, Enlightenment, and abolition of the British slave trade', *Historical Journal*, 54 (2011), 741-72.

⁵⁹ John Orbell, 'Lord Shelburne, Finance, and Sir Francis Baring', in Aston and Campbell Orr, *Enlightenment statesman*, 111.

⁶⁰ Aston and Campbell Orr, *Enlightenment statesman*, 21.

⁶¹ Shelburne to Coutts, 1 August 1798, cited in Powell, 'Shelburne and Ireland', in Aston and Campbell Orr eds., *Enlightenment statesman*, 155.

economic power and political influence of British slave traders. After decades of detailed research and debate over the ‘Williams thesis’, most historians reject the idea that economic decline led to abolition of the slave trade in 1807. The numbers show that the slave trade boomed in the decades after 1783 and trade with the West Indies remained a significant portion of British imperial commerce down to the eve of abolition.⁶²

The end of the British slave trade in 1807 owed much to a change of sentiment among Britons in the wake of the American war.⁶³ A range of Enlightenment and Evangelical values fed into debate about the nature of the British Empire, and after Thomas Clarkson and some Quakers established an Abolition Society in 1787, a popular campaign against the slave trade spread throughout the nation.⁶⁴ In *The Zong: a massacre, the law and the end of slavery*, James Walvin has written probably the best introduction to the subject of Britain’s slave trade and the origins of abolition. One of the pioneers of the field, he wears a vast amount of scholarship lightly in a page-turner of a book. In exploring the context of an historically important incident, Walvin provides a masterly survey of the role of Liverpool, life on slave ships, the legal and financial dimensions of the trade, and the origins of abolitionism.

In March 1783 Gustavus Vassa (who later published under the name Olaudah Equiano) brought the legal dispute over insurance of the slave ship *Zong* to the attention of Granville Sharp. The ship had accidentally sailed past Jamaica while running very low on water; 132 slaves were thrown overboard, it was claimed, in order to ensure the survival of the crew and remaining slaves. The Liverpool owners of the *Zong*, Gregson & Co., tried to claim insurance for their lost cargo. According to insurance law, if slaves died naturally on a ship the owners had to bear the cost, but Gregson & Co. argued the slaves were thrown overboard out of necessity, in which case the underwriters must pay. The insurers lost the case in March 1783 and appealed before Lord Mansfield for a retrial. ‘Though it shocks one very much’, Mansfield observed, ‘the case of slaves was the same as if horses had been thrown overboard’ (153). Upon a technicality he ordered a retrial – but there is no record it occurred. It was a complex and confusing case, not least because the sole courtroom witness seems

⁶² Seymour Drescher, *Econocide: British slavery in the era of abolition* (2nd edn., Chapel Hill, NC, 2010).

⁶³ Christopher L Brown, *Moral capital* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2006).

⁶⁴ Roger Anstey, *The Atlantic slave trade and British abolition* (London, 1975); Seymour Drescher, *Capitalism and antislavery* (Oxford, 1987); J R Oldfield, *Popular politics and British anti-slavery* (Manchester, 1995).

to have been an inveterate liar, but Walvin does his best to identify facts, highlight uncertainties and suggest plausible explanations. The *Zong* case made little difference in itself: those Africans not killed at sea were enslaved in the fields and houses of Jamaica, and Gregson & Co. continued to trade. In the three decades following 1780 British traders shipped nearly one million Africans into slavery in the Americas (179).

The *Zong* case was little mentioned in the newspapers. This is not surprising in light of Bickham's study of the press during the American war. There was much discussion of the rights and wrongs of using Native American allies and German soldiers against the American Patriots. But there was little mention of the fact that generals offered freedom to slaves owned by rebels and employed them in the British army. Given the importance of slavery within the British Empire, siding with slaves against their masters was a sensitive issue for most British politicians.⁶⁵ As Walvin notes, while the technicalities of the *Zong* case were unusual, throwing slaves overboard was far from shocking for those working in the trade – it was standard operating procedure. Thus Gregson & Co. appear to have had no fear of going to court and making the case public. As the former slave ship captain, John Newton, observed: 'It was a business with a tendency to efface the moral sense, to rob the heart of every gentle and humane disposition, and to harden it, like steel, against all impression of sensibility.'⁶⁶

Though not widely reported at the time, 'once the *Zong* story became public in March 1783, the grisly details about the slave trade seeped from the courtroom into the public sphere' (176). There is no formal record of the first trial. There was a letter to one newspaper by a shocked observer who noted that 'the narrative seemed to make every person present shudder', and wished that 'some man of feeling and genius' would use poetic language to depict the scene in which some 'English barbarians' committed 'flagrant acts of villainy with impunity'.⁶⁷ Most of our knowledge of the case comes from a transcript made by Granville Sharp of the appeal proceedings. John Lee, the Solicitor General and a strong supporter for the Essex Street Unitarian chapel, appeared for the owners – at one point glaring at Sharp, who, he claimed, 'intended to bring a criminal prosecution for murder against the parties concerned' (148).

⁶⁵ Bickham, *Making headlines*, 212-14.

⁶⁶ Cited in Walvin, *Zong*, 45.

⁶⁷ *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 18 March 1783.

Among the lawyers for the insurers, the Rational Dissenter Samuel Heywood declared they ‘appear as Council for millions of Mankind and the Cause of Humanity in general’.⁶⁸ According to Walvin, ‘some of their arguments were more profound than almost any other contemporary discussions about the slave trade’ (148). Sharp busied himself spreading the news and made sure that leading politicians and bishops became aware of the case. The *Zong* was held up as an indictment of the slave trade in important abolitionist tracts by the likes of James Ramsay, Ottobah Cugoana, Thomas Cooper and Thomas Clarkson. In doing so they appealed, along with ideas of natural rights and national sinfulness, to the self-conscious sensibility of their fellow Britons.

The British-American Civil War ushered in an age of revolution. In his dictionary Dr Johnson defined sensibility as ‘quickness of sensation’ or ‘quickness of perception’. George III was arguably a blunt talker and thinker.⁶⁹ Had he more sensibility, conciliation between Patriots and Parliament might have occurred. With American independence avoided, the thirteen colonies might have developed along similar lines to Canada and Australia. But war broke out, lives were destroyed and Britain was impacted in various ways. The nature of liberty and empire was much debated, and the campaign against the slave trade that emerged in the 1780s had a widespread impact. If some of the policies of George III and his ministers were not very sensible, Britons were very sensible to the issues and outcomes of the American Revolution.

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⁶⁸ Cited in Walvin, *Zong*, 147.

⁶⁹ The best biography is Jeremy Black, *George III: America's last king* (New Haven, CT, 2006).

PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION IN ENLIGHTENMENT BRITAIN

Alan P F Sell

Ruth Savage, ed., *Philosophy and religion in Enlightenment Britain: new case studies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, pp. x + 289; ISBN 978-0-19-922704-4; £40.00.

Ruth Savage here assembles an international team of scholars, each of whom contributes a paper on the intellectual history of the long eighteenth century. The overall purpose of the volume is to honour Professor Emeritus M A Stewart, from whose text-based studies with their meticulous attention to detail many scholars have benefited. From the point of view of policy the objective is to ‘enable scholars to make their individual cases in a way that illustrates some of the best techniques of intellectual history today’ (1). More than an overall purpose and an objective, there is a mission here, not to mention an implied rebuke: ‘there is still along way to go before an awareness of historical context and its significance is fully accepted in mainstream philosophical and religious scholarship’ (2). Let it be said at the outset that all of the essays are illuminating, and some are outstanding. I shall briefly introduce each one, and shall offer a few reflections in conclusion.

Giovanni Tarantino discusses Martin Clifford’s *Treatise of humane reason* (1674). We learn that ‘Clifford did not so much search for a rational foundation for morality as recognize a moral dimension in rationality’ (15). Where the specific issue of toleration was concerned, and in the wake of civil wars he, like many others, feared that freedom of conscience would yield multiple religions and threaten the stability of society. Happily, on grounds of Christian charity, he did not concur with those Church of England theologians who thought that a measure of repression, while it would not compel a Dissenter’s conscience, might nevertheless prompt such a person to reflect upon arguments ‘which, without being forced, they would not consider’ (17). He further held that since the Christian revelation was not universally accessible, there might be routes whereby those deprived of it might find salvation – a view compatible with his conviction that ‘The real heresy ... is the obtuse and deliberate infringement of rational principles’ (18). Not surprisingly, Clifford’s ecclesiastical opponents rebutted his view that the individual’s exercise of reason constituted a sufficient guide for life, for this was to deny ‘the redeeming role of clerical mediation’ and ‘the socially cohesive

function of the ecclesiastical institution' (19). To this Robert Ferguson added the thought that 'as mens belief of the Scripture is [said to be] owing to the conduct of Reason, so they may disbelieve it by the same guidance' (22). Clifford's work was translated into French by William Popple, who was in broad, but not complete, sympathy with it, and it was trounced by Pierre Jurieu as nothing more than a Latitudinarian confession of faith.

In introducing her history (from 1676 to 1830) of Henry Scougal's book, *The life of God in the soul of man*, Isabel Rivers reminds us that whereas today's students of the period tend to focus upon expository and polemical works on natural religion *vis à vis* revelation, those living at the time paid more heed to practical works offering guidance for the religious life. Of such works Scougal's is a prominent example, and the importance of his editor, Gilbert Burnet, is rightly emphasised. Both author and editor were impressed by the Cambridge Platonists Smith and More, and 'It seems likely ... that Scougal approved Burnet's Arminian statement of Christ's function as offering redemption to all, not only the elect, which blatantly contradicts the theology of the Westminster Confession' (34). Scougal's book found favour among Scottish Episcopalians, it was welcomed by Scottish Presbyterian Moderates – notably William Wishart, while in England the Arminian Methodist John Wesley and the Calvinistic Methodist George Whitefield were likewise favourably impressed by it. There was opposition in Scotland from strict confessionalists, some of whom smelled the burning rubber of deism, and from others who thought that the traditional emphasis upon Christ's imputed righteousness was being replaced by the belief that our 'inward *Sensations*' were 'The Ground of our Pardon and Acceptance before God' (so the Associate Presbytery) (43). The SPCK made the book available in America in 1707, whilst at home the Congregationalist Philip Doddridge commended it to his Northampton Academy students as 'the best model of all his class' (51), and the Unitarian Joshua Toulmin brought out his own edition in 1782. The last 'significant edition' was published in 1830 in a collection edited by the Church of Ireland clergyman, John Jebb, himself influenced by the Cambridge Platonists and George Burnet. Over the years the book had ceased to be simply a manual of personal devotion, but had become a text for study by ministerial students and young ministers, and a resource for people of all classes regardless of 'denominational' allegiance. An Appendix to the paper is supplied in which the principal editions of Scougal's book published between 1676 and 1830 are helpfully listed.

Victor Nuovo discusses ‘Locke’s proof of the divine authority of Scripture.’ He fastens upon the fact that Locke nowhere sought to offer a reasoned justification of his view that the Bible, as being from God, was ‘an authoritative and infallible source of divine truth’ (57). This seems odd because of Locke’s view that reason should determine the authenticity of purported revelation; because Locke was practised in biblical historical criticism and conversant with interpretative objections raised variously by Spinoza and the deist Charles Blount; and because of his awareness of textual corruption over time, doubts regarding both the canon, and the authenticity of certain doctrinally crucial texts. Leaving on one side the view that, by the illumination of the Holy Spirit, Scripture is self-authenticating, and discounting the opinion that Locke’s public commitment to biblical authority was insincere, Nuovo finds that Locke’s proof of biblical authority is integral to his theological writings, and that in its ubiquity we find the probable explanation of the fact that it has been widely overlooked. Nuovo’s first task is the historical one of ascertaining how Locke came to believe what he did about biblical authority: this with a view to exposing the premises of his proof. Only then can the logical structure of the proof be clarified. Locke’s intellectual inheritance includes the view that the ‘two books’ of nature and Scripture are alike revelatory of God. This is accompanied by the assumption, flowing down from Robert Boyle and Isaac Newton, that God has endowed humanity with reason so that the truth residing in the two complementary books – especially that concerning God’s providential ordering of all things – might be acquired. Locke’s interest in biblical chronology, prophecy and miracles is considered, and in the light of his biblical studies he embarked upon *The reasonableness of Christianity*, wherein ‘the veracity of the biblical account is derived from its content, its fitness to human circumstances, and the method of its propagation’ (70). Locke finds that the resurrection of Jesus confirms the hope that the virtuous are finally rewarded; and in the way in which Jesus propagated his gospel during his earthly ministry he finds ‘conclusive evidence of the authenticity of the Christian revelation and of the authority of the biblical account of it’ (72). His proof is thus cumulative in character.

We come next to Laurent Jaffro on ‘Toland and the moral teaching of the gospel’. Ardent in his advocacy of freedom from religious authority and in his opposition to priestcraft, and keen to establish a new order of pantheists – ‘the concept is at least as much ecclesiological and metaphysical’ (78) – Toland employed exegetical scholarship with a view to undermining biblical authority. He was convinced that while

submission to religious authority perverts morality, true religion – that is, non-priestly, non-superstitious, religion – was the rightful teacher of morality. Jaffro proceeds to answer two questions: What, for Toland, is the connection between morality and the gospel? And How does he account for morality? As to the first, Toland holds that the moral content of the gospel is that which is intelligible in it, and that it concerns the promotion of the social virtue of mutual love; and secondly, that morality originates in the natural law – a view that atheists also endorse. Jaffro claims that Toland's recourse to the Stoic concept of the law of nature is verbal only, and that in fact 'His atheist rephrasing of gospel morality is closer to 'the principle of utility' (88), 'although the evidence to support this view is scarce' (89). The upshot is that 'The gospel is the medium through which Toland expresses the moral view – a social rather than a religious truth – as if this was [*sic*] the meaning conveyed by the gospel itself' (89).

In 'Religion and materialist metaphysics' Udo Thiel sets the increasingly materialistic eighteenth-century discussion of the resurrection of the body against its seventeenth-century background. In the latter century John Pearson argued that resurrection entails the restoration to life of the same body that inhabited the earth, and that divine rewards and punishments concern both that body and the soul, otherwise they would not be just. As questions of personal identity increasingly came to the fore the intermingling of religion and metaphysics challenged numerous authors, not least the Christian materialist Joseph Priestley, for if humans are entirely material all turns on the viability of a doctrine of resurrection – a precarious doctrine in Priestley's opinion. Hinting at his conclusion, Thiel declares that 'the development of materialist thought, at least in Britain, results in a denial of numerical bodily identity at the resurrection, combined with the claim that such identity is not even required for a plausible account of the resurrection' (92). On the way Thiel introduces a number of seventeenth-century writers on the subject including Locke, who denied the necessary identity of the resurrection body with the mortal one, and went further than some in not regarding the identity of the soul *qua* substance as necessary either. There follows an account of Locke's critics, some of whom, Samuel Bold among them, were not entirely helpful to his cause. We then return in more detail to Priestley, among whose intellectual opponents was Thomas Reid, who thought that Priestley 'surely mistook his Talent when he attempted to write on abstract Subjects' (102). There is a backward glance to Isaac Watts and his view that the resurrection body is the same as the pre-mortem body because of a few 'essential particles' that never change.

Priestley was not uninfluenced by this view, and he also endorsed Locke's invocation of consciousness. Thiel observes that an immaterialist could make the same appeals, and that Priestley failed to advance a genuinely materialistic case. We next meet Thomas Cooper who managed to believe in resurrection on the hypothesis that identity does not exist, while W R Alger, himself a critic of resurrection doctrine, contended that consistency demanded that materialists reject the 'fancy' of an afterlife.

A D G Steers provides a full and authoritative account of 'Samuel Haliday (1685-1739): Travelling scholar, court lobbyist, and non-subscribing divine.' Haliday, together with John Abernethy and James Kirkpatrick, was a doughty opponent of confessional subscription, so neuralgic an issue in eighteenth-century Ireland (and not entirely dormant to this day). The issue was not, however, merely a local one; indeed, following his course at Glasgow University, Haliday eventually acquired his anti-subscription convictions in Europe. He travelled to the Netherlands, where he sat under the theologians of Leiden, met those of Utrecht, and obtained his preaching license (which required him to subscribe to the Westminster Confession) in Rotterdam. He alighted briefly in Heidelberg, became a student in Basel, and visited other centres of Reformed teaching, including Geneva, where he sought ordination 'because the Terms of Church-Communion there, are not narrowed by any human Impositions' (123). This clearly shows that by the end of his itinerary Haliday had become convinced of 'the inessentiality of the doctrines and practices over which the sects have fought and feuded, when the central message of religion was one of peace and joy' (121). Haliday's subsequent career is recorded in detail, non-subscription being a central feature of it. He made it clear that his requested refusal to reaffirm in Ireland the assent to the Westminster Confession that he had given in Rotterdam did not imply that he did not believe the doctrines contained therein, but rather that he would not submit to 'Human Tests of Divine Truths, especially in a great Number of extraessential Points, without the Knowledge and Belief of which, Men may be entitled to the Favour of GOD and the Hope of eternal Life' (134). Eventually, in 1725, the non-subscribing minority of the Presbyterian Church of Ireland were placed in a re-formed Presbytery of Antrim. This did not satisfy the subscribers, and the Presbytery was separated from the General Synod. Opposed as they were, the subscribers and non-subscribers were mirror images on one another, for both appealed to liberty of judgment and conscience, the former holding that 'the true believer is most at liberty when completely open to God's inspiration, uncontaminated by the

application of a reason incurably degraded in its motivation and performance', the latter convinced that 'if reason cannot be the arbiter of competing claims to inspiration, then the human dilemma has no solution, which the friends of reason considered a blasphemous insult to the divine design' (140).

In a substantial contribution James Moore takes up the story of 'Presbyterianism and the right of private judgement' with respect to 'Church government in Ireland and Scotland in the age of Francis Hutcheson.' In the General Synod of Ulster the Presbyterians divided over the issue of subscription to the Westminster Confession; in Scotland they disagreed over the procedure for calling ministers: should the call be in the name of noble patrons, heritors and elders, or the church members? Francis Hutcheson who, having initially opposed the defence of the right of private judgement advanced by Benjamin Hoadly, Bishop of the Welsh Bangor, became a staunch believer in that right where matters of religious belief were concerned, and held that the doctrinal divisions within Protestantism were irrelevant to virtue and true religion. In a sermon of 1717 preached before the King, Hoadly argued that where religion was concerned Christians were subject not to ecclesiastical authorities, but to Christ alone, and that all Christians must interpret Christ's laws for themselves; thus was ignited the Bangorian controversy. Two years later the Irishman John Abernethy took up the theme in a sermon and was charged with having succumbed to the 'new light', and with peddling Socinianism – a charged vigorously denied by members of the Belfast Society, of which Abernethy was a founder member. Moore rightly perceives that 'Underlying the debate about subscription, there was a profound longing on the part of the non-subscribers to find common ground with other Protestants' (145) – an untenable aspiration in the eyes of more reactionary Presbyterians, but one nurtured by Hutcheson through personal friendships with Hoadly, Hugh Boulter, Richard West, Gilbert Burnet the younger, and others. Hutcheson turned more publicly to the demonstration of the inadequacy of Pufendorf's rule-bound moral system, rooted as it was in the fear of divine and human punishment and devoid of the idea of virtue for its own sake. At the heart of Hutcheson's case was his conviction that '*the Right of private Judgment* or of our *inward Sentiments*, is *unalienable*, since we cannot command our selves to think what either we our selves or any other Person pleases' (151). The implication for worship was not lost on Hutcheson: 'it can never serve any valuable purpose to make Men serve [God] in a way which seems to them displeasing to him' (151). Not all supporters of the right of private

judgment were in entire accord. Hoadly, Burnet and others insisted that discernment of the laws of Christ's kingdom was the task of reason, and felt that Hutcheson's appeal to the moral sense was inadequate, to which Hutcheson replied that the terms 'reason' and 'reasonable' have moral significance insofar as they 'refer to the end of moral conduct, benevolence or the happiness of others' (152). Hutcheson subsequently introduced natural law into his ethics, with conscience, or the moral sense, determining the application of general laws in particular cases. As to church polity, Hutcheson felt it a purely prudential matter to determine whether Presbyterianism or Episcopalianism best served the promotion of 'real piety and virtue' (152) – on which matter he disagreed with his father, John, who opposed the application of the right of private judgment to matters of polity which, he was convinced, had been laid down by Christ in the New Testament. Back in Scotland, Hutcheson found himself in the midst of the turmoil over the appropriate mode of calling ministers, which prompted the secession of Ebenezer Erskine and three others and the formation of the Associate Presbytery. The seceders maintained that the restriction of the right of call to heritors and elders was inconsistent with Reformed and New Testament practice. Hutcheson, to the dismay of some, argued that the civil magistrate retained the right 'to take Care of the religious Notions of the People, to appoint proper Teachers, and to support them' (162), though he elsewhere observed that magistrates should not punish any whose opinions are not hurtful to their neighbours or society at large. With this qualification Hutcheson consistently maintained the right of private judgment.

In Aaron Garrett's paper on 'Reasoning about morals from Butler to Hume', the emphasis is upon Butler's pre-*Analogy* writings and Hume's writings up to 1742, for these most clearly reveal the philosophical affinities between the two men. I pass over a section containing comments on current scholarship and come to Garrett's discussion of the Butler-Clarke correspondence in its bearing upon morals, with Clarke emphasising a priori arguments as securing obligations, and probable arguments as having a less important role; and Butler urging that moral duties are for the most part best established not by abstract relations but from matters of fact. In one sentence: 'Butler was criticizing the rationalist *methodological* programme in moral philosophy that certain, a priori truths had to be secured in order to explain and justify moral virtue and to provide for what was obligatory in moral duties' (177). The matters of fact to which Butler directs attention are those concerning 'the particular nature of man' (178). Of special importance is the conscience which, in

the minds of the equity lawyers to whom Butler delivered his *Fifteen sermons* in 1720, referred to both ordinary and ideal reasoning. Butler's further move is to argue that obligation, duty and virtue may be explained solely in terms of the science of man – a view echoed by Hume in the introduction to his *Treatise*. The significance of the word 'solely' is that we do not have access to the workings and intentions of providence and hence in determining our duties we rely upon the world we know and upon probable argumentation. In making out his case Butler criticized Shaftesbury and Hutcheson for over-simplifying human psychology and relying upon 'confused concepts like happiness, benevolence, interest, and virtue that outstrip experience and do a disservice to the sophisticated distinctively human forms of reasoning involved. They do this because they fail to recognize the degree and nature of our ignorance. Mandeville is less guilty' (182). In his essay 'Of the dignity of human nature', Hume appears in his most Butlerian guise in that he opposes those philosophers who find only a single motivating principle in human nature – such as pleasure. Says Hume, 'I feel a pleasure in doing good to my friend, because I love him; but do not love him for the sake of that pleasure' (186). Were it otherwise, virtue would become a matter of self-interest. Not indeed that Butler and Hume were in agreement on all matters: Hume, for example, presented a psychological and social account of obligation whereas Butler relied upon conscience. But their 'general attitude towards human nature and the focus on human probable reasoning persisted' (186).

John P Wright contributes a paper in which he discusses Hume's unpublished work, 'An historical essay on chivalry and modern honour'. His first task is to estimate when Hume wrote the essay. Whereas Ernest Mossner regarded it as a college exercise by Hume the teenager, Wright concludes, in the light of more recent scholarship – not least that of M A Stewart, that it is most likely that the essay dates from the first half of the 1730s. Wright inclines to this view in particular because of the parallels he finds between Hume's essay and Mandeville's *Enquiry into the origin of honour*, which was published in 1732. Some parallels are verbal only, but others suggest that Hume took ideas from Mandeville, though he did not endorse the latter's thesis that the founders of Christianity employed modern honour as a method of social control. Hume is interested in the contrast between modern honour, which concerns courage, virtue and fidelity, and genuine virtue; and he agrees with Mandeville that the concept of modern honour, flowing down from the heroics of the barbarians who conquered the late Roman empire, is one in which the

courage of the ancient poetic epics is mixed with ideals foreign to it. Modern honour could lead to vice and criminal behaviour, notwithstanding that it was, hypocritically, understood as being in accord with Christian values. Hume finds the origin of modern honour in the principles of human nature. In Wright's words Hume argues that 'when human beings aspire to an ideal which is far beyond their capacities, they create a distorted conception of that ideal that cannot actually be realized, or else is realized in an entirely perverse form' (193). Underlying Hume's position is the Hutchesonian doctrine that virtue is natural, whereas Mandeville held that it is artificial, and imposed upon people against their natural inclinations. By the time Hume wrote his *Treatise of human nature* he had distanced himself from both Mandeville and Hutcheson. For example, he 'rejected the Hutchesonian view what the *distinction* between vice and virtue corresponds to a distinction between what is natural and artificial' (199); and he approves of 'natural virtues' because of their consequences, not because of their nature. Again, unlike Hutcheson, Hume makes positive use of the principle of the association of ideas, contending that it is this that operates on our passions and hence affects our actions. Wright concludes by suggesting that themes from the 'Essay on chivalry' are later taken up in Hume's discussions of superstition and enthusiasm, and in his 'Natural history of religion.' A transcription of the 'Essay on chivalry' is helpfully appended to this chapter.

In his excellent account of 'The early reception of Hume's theory of justice', James A Harris sets out from a reviewer who mistakenly found Hume's distinction between virtue and vice to be essentially the same as Hutcheson's, and from others who, against what they saw as Hume's excessive reliance upon reason, charged him 'With sapping the Foundations of Morality, by denying the natural and essential Difference betwixt Right and Wrong, Good and Evil, Justice and Injustice; making the Difference only artificial, and to arise from human Conventions and Compacts' (211). Such complaints (the one just quoted was anonymous) were reiterated in relation to Hume's emphasis upon the utility of the rules of justice at, it was alleged, the expense of the absolute obligation to justice. Some early critics explained this lacuna in terms of Hume's hostility to the idea that morality's foundation lay in the principles of religion. Wright argues that the most decisive response to Hume came not from Hutcheson, whose moral sense position was found wanting by Kames, Smith and Reid because it lacked an analysis of the structure of our moral powers, but from Butler's understanding of conscience: 'For prominent in Butler's moral theory was precisely what was missing from

Hutcheson's: the idea that moral claims can press themselves upon us with an *authority* that has nothing to do with the consequences of actions, and that also has nothing to do with the fact that such claims may indeed ultimately be traced back to the will of God' (215). In thus proposing the conscientious weighing of the *pros* and *cons* of actions Butler was advancing an experimental approach to the matter, thereby answering Hume on his own terms. There follows a discussion of the views of Kames, Smith and Reid which is so detailed as to defy accurate summary. In his conclusion Harris observes that whereas Locke, Samuel Clarke, Berkeley and Archibald Campbell had supposed that the carrot of heaven and the stick of hell were necessary to prompt people towards virtue and away from vice, by the middle of the eighteenth century this 'selfish' theory was being superseded by the view that on rational grounds, and independently of reference to God's commandments, virtue could be pursued as an end in itself – a view with which Hume was in agreement. Yet the question remained whether the unconditional obligation to certain virtues could be sustained without recourse to the 'selfish' argument. Harris's case is that Butler's account of conscience supplied Hume's critics with the means of returning an affirmative answer.

'The end of empire and the death of religion: A consideration of Hume's later political thought' is Moritz Baumstark's subject. He sets out to show that 'the tone and – to a lesser extent – the content of [Hume's] statements on political matters underwent a significant change about ten years prior to his death in 1776' (231). Hume became convinced that the political crises from the late 1760s onwards had placed Britain's 'uniquely fragile constitutional order', which he had laboured to defend, under threat (232). Baumstark investigates two particular concerns of Hume: the fate of the British Empire *via à vis* the American colonies, and the future of established religion. Hume the historian had had high hopes for the colonies, and for the spirit of independency which flourished there, but as relations between Britain and America deteriorated, he became ever more anxious for the future of the empire. When the War of Independence came, Hume was dismayed by what he perceived as the lack of competence of those in the British government who were charged with conducting it. Equally concerned was Josiah Tucker, who argued that 'Since the crisis of an empire that had been acquired for the wrong reasons was threatening to bring the British constitution down, it was best [not least with a view to good trading conditions thereafter] to relinquish that empire' (241). The radical Wilkes and the Dissenting ministers Richard Price and Joseph Priestley supported the Americans, and in 1775 Hume, in the midst of the parliamentary reform movement and motivated by the

conviction that it was more important to preserve the British constitution than to retain the empire, recommended that the combatants ‘lay aside all Anger, shake hands, and part Friends’ (243). As to religious establishments, Hume castigated some for their propensity to destabilize political order, but he also thought that in principle they could preserve public morality in a well-ordered society. But they ought always to be subject to civil authority. So far, so straightforward. But in a recently discovered letter of 1775 from Hume to Andrew Stuart of Torrance (which is appended to this paper), we see that in private Hume, albeit in jocular style, took a more hostile view of religion, and expressed his view that the prosperity of Britain will be established when, *inter alia*, ‘all the Churches shall be converted into Riding Schools, Manufactories, Tennis Courts or Playhouses. Old as I am, I expect to see the three first Objects compleated, and the fourth much advanced. Amen, So be it’ (257). This encourages Baumstark to suggest that Hume ‘may not have regarded some form of established religion as indispensable to well-ordered society, as some commentators have claimed’ (255).

In bringing up the rear, Knud Haakonssen advances the discussion of ‘Natural jurisprudence and the identity of the Scottish Enlightenment’. He first proposes that while Dugald Stewart and other Scots scuppered the natural jurisprudence of Pufendorf and replaced it with philosophical history and political economy, it is not accurate to claim that natural jurisprudence survived into the eighteenth century only as a mode of academic instruction. On the contrary, ‘it had a much wider cultural significance and stood prominently alongside the more well-known forms of philosophy as a contribution to public discourse and the republic of letters’ (259). The point is not always taken because of ‘the amorphous philosophical and theological foundation’ of natural jurisprudence, which ‘stretched from the orthodox theocentric ethics of thinkers such as Gershom Carmichael, through the unorthodox liberal benevolism of Francis Hutcheson, to the vaguest form of natural religion in Adam Smith’ (259). In Scotland as in Europe ‘natural law [the main concern of which was with ‘peace and sociability under civil government rather than with divine law’] was seen as a modern subject transcending traditional intellectual parochialism, not least of a theological sort’ (260). Haakonssen proceeds to demonstrate the persistence of natural jurisprudence by examining the curriculum devised and the lectures delivered in the Scottish universities. Many of the lectures were published, or became the basis of publications, while further contributions sought to reach a more popular market. However, within half a generation from the 1790s ‘the whole enterprise had become unintelligible to many,

even to some of those who had been schooled in it' (270). What, then, was natural jurisprudence? Haakonssen argues that those scholars who cash the term predominantly in terms of rights miss the broader understanding characteristic of the Scottish Enlightenment, where it was defined as 'a social and political ethics that arranged moral life into three broad sets of duties imposed by a basic law of nature: the duties to God, to ourselves, and to others' (270). It referred to the duties charged upon a particular office and the requisite rights for the exercise of the office. There follows a careful consideration of the impact of moral and common sense theorists upon natural jurisprudence, and their distancing from the causal accounts of morality favoured by Hume, Smith and Millar. Haakonssen concludes that the longevity of natural jurisprudence as an academic and a civic phenomenon in Scotland is attributable to the fact that it 'presented a broad moral outlook that had preciously little room for any strong theory of individual rights, which skilfully took the moral dangers out of the new historicist view of morality, law, and society, and which consequently was eminently suited for the civic education of a moderately progressive society' (277).

I trust that the summaries I have presented of the papers gathered here substantiate my view that this collection has a degree of coherence and a sense of flow that are not always to be found in *Festschriften*. I further hope that the challenge of presenting the gist of the papers, many of which are replete with detail, has not resulted in the misrepresentation of the authors' intentions. (It is well known that even those writers of a postmodern bent who declare that authorial intention will forever elude us are not immune to bristling when their own works are misrepresented).

By way of showing that I have thought about what I have read and not simply described it, I shall briefly offer some random observations. I should hesitate to say with Tarantino that the Cambridge Platonists 'founded a movement' in Cambridge, or that it was simply 'in reaction to rigid Puritan predestinarianism' (Nathaniel Culverwel managed to be both Platonist and predestinarian). Again, we learn that the post-Restoration Church of England regarded itself as presenting a *via media* between Roman Catholic idolatry and 'the fanaticism of the dissenters' (15). As to the latter, I should have welcomed recognition of the fact that while some Anglicans did speak and write in such terms, and had an interest in polemically tarring all dissenters with the brush of Commonwealth sectarianism at its wildest, this is unjust to many post-Restoration dissenters. The same point may be urged in relation to Hume's unchallenged charge of seventeenth-century Puritan 'enthusiasm' in

Baumstark's paper (250). We might recall that Samuel Johnson defined 'enthusiasm' as 'a vain confidence of divine favour or communication', while John Wesley, regarded the 'fanatic' and 'enthusiast' as synonymous terms indicative of religious madness, and insisted that from this his doctrines 'are distant as far as the east from the west.' Returning to the Restoration period, I challenge anyone to demonstrate that John Owen and numerous other dissenters were situated anywhere other than on the dour side of 'happy clappy'.

Thiel makes passing reference to Richard Price's adverse criticism of Priestley's materialism (106), but I should have welcomed more on the discussion of this matter between these two friends. I think that Steers and Moore (140, 145) might have made more of the appeal to the sufficiency of Scripture which was made by both sides in subscription debates, not least because Scripture was so frequently that with respect to which protagonists exercised their right of private judgment.

On p. 260 Haakonssen makes the passing remark that 'Scotland seems to have had much less of the warfare between the faculties of philosophy, theology and law that was so prominent in Europe, especially Germany.' Why was this, one wonders – especially since we are informed on the same page that 'in Scotland and across Europe natural law was seen as a modern subject transcending traditional intellectual parochialism, not least of a theological sort'? Again, when Haakonssen suggests that by 1810 'the whole enterprise' of natural jurisprudence 'had become unintelligible to many' (270) may we not qualify this by reference to Thomas Chalmers (1780-1847), for example, through whose influence the flag was kept flying until well into the nineteenth century? In the same paper we find the important point concerning Reid's realisation that 'the whole empirical and scientific ambition with moral science could not and should not be seen in Newtonian terms as natural philosophy but in Linnaean terms as natural history, that is, as a taxonomy of the preordained moral system of which humanity is capable' (274). In connection with the natural jurisprudence publications of Scottish professors it was interesting to learn that Henry Raeburn's portrait of Ferguson shows the subject with an elbow resting on his prominently displayed two-volume *Principles* (269). No doubt Haakonssen is correct in surmising that for this work Ferguson wanted to be remembered: it would surely be an unsanctified thought to suppose that this was a marketing ploy.

Your humble reviewer confesses that he is among the minority who do not subscribe to *The Bulletin of the Australian Society for Legal*

Philosophy. This deficiency prompts the thought that a full bibliography of the writings of Sandy Stewart would have been most welcome, not least because, as the editor explains, his ‘mode of working has led to an oeuvre that has consisted largely of individual essays’ (8).

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REVIEWS

Nadine Béranguier, *Conduct books for girls in Enlightenment France*, Ashgate, Farnham, 2011, 283pp. ISBN: 978-0-7546-6875-6; £60.00.

Traditionally, scholars regarded conduct books as little more than signifiers of the sexual status quo. Taking their cue from Mary Wollstonecraft, who famously singled out several conduct book authors as ‘Writers Who Have Rendered Women Objects of Pity, Bordering on Contempt’, academics, especially those writing from a feminist perspective, maintained that the genre simply consolidated and reproduced prevailing gendered norms. Fortunately, attitudes towards the conduct book have begun to shift in recent years, thanks in no small part to the efforts of Jane Rendall, Mary Catherine Moran and others. As they have stressed, in their research on eighteenth-century Britain, conduct literature was not outside of the Enlightenment, but a crucial part of it, contributing in productive ways to a much broader conversation about gender, morals and the progress of civilization. ‘If Enlightenment historians and philosophers interpreted their own interest in the ‘progress of the female sex’ as at once an instance of, and a further contribution to, the progress of politeness,’ observes Moran, ‘politeness and its progress was also the central preoccupation of eighteenth-century works aimed at the improvement of the female reader.’ (See Mary Catherine Moran, ‘Between the Savage and the Civil: Dr John Gregory’s Natural History of Femininity’, in Sarah Knott and Barbara Taylor, eds., *Women, gender and Enlightenment* [New York, 2005], pp. 8-29).

Given these fresh reassessments in an Anglophone context, the time seems ripe for a reconsideration of the genre within other national and international frameworks. Nadine Béranguier’s *Conduct books for girls in Enlightenment France* is thus a welcome contribution to a growing literature, and goes a long way towards explaining developments across the English Channel. As Béranguier makes clear from the opening pages of her book, she, too, sees conduct books as actively participating in the French Enlightenment, a movement, after all, deeply preoccupied by questions relating to education and character formation. As she deftly illustrates, conduct books served as a primary site for the working out of some of the most fundamental French anxieties regarding these concerns, especially as they related to girls and young women. Rejecting the notion that conduct books served an exclusively retrograde function when it came to propagating ideas about gender, Béranguier instead credits the

genre with opening up a critical (albeit highly fraught) space for discussion of the 'intellectual, moral, and social training of society's younger female members' (2). In this sense, *Conduct books for girls* has much to say not just about conduct books themselves, but also about the significance of female education as a philosophical problem within the French Enlightenment.

The book itself is logically divided into three parts, further organized into several subsections. Part One, 'Textual Strategies,' examines the narrative forms and framing techniques that the genre's 'pioneering' authors – including the Marquise Anne-Thérèse de Lambert, Madeleine de Puisieux, Jeanne Marie Leprince de Beaumont and the Chevalier de Cerfvol – adopted to speak to their young female audiences. This was no easy task because girls, even those who belonged to the social elite, were still very much in the early stages of being enlisted as readers, a process viewed with great trepidation in many quarters. Part Two, 'Topoi,' convincingly demonstrates that an overwhelming discontent with 'educational practices and social conventions' fuelled conduct book authors' decisions to write didactic literature for girls. In particular, many authors were troubled by what they regarded as mothers' ill-preparation for the important work of child-rearing. The larger point that Béranguier makes in this section, therefore, is that the yearning for better mothers served as a catalyst in the push for more rational and comprehensive female education (though not so comprehensive as to turn women into 'femmes savantes'). Finally, Part Three, 'Reception,' assesses how various critics responded to conduct books and analyzes what these responses tell us about prevailing ideas about gender, authorship and the public sphere in eighteenth-century France.

It is this third part of *Conduct books for girls* that proves the most rewarding, because it is here that Béranguier conveys in a textured way the specific histories of conduct books – who wrote them, how they circulated and what kind of responses they received in the periodical press. Particularly fascinating is Béranguier's detailed discussion of the journalist Elie-Catherine Fréron, founder of the polemical *L'Année littéraire*, who used his reviews of Jeanne Marie Leprince de Beaumont's work to hurl attacks at his 'archenemy' Voltaire. It is also in this last part of the book that Béranguier delves most fully into the gendered politics of writing itself. Some of the ideas about female authorship explored here have, of course, also been taken up by Carla Hesse, Joan DeJean, Nina Rattner Gelbart, Dena Goodman, Erica Harth and Elizabeth Goldsmith. But they take on new meanings in Béranguier's close readings of critics' divergent responses to male and female conduct book authors. She calls

attention, for example, to the fact that '[w]hile reviews of conduct books by male authors ignored biographical information and paid no attention to their identity and social status, the comments on their female counterparts consistently provided, albeit to varying degrees, information about their lives and positions in society, even when their books had been published anonymously' (183).

Béranguier characterizes her approach as one 'grounded primarily in literary analysis' (6). This is a fine methodology, but it does occasionally lead her to omit and/or overlook secondary sources from other disciplines that would have enhanced her discussion. Most striking for its absence is Carla Hesse's seminal *The other Enlightenment* (Princeton, 2001), which makes a strong case for writing as the foundation of modern female subjectivity. Given Béranguier's own similar conviction that the acts of writing and reading 'reflect the very essence of the Enlightenment project,' engaging with Hesse's book here would have been productive (6). In a similar vein, I would have liked to see Béranguier situate her own work a bit more actively within the broader secondary literature on conduct books themselves, even if much of this literature has focused on other national contexts. Moran and Rendall, for example, are surprisingly absent here, as is any discussion of similar pedagogical developments within the English or Scottish Enlightenments. Such comparative discussion might have enhanced this project, not least because the material lends itself to this kind of analysis. Jeanne Marie Leprince de Beaumont, for example, on whom Béranguier focuses considerable energy, spent a period of time in London working as a governess. In her *Magasin des adolescentes* (1760), Leprince de Beaumont cautions her female readers against 'mak[ing] a show of wit and knowledge' (91) – words that strongly resonate with the Scottish moralist John Gregory's own insistence in his popular *A father's legacy to his daughters* (1774) that his daughters conceal their learning from potential suitors. Might the two have had an encounter, even if only a textual one? Despite these minor limitations, however, *Conduct books for girls* demonstrates Béranguier's willingness to dwell in the complexities of her important subject. Her careful readings and judicious assessments make this a deeply rewarding read that greatly enhances our understanding of gender and Enlightenment.

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Mark Curran, *Atheism, religion and Enlightenment in pre-revolutionary Europe*, Woodbridge, Boydell Press, 2012, pp. viii + 218. ISBN: 9780861933167; £50.00.

Religion, robed, carrying the Eucharist, guides Truth, scantily-clad, carrying a flaming torch, into a cave, in which the *philosophes* vainly hide from her light, as their grim-faced masks fall on the ground. This cover image perfectly illustrates the conflict at the centre of Mark Curran's scholarly and thought-provoking study of atheism and Christianity during the late Enlightenment. These themes are assessed via the works of Baron d'Holbach (1732-1789) and their critical reception by (predominantly) Christian apologists. The Baron's publications fall into three distinct phases. Most of his early works were translations, principally of German scientific texts covering physics, chemistry, natural history and metallurgy; d'Holbach reused these texts to provide 400 entries in the *Encyclopédie*. He also produced the first French translations of English Deists, like Collins and Toland, and extracts from the anti-clerical newspaper *The Independent Whig*. Curran downplays the argument of previous scholars that d'Holbach 'atheitised' the texts, but nonetheless concedes that some subtle liberties were taken. During his late phase, d'Holbach expounded his Utilitarian moral and political thought in works that alluded to 'despotism' and Maupeou's *coup* against the *Parlements*, but which proved far too theoretical and voluble for the public. D'Holbach aroused greatest public interest and censure with the strident materialism and atheism of his middle period (ca. 1766-72), which peaked with his *Système de la nature* (1770) – though Diderot, apparently, co-authored the last chapter.

In chapters 2-4, Curran discusses this polemical conflict within the debates on Habermas' bourgeois, secular public sphere. D'Holbach's *salon* emerges as an ideal, aristocratic venue for radical discussions of religion, where attendees canvassed opinion via public deliberation, or by discreetly distributing manuscripts. Elite debates rapidly entered print and travelled across Francophone Europe along the clandestine channels identified by Robert Darnton. Curran, however, fascinatingly, illustrates that religious apologists were also using these 'Grub Street' printing houses to disseminate their own anti-*philosophe* texts, as he puts it: '[they] shipped the antidote with the poison' (78). Publishers eagerly perpetuated religious disputes and successfully kept debate on d'Holbach's *Système* going into the 1780s. One religious apologist even demanded that his works be printed with same paper and typeset as the

philosophes to capitalize on their sales. Periodicals also played a crucial role via book reviews and by printing large extracts from polemical texts. Curran effectively uses statistical analyses to map the average age of polemicists, chronological distributions of responses, etc. Yet, Curran is self-conscious about the dangers of over-reliance on statistics and poignantly reminds readers that ‘some authors touch more readers with a sentence than others might with a career’ (60).

Curran strikingly argues, elucidated in chapters 5-8, that the dynamism and demands of this evolving public sphere caused ‘a quiet revolution in apologetic writing’ (164). The Gallican Church departed from its traditional policy of ignoring atheistic publications and had d’Holbach’s books publically burnt and issued pastoral letters against irreligion. But Curran illustrates that Louis XV’s apathy and successful contraband sales made censorship largely ineffective. Instead, a new generation of religious apologists emerged who fought reason with reason, seeking to beat the *philosophes* at their own game. Darrin McMahon has already asserted the modernity and innovation of some of these authors in his *Enemies of the Enlightenment* (2002). Yet Curran locates them not in opposition to the Enlightenment, but within a ‘Christian Enlightenment’ and presents his book as a study of ‘two Enlightenments’; an idiom unlikely to please those who insist on *The Enlightenment*. However, Curran illustrates that the *philosophe* camp was deeply divided over d’Holbach’s atheist campaign. No *philosophe* came to his defence and heavyweights, Voltaire and Frederick the Great, penned Deistic rebuttals. Pro-*philosophe* newspapers even strategically lauded the orthodox campaign and deemed one author as ‘a Christian, a theologian and a *philosophe*’ (83-4); a designation still considered oxymoronic by some scholars.

The divided *philosophe* camp allowed for, Curran argues, the emergence of ‘a progressive, educated and Christian third way’ (131). The form of Christian apologists radically mutated, as one journalist put it ‘to successfully refute the unbelievers, it seems [...] we must, up to a certain point, speak their language and fight on their terms’ (155). Apologists shifted from staid theological works to newspapers, poems, satirical dictionaries and novels. Authors like Jacob Varnes, a Swiss Protestant, and Abbé Crillon, wrote sensational bestselling novels of young, innocent Christians transformed by *Philosophe* doctrines into brazen libertines. Abbé Barruel advanced his notoriously long-lived narrative of the *Philosophe* sect plotting to overthrow throne and altar. Even the Assembly of the Clergy paid for works, like Abbé Bergier’s highly esteemed *Examen du matérialisme* – a point-by-point dissection of

d'Holbach's *Système*. The focus of apologetics moved from validating Christianity to a Utilitarian focus on the boon of religion to social order. Authors incorporated Rousseau, Clarke, Descartes, Pascal, Locke, Shaftesbury, Montesquieu and Newton into their discourses and justifies Curran's claim that they entertained ideas 'often antithetical to Roman Catholic orthodoxy' (22). But how these thinkers were utilized is not consistently explained. We are also told early on that 'known Jansenists [...] refuted works by d'Holbach' (20), but this insight is never followed-up.

Curran places apologists in the Christian Enlightenment, rather than in the Counter-Enlightenment, but there is a danger in forcing his entire cohort into either one or the other category. This is compounded by judging his cohort solely on the basis of their refutations of d'Holbach. For example, the other publications of Jean Pey reveal his ardent Ultramontanism and his abhorrence of Jansenism, Erastianism and religious toleration in equal measure. Despite his scholarship and literary bravura, the positioning of Pey in a Christian Enlightenment is questionable. Adopting *philosophe* modes of writing did not always equate to adopting the substance. Curran himself acknowledges that his work 'represents just the tip of an enormous and largely uncharted iceberg' (6), and these neglected authors certainly demand more scholarship before we can fully certify all of them with that highly coveted adjective 'enlightened'. Nonetheless, Curran's book is a welcome and commendable addition to the growing literature that convincingly locates a Religious Enlightenment.

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G M Ditchfield ed., *The Letters of Theophilus Lindsey (1723-1808), vol 2, 1789-1808*, Woodbridge, Suffolk, Boydell Press for the Church of England Record Society, vol. 19, 2012, pp. lxxvii + 939, ISBN 978-1-84383-742-8, £100.

The letters of Theophilus Lindsey ranks among the most important contributions to the field of *Enlightenment and Dissent* since the journal began. Many words could be written about this volume and a short review can only provide some sense of its dimensions. In his review of the first volume in *E&D*, 25 (2009), pp. 306-08, William Gibson concluded: 'it is clear ... that Grayson Ditchfield has made a remarkable addition to our knowledge of this crucial period, and of a central figure within it. If the

second volume reaches up to the high standards of scholarship of the first, the *Letters of Theophilus Lindsey* will be an indispensable tool for historians for generations to come.' Volume II more than lives up to Gibson's hope. At over 900 pages, including an index of nearly 300 pages, it will prove a goldmine for those studying late eighteenth-century Britain. As some indication of the scale of scholarship on display, note that the list of abbreviations for key sources cited in volume 2 runs to six pages *in addition* to the six pages in volume 1. There is a list of short biographies of Lindsey's correspondents that are informative, insightful and, where relevant, extend a biography from volume 1 to cover the period of volume 2. We all owe a debt to Professor Ditchfield for the countless hours of forensic research that must have gone into constructing the detailed scholarly apparatus that surrounds these letters.

Theophilus Lindsey was central to the emergence of Unitarianism as a distinct denomination. The letters in the first volume show how he started out on the career path of an Anglican clergyman, complete with aristocratic patronage and an interest in evangelicalism. Like a number of his colleagues Lindsey read himself into heterodoxy, but unlike some he chose to resign from his living once it became clear the Church would not reform. He played an active role in the Feather's Tavern Petition campaign that called on parliament to remove the requirement that clergy subscribe belief in orthodox theology. After the first petition failed he decided to resign from the Church and proceeded to establish the first Unitarian chapel at Essex Street in London in 1774. Living among reform minded metropolitan circles, Lindsey's letters to provincial correspondents contain a great deal of information and opinion on religious, political and intellectual issues. His publications were limited to his professional sphere as a minister of religion. In these he appears in the guise of a reasonable and candid clergyman trying to persuade an enlightened public of the truth of Unitarianism in the face of intemperate and prejudiced criticism by orthodox clergy. In his private letters Lindsey ranges more widely, and when writing to friends he is more blunt in expressing his opinions and hopes. For example, take the following passage from a letter to Henry Toulmin, 5 September 1789:

We have heard of your bishop in his progress through his wide-extended diocese, and his great zeal against the growth of Socinianism every where expressed [William Cleaver, Bishop of Chester]. I like him the better for it. It is a mark of his being in earnest; and its effects will be to excite attention to the doctrine, and then I persuade myself that he will promote what

he wishes to suppress. Such crafty men as Bishop Hurd are for making no noise about such matters. (19)

Religion and politics bulk large in the letters. As Ditchfield notes, it is revealing that Lindsey displayed little interest in the scientific work of his close friend Joseph Priestley.

Lindsey was sixty-five years old at the start of 1789 and he retired from his position at Essex Street in 1793. In 1801 he had his first paralytic stroke, and this collection includes letters that Hannah Lindsey wrote on behalf of her husband in his final years. The 380 letters of volume 1 (occupying 565 pages) chart his path from provincial clergyman to pioneer Unitarian minister living among London reformers and radicals. The 403 letters in volume 2 (occupying 640 pages) are from the pen of a prominent and aging figure in the British Enlightenment. His ideas and attitudes were fully formed, and his aims clear and diligently promoted over many years. Lindsey therefore provides us with a fascinating example of how a mature figure on the radical wing of the British Enlightenment responded to the revolutionary developments of the 1790s and early Napoleonic Wars.

Allowing for the uneven survival of manuscript sources, this collection of letters and its scholarly apparatus goes a long way to providing a guide to notable Unitarians and their relationships. As a scholarly tool, it bears comparison with the Oxford University's impressive online database of *William Godwin's Diary*. More than a few letters in volume 1, such as a number of those to his close friend John Jebb, were based on fragments preserved in printed sources such as Belsham's *Memoirs of Theophilus Lindsey*. While there are some instances of this in volume 2, the letters are generally based on manuscripts (if they have previously appeared in print, Ditchfield notes errors or omissions in their former presentation – this is helpful for us when using past publications or our own notes based on previously published Lindsey letters). Many of the letters are to the Shropshire gentleman, William Tayleur (1712-96), Lindsey's most frequent correspondent between late 1775 and his death in early 1796. To the 142 letters from Tayleur in volume 1, there are added 72 in this volume, making a total of 214 out of the 783 letters in the collection – or 27.33% of the whole. And the letters to Tayleur are among the longest and most complete. In contrast, as Ditchfield observes, Joseph Priestley 'was Lindsey's closest colleague in the evolution of Unitarianism, and it is a matter of regret that only one letter – and that a letter of which Lindsey was a not sole author – from him to Priestley survives' (lx). Fortunately, many of Priestley's letters to Lindsey have survived, and

along with other letters to Lindsey, these and their location are listed in one of the appendixes at the end of this volume.

Indexes are important but often wrongly neglected elements of book publishing. There is an *American Society for Indexing* that hosts an annual conference and styles itself ‘The Voice of Excellence in Indexing’. They should hand Ditchfield an award for excellence, as the level of detail in the entries is amazing. Reading through the index provides insight into the contours of Lindsey’s interests – at least as they appear in his surviving letters. Not surprisingly, there are many entries on religious people and topics. And we can now easily find all of his surviving comments on various people and events. Interesting, for example, that Mary Wollstonecraft is only mentioned in one letter (to Tayleur on 29 September 1794), where Lindsey praises her recently published *An historical and moral view of the origins and progress of the French Revolution*. No mention of either her *Vindication of the rights of men* (1790), or *Vindication of the rights of woman* (1792). While Tom Paine has one and a half columns of index references, Lindsey’s interests are on display in the three columns of references to the Unitarian ‘Scottish Martyr’ Thomas Fyshe Palmer.

A brief test of the ‘New Imperial History’ provides an example of how this weighty tome can be used. In recent years the influence of empire on British culture has been increasingly studied and its importance asserted. With the ‘imperial turn’ looking like it is here to stay, some scholars have been prompted to restate the importance of Europe in the lives and minds of eighteenth-century Britons – see, for example, Stephen Conway’s recent *Britain, Ireland and Europe in the eighteenth century: similarities, connections and identities* (Oxford, 2011). As a ‘Friend of America’, it is not surprising that there are numerous references to America and Americans in Lindsey’s letters. India, however, passes unmentioned in volume 2, aside from a few references in Ditchfield’s notes. It is only mentioned once in volume 1, when Lindsey makes a passing reference to both Fox and Pitt’s India Bills (1783–84). The single mention of the Middle Kingdom in the entire collection occurs in letter 732: Hannah Lindsey notes that they had no news of the whereabouts of Thomas Fyshe Palmer and it was thought he had left Botany Bay and ‘gone to China with his Cargo’. In light of his surviving letters, Lindsey appears little interested in the emerging ‘Second British Empire’ – it is European countries, and above all France and Ireland, that loom largest in his view of the world beyond Britain’s shores.

More than simply a collection of letters by a notable figure in the British Enlightenment, thanks to Grayson Ditchfield's exceptional scholarship, *The Letters of Theophilus Lindsey* provide a wealth of detail and insight into the founder of Unitarianism, his associates and context. These volumes are, quite simply, indispensable to readers of *E&D* – worth every pound of their handsome price, they will sit well thumbed and within easy arms reach on our book shelves.

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The correspondence of Anthony Collins (1676-1729), freethinker. Critical edition established by James Dybikowski, Honoré Champion, Paris, 2011, pp. 450. n.p.

A pupil of John Locke's as a young man and best-known as a freethinker, Anthony Collins led a life that was marked by friendships with the most radical and influential intellectuals of the English-speaking and continental worlds. At his death, on December 13th 1729 according to the Julian calendar, he left the entire body of his writings, including all his letters, to his close friend Pierre Des Maizeaux. Unfortunately, in troubled circumstances, this considerable body of writings passed from hand to hand and ended up being entirely dispersed or, perhaps more probably, maliciously destroyed.

James Dybikowski, Professor Emeritus at the University of British Columbia, has for the first time produced a critical edition of Collins' surviving correspondence. The work, prefaced by an extensive and clear biographical introduction about the author, primarily brings together the letters that the freethinker exchanged with John Locke. These, available in manuscript at London's British Library, had already been published in the edition of Locke's extensive correspondence edited by E S De Beer for the Clarendon Press, Oxford. As well as the correspondence with Locke, Dybikowski also reproduces the fundamental and previously unpublished letters from Collins to Des Maizeaux, conserved in manuscript in the *Birch Collection*, likewise available at the British Library. Lastly, some unpublished letters collected in European and American estates are edited and reproduced. Though not of exceptional philosophical value, these are important in the overall light of his work.

The edition of Collins' letters, as Dybikowski points out in his introduction, not only makes an important historical contribution to Collins' studies, but also provides considerable material that may remove,

once and for all, the somewhat stereotyped view of Collins. Quite unlike the banal personalities of the minute philosophers used by George Berkeley to represent the freethinkers, Lysicles and Alciphron, in his book of that name, Collins shows himself in private to be placid, friendly, from his youth guided by a disinterested love of truth.

His meeting with John Locke, of course, marked Collins's life. The letters bring to life a relationship that goes far beyond simple cordiality, becoming a warm friendship. In one letter Locke writes to Collins, 'I should think it my great happynss to have such a companion as you who had a true relish of truth, would in earnest seeke it with me, from whom I might receive it undisguisd, & to whom I might communicate what I thought true freely' (Letter no. 11).¹ The old philosopher found in Collins a young friend of the truth, ready to undertake the most detailed research with the greatest freedom, without setting himself any type of obstacles or limits. These were the characteristics of Collins's mind that struck Locke: his love of truth and his determination to think freely. And these were the features that marked Collins's reflection throughout his life. In a later letter Locke thanked his pupil: 'you have cleard what I had puzzled & even made me understand my own thoughts better that I did before [...]' (Letter no. 40). The relationship between the two is not a one-way teacher-pupil one: it develops from an exchange of views and above all from reciprocal growth. Locke recognises that Collins's is the best interpretation of his *Essay on human understanding*, that the younger man has best understood the significance of the text: 'I know noe body that understands it [the *Essay*] so well, nor can give me a better light concerning it' (Letter no. 41). Again, the philosopher stresses reciprocity: you are the one who has best understood the essay, and you are also the person best suited to clarify the doubts that I myself have about it. If we remember that Locke had, in the past, been willing to listen to problems his friends raised about his *Essay*, it is easy to imagine that, in his relationship with Collins, this was again the situation, and that it now recurred with fresh breadth.

The relationship that linked the two was not only an intellectual one: it was a deep friendship and a source of mutual help. Locke admired the young Collins's qualities as a bibliophile, his ability to ferret out rare, unobtainable books. His was a true passion for books that, in years to come, led him to collect well over 10,000 volumes in his library. Collins

¹ Hereinafter I refer to the letter numbers established in Dybikowski's book.

had become Locke's 'eyes and ears' in the London salons and coffee-houses, and we can easily imagine the avidity with which the old philosopher, by now confined at Oates on the estate of Lady Masham, daughter of the famous Ralph Cudworth, listened to Collins's accounts during his frequent visits. In this connection, the letters give us brief glimpses of those dynamics. Collins tried to content Locke even on the practical plane, one task with which Locke charged him being a curious one: to get a good craftsman to make a small gig that would enable him easily to get away from Oates. The instructions concerning how this vehicle was to be made are given in great detail in several letters.

Locke's death marked the end of the relationship between the two, but certainly did not end the friendship. Locke left some books to Collins, knowing full well the value that the young thinker would attribute to this bequest. Collins, together with Peter King, was also to edit the posthumous edition of some of Locke's writings. But the greatest inheritance that the great philosopher left Collins was his disinterested love for truth and research, which remained with the freethinker throughout the rest of his life.

The second great correspondent, whose letters to Collins have all been lost whereas almost all of those in the other direction remain, is Pierre Des Maizeaux. He was a French Huguenot and son of a protestant minister, whose parents had settled in Switzerland after the Edict of Nantes was revoked. He left that country and, after spending some time in Holland where he established collaborations with intellectuals of the calibre of Jean Le Clerc and Charles de la Motte, arrived in England. The nature of the relationship that Des Maizeaux had with Collins is surrounded by controversy: some view him as merely helping the freethinker in his search for books and food supplies from the continent, whereas others see him as the true author of Collins's last works. In this connection the correspondence is helpful to sweep away both erroneous extremes of interpretation. Des Maizeaux shows himself to be an essential collaborator for Collins, and his relations with printers and booksellers, as well as his Dutch connections, were to be vital for the freethinker himself and for the growth of his library. At the same time, on questions such as determinism, for Collins Des Maizeaux was a valid assistant, as well as a friendly confidant. After the publication of Samuel Clarke's reply to Collins's *Inquiry concerning human liberty*, the freethinker prepared a counter-reply, as he tells Des Maizeaux: 'I have written my reply to Doctor C in loose papers & am putting them together, and hope in a few days to revise them in such a manner, as that I may begin, when

you come down, to transcribe them fair' (Letter no. 99). A year later, Des Maizeaux invites Collins to add to his reply to Clarke as a footnote to the correspondence between Clarke and Leibniz, whose publication the Huguenot thinker was editing. Collins cordially refuses the invitation, 'Let not the collection of Leibnitzs & Clarks Papers &c now printing in Holland wait for my reply to Doctor Clark. If I do any thing more, it shall be by way of addition to my *Inquiry*, in a third edition of it' (Letter no. 105). Unfortunately the reply to Clarke was to remain among Collins' private papers that, as was said, were irremediably lost after his death. It is true that, in his last year of life, 1729, a *Dissertation on liberty and necessity* appeared under Anthony Collins' signature, which might be a part of the reply to Clarke. Although a favourable attribution has recently been proposed,² there appears to be a strong probability that in reality the work is spurious.

The correspondence with Des Maizeaux gives us a second opening onto Collins's unpublished works. The freethinker, a great admirer of Cicero: 'Nothing can more tend to promote good sens in the world than some of his [Cicero's] Philosophical works' (Letter no. 130), discusses with Des Maizeaux the translation of two works by the great Roman philosopher, *De Divinatione* and *De Natura Deorum*: 'I have a plan for the publishing my translation of *Cicero's books of the Nature of Gods & of Divination*' (Ibid.). Collins' attention to these two works is not random, but points to the important role that he assigns to the questions of scepticism about religious beliefs and about the transmission of those beliefs. We also find mention of these translations in a letter dated three years later, again to Collins' Huguenot friend, 'I intend to come to town for a few days; when we will discourse together in relation to the review and publication of my translation of *Cicero's Two Book[s] [...]*' (Letter no. 142). This letter confirms the existence of these translations and at the same time strengthens the hypothesis that Des Maizeaux was a collaborator whom Collins held in great consideration. Unfortunately we have no further official news of the translations, and it is likely that they were lost with the freethinker's other papers. However, several years after Collins' death, the same editor to whom it appears the translations had been sent published an edition of *De natura Deorum*, which might be a corrected version of Collins' translation.

² See Jonathan S Marko, 'Revisiting the Question: Is Anthony Collins the Author of the 1729 Dissertation on Liberty and Necessity?' in *Philosophy & Theology*, 22, 1-2 (2010), 77-104.

The loss of his correspondence with his other friends and collaborators deprives us of a more general view of Collins' relations. However, something may emerge from reading between the lines of the surviving letters. In particular, in his relations with Toland, with whom he undoubtedly collaborated for much of his life, Collins appears extremely cold, almost cynical. Having learned about the death of the thinker of Irish origin, in fact, he wrote to Des Maizeaux: 'I find by Papers, that Mr. Toland dyed on Saturday last at Putney. If that be so, I desire the favor of you if you have an opportunity to inquire & learn if the Books which I have lent him may be got [...]' (Letter no. 134). Clearly relations between the two, whose personalities were very different, had deteriorated over time.

In conclusion, the work of James Dybikowski is of great interest for scholars of Anthony Collins's thought. The letters, finally collected together and with a wide-ranging commentary and bibliographic references, restore to us a Collins purified of the sediments that had accumulated around his figure, and that had distorted it. Alongside curiosities and information about his literary production that never reached completion, the correspondence points up once and for all the true significance of Collins's thought: love for the truth and the absolutely necessary defence of freethinking.

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Jonathan I Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment: philosophy, revolution, and human rights 1750-1790*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011, xvi+1066pp. ISBN13: 9780199548200; hdbk., £30/\$45.00

Displaying the same virtuoso mastery of sources near and far and the same linguistic range this formidable volume of over one thousand pages is very much a sequel in its size and scope to the author's *Enlightenment contested* (2006). Again the prodigious amount of information – often dealing with little known byways of the Enlightenment – is organised around the same central thesis: that the Enlightenment is best understood as the outcome of two different and conflicting impulses, a Moderate Enlightenment willing to make its peace with the *status quo* particularly its aristocratic and ecclesiastical institutions and a Radical Enlightenment based on an uncompromising monism derived from Spinoza. This philosophical position left no place for religion or any other form of transcendence and provided the basis for a movement which sought to

reconstruct society anew with the ultimate goal of achieving ‘a new kind of world based on equality, democracy, individual liberty, and freedom of expression and the press’ (950). Though this bifurcation between a Moderate and a Radical Enlightenment lies at the heart of both books’ structure it is, not altogether consistently, combined with a strong affirmation of the Enlightenment’s unity and an impatience with the recent trend to Balkanise the Enlightenment by focussing on its different national variations.

In the earlier volume dealing with the period 1670-1752 the insistence on the importance of the Radical Enlightenment had to contend with its rather marginal character at a time when the influence of major figures whom Israel would associate with the Moderate Enlightenment such as Locke, Newton, Montesquieu and the young Voltaire was dominant. By contrast, in this volume dealing with the period 1750-90 the claims made for the Radical Enlightenment carry more weight with the increasing ascendancy of Diderot and the Encyclopaedists and the widespread influence of Abbé Raynal’s *History of the two Indies* to which Diderot again made a major contribution. The inadequacies of the Moderate Enlightenment are more plausibly underlined with the failure of attempts at reform of traditional institutions such as the French parlement or the Assembly of Notables.

The consequence, argues Israel, is that France, and Europe more generally, was dominated intellectually by the programme of the Radical Enlightenment in the 1780s and 1790s thus weakening the ideological defences of the Old Regime and steering the French Revolution in a more radical direction. Indeed, one of the most important and controversial claims of this important and controversial book is that much of the historiography of the French Revolution needs to be rewritten since it does not take sufficient account of the intellectual origins of the Revolution and, above all, its links with the Radical Enlightenment. This forms part of Israel’s more fundamental view of the Enlightenment as ‘the single most important topic, internationally, in modern historical studies’ (1) since it was that movement which shaped the modern world – a world largely ushered in by the French Revolution which, in turn, was the ideological offspring of the Enlightenment. With all its formidable erudition, then, this is a work written with a view to the present and what the author sees as contemporary attacks on the heritage of the Enlightenment and particularly the Radical Enlightenment. In *engagé* style the work concludes with a historical retrospective on the way in which the full fruits of the Radical Enlightenment were blighted by the

Counter-Enlightenment. The principles of the Radical Enlightenment are seen as having a second spring in the period after 1945 but again as being thwarted by a number of contemporary movements ranging from religious fundamentalism to postmodernism. Wistfully the book concludes with the hope that 'the programme of the radical *philosophes* could perhaps be completed yet' (951).

In Israel's account, the Enlightenment was a transforming movement not only for Europe but the world more generally and one of the most original and interesting sections of the work is its Part III 'Europe and the Remaking of the World'. Here the main ideological pivot is Raynal's work (which bore his name but was largely a collaborative production) which is seen both as providing a critique of the growing scale of European imperialism and providing weapons with which the colonised could hit back at the colonisers. Tellingly the book reproduces an illustration of Jean-Baptiste Bellery, the black deputy from Saint-Dominique to the National Convention in Paris, with the bust of Raynal prominent next to him. The programme of the Radical Enlightenment is seen not only as the seedbed for the French Revolution but also for the Atlantic Revolutions more generally both in Europe (including in the Netherlands, what became Belgium, Switzerland and Ireland) and those beyond Europe. The associations between the American and the French Revolution have long been addressed by historians and provided the central core of R R Palmer's *The age of democratic revolution. A political history of Europe and America 1760-1800* (2 vols., 1959-64) (included in the bibliography but not given extended attention in the text). Israel, however, takes the global impact of the principles of the Atlantic Revolution further with an examination of revolts in South America such as those in Peru and the future Columbia; the impact of the Radical Enlightenment is even traced to distant Ceylon.

As this emphasis on the importance of the ideological origins of revolution would suggest, in this, as in his previous volume, one of the major historiographical emphases is to restore the importance of the role of ideas. Israel is impatient with those who would attribute the primary cause of the French or other revolutions to social and political factors. These, as he acknowledges, were important in creating the conditions for a revolution but it required ideas and ideologies to give that revolution form and to map out an alternative to the old regime which it was replacing. Responding to those who criticised his first volume for being too focussed on ideas at the expense of their social context he argues that his approach is not simply based on an account of who said what to

whom. Rather intellectual debate is viewed as ‘reacting to the logic of conditions no less than the play of ideas’ (32). Such an approach is embodied in the opening section of the work which deals, with refreshing originality, with an issue well removed from the salons: that of the explanation for earthquakes and the extent to which such explanations could be combined with a Providential understanding of the world. By taking such an approach and by illustrating it with original archival sources dealing with such manifestations of the topic as the pastoral letters of the Archbishop of Lima the book takes us to a wider world than that occupied by the major *philosophes*. This section, then, illustrates how the terms of Enlightenment debate were shaped by key events and how, too, more secular understandings of the world and its workings were beginning to gain ground in the public realm.

Such an approach does not, however, preclude a continuing focus on the impact of key bodies of ideas and above all those of Spinoza. For, in Israel’s account, Spinoza is the *fons et origo* of the Radical Enlightenment by providing the fullest statement of monism or ‘one substance metaphysics’ and thus of undermining any dualist view of the world which left open the door for transcendental understandings of traditional institutions and, above all, for a role for religion. This Spinoza-centric approach has been a distinguishing feature of Israel’s understanding of the Enlightenment over the course of three volumes with this present one forming a triptych with its predecessors, *Enlightenment contested* (2006) and *Radical Enlightenment: philosophy and the making of modernity* (2001). Again the shadow of Spinoza is discerned in various manifestations of the Radical Enlightenment. Indeed, Section IV is entitled ‘Spinoza Controversies in the later Enlightenment’. Yet, as Israel concedes (on 693), there were few indeed who could read and still fewer who could understand Spinoza. This raises questions about the extent to which one can attribute to him a guiding role in the emergence of the Radical Enlightenment especially in this later period so removed from his own times. How far had Spinoza become a short-hand for a whole array of radical ideas which derived only in part from Spinoza? If there were few who actually read Spinoza would a study of the filiation of ideas not be better more focussed on the immediate influences and authors which, we can demonstrate, contemporaries knew and understood?

The preoccupation with Spinoza is part of the reason why Israel devotes significant attention in this work to the Counter-Enlightenment. For some of these opponents of the Radical Enlightenment were more explicit about that movement’s ideological origins than the *philosophes* themselves. In

particular, the conservatives sheeted home much that was unsettling to Spinoza. But such ideological smearing may again simply indicate how such labels as Spinozist were thrown around without necessarily any very secure connection with the work of the Dutch philosopher. That having been said, this attention to the Counter-Enlightenment is another of the original features of the work drawing attention to little studied figures whose responses to the Enlightenment provide a form of mirror image of the main movements of modernity which helps clarify the chief points in contention.

In Israel's account, the Counter-Enlightenment looms particularly large because the middle ground of the Moderate Enlightenment was increasingly cut away by the advance of the Radical Enlightenment on the left and the Counter-Enlightenment on the right. Yet, under the umbrella of that Moderate Enlightenment which is seen as being in eclipse, resided many of the major figures from whence modernity derives. Importantly, the whole tenor of the Scottish Enlightenment is seen as being too marked by compromise with an aristocratic and ecclesiastical establishment to be fully at the vanguard of the modernising and democratising impulses which were the outcome of the Radical Enlightenment. The whole project of the Science of Man which the Scots pioneered becomes something of a detour on the way to the modern world. Even the irreligious Hume is seen as too characterised by scepticism and social relativism to take a place among the champions of the Radical Enlightenment.

It is this teleological understanding of the Radical Enlightenment as laying down a programme which continues to this day which provides some of the major grounds for criticism of this far-ranging work. In the eighteenth century, as in all ages, intellectuals contended for a range of positions and, in the nature of things, could not see where their ideas would lead. In Israel's account, however, certain figures are enlisted in a disciplined army with a discernible plan of attack on the Old Regime which finally came to fulfilment in the French Revolution. The conflicting parties who produced the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen are viewed as a well-organised grouping who seized the day and set the French Revolution on the path of the Radical Enlightenment – that is towards a democratic polity characterised by equality. Yet those most closely associated with the document – such as the monarchist Lafayette, Vice-President of the National Assembly – were greatly influenced by the American Revolution which Israel plausibly views as largely a product of the Moderate Enlightenment (446, 464). Very likely, this document may even have been looked over by Lafayette's good friend, Thomas

Jefferson, then an ambassador of the infant United States to Paris. The abiding influence of key figures of the Moderate Enlightenment such as Montesquieu was evident, too, in the document's insistence on the importance of the division of powers. Far from radical, too, was the description of property as a 'sacred right'. Unlike the Americans the French revolutionaries did not ascribe to the Deity the source of human rights but they did affirm that they were acting 'in the presence and under the auspices of the Supreme Being' – a sentiment well removed from the profound secularism which Israel sees as being at the heart of the Radical Enlightenment. The many different tributaries which shaped the course of the French Revolution are measured by Israel to the extent to which they flowed into the central stream of the programme of the Radical Enlightenment. Disturbing manifestations of radical republican sentiment such as those displayed by Robespierre are dismissed as a distortion of what the Radical Enlightenment stood for. Indeed, Robespierre is drummed out of the Enlightenment generally for his fanaticism and hostility to atheism. Many of the Revolution's twists and turns are seen as the outcome of the baleful influence of the Counter-Enlightenment to which, disappointingly, even Raynal succumbed with his abandonment of the Enlightenment cause at the outset of the Revolution. The true Radical Enlightenment's programme then became a subterranean stream which only partially surfaced in the many travails between 1789 and the present. For Israel, however, its intellectual cogency and force mean that it may still sweep its opponents to one side. To echo G K Chesterton on Christianity, the Radical Enlightenment 'has not been tried and found wanting; it has been found difficult and left untried'.

Whatever one's reservations about following Israel over such a broad trajectory this is a work which, with astonishing scholarship and tenacity, significantly adds to any understanding of the Enlightenment – a movement which, as Israel plausibly contends, is central to an understanding the modern world. It is a book which illustrates the wide reach of some of the key ideas linked to the Enlightenment in its more radical manifestation – even in such seemingly inhospitable corners of Europe as Spain. Beyond Europe the book illustrates how Enlightenment ideas could take root in more distant climes not only in North but also in South America and even in the European colonial tropical empires. Such diversity is combined with an insistence on the Enlightenment's unity (if one overlooks the division between its Moderate and the Radical manifestations). One of the merits of the work is that it acts as a corrective to more recent fissiparous views of the Enlightenment as being

characterised by such a range of national and other divisions that it is difficult to detect a common core. For Israel, by contrast, the Enlightenment stands firmly as a coherent body of ideas linked by a common opposition to the traditional order and a determination to enlist philosophy in the task of achieving human amelioration. One may agree or disagree with Israel's account of the path taken by the Enlightenment but his work reinforces, with much laboriously forged historical armour-plating, the centrality of the Enlightenment and its message.

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Kristian Jensen, *Revolution and the antiquarian book: reshaping the past, 1780-1815*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011, x + 318pp. ISBN 978 1 107 00051 3; £55.00.

Printed books of the fifteenth century – collectively known as incunabula – emerged in the long eighteenth century as a distinct class of object whose economic and cultural value bore no relation to the broader market for books. Considered as much for their value as scrap paper in 1700 as for their intellectual significance, their collective worth had been ‘comprehensively reassessed’ by the 1790s (5) – so that in 1812, the Duke of Roxburghe’s celebrated book collection raised quite unprecedented sums at auction. Kristian Jensen’s new book, based on the Lyell Lectures he gave at Oxford in 2008, seeks to explain this crucial period in the history of bibliophilia and book collecting, rooting the eighteenth-century invention of incunabula in the ideological currents of the Enlightenment and the Revolutionary 1790s. At its heart are the competing but overlapping book collecting impulses of the Bibliothèque Nationale (as it became known) and George John, the second Earl Spencer, who both lavished vast resources on the acquisition of incunabula – scouring the war-torn territories of Europe for hidden copies of rare or unique imprints.

In chapter one, Jensen sets out to explain why the Bibliothèque Nationale deliberately set out to profit from the Revolutionary wars of the 1790s, sending French troops out all over Europe with systematic lists of rare editions so that ‘monuments of the art of printing’ could also become monuments to French military prowess (11). This enterprise required careful planning and extraordinary attention to detail, but was only made possible by important changes in the intellectual environment of the eighteenth century – particularly ideological investment in printing as the crucial instrument for dispelling the unreasoned darkness of the

Middle Ages. Enlightenment philosophers such as Malesherbes, Condorcet and Volney traced a 'causal link between modern freedom and the invention of printing' (26), in which relics of early printing became reified in the people's struggle to uncover truth and to control those in power. By investing so much military resource and administrative manpower in the collection of incunabula, revolutionary politicians and philosophers sought to remove them from the privilege of wealth and organised religion, making them available to the public at large for the first time. As Jensen suggests, however, it helped concentrate French minds that their principle competition in acquiring early printed books came from across the English Channel. Chapter two details the extent to which the search for incunabula became something of a bibliographical arms race, with the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars fought in the field of rare books as well as on the battlefield. Like the intellectual leaders of the Bibliothèque Nationale, Earl Spencer was motivated by the ideas of Enlightenment and by notions of patriotism as a British war leader, but the wealth that he invested in incunabula was private – and the fruits of his collecting impulses were therefore very different. Another major theme of Jensen's major book is the 'opposing but overlapping views of the function of books and collections in the public and private sphere' (67), since Spencer's private library could apparently have no part in enriching the intellectual and cultural life of Britons more generally.

This key battleground between public Enlightenment and private self-interest overshadows the rest of the book, which looks in more detail at the emergence of incunabula as desirable objects in their own right. Chapter three traces the development of an early form of book history, building on important developments in philology, antiquarianism and historiography, in which scholars looked beyond the textual significance of early books to consider their physical characteristics as evidence for the past. This created a powerful framework for the new field of collecting, allowing scholars – and collectors – to place editions authoritatively in a chronological sequence, differentiate their physical characteristics, and give them value in the marketplace. Books that had until recently been 'part of an unstructured mass, became identifiable, desirable and marketable' (88). This mode of analysis had implications for the way the books themselves were understood, with chapter four reinforcing the point that the value of incunabula had very little to do with the intellectual or cultural significance of the texts inscribed in them. Instead, they became objectified in the conspicuous cultural consumption of the age, bound up in moral debates about luxury, and status symbols in the

aspirational middling sorts' rush to emulate their social superiors. Private collectors were the antithesis of the enlightened Bibliothèque Nationale – competing to exhibit their vast wealth and magnificent taste like chivalrous knights gathering together on the jousting field, in Dibdin's effusive metaphor. The competition evidently took a terrible toll on the books themselves, with the systematic rebinding, upgrading, redecorating, cropping, washing and bleaching of books relayed in unremitting detail in chapter five. Incunabula 'were made to conform so that they could reflect both what collectors valued of the past and what collectors did not care to commemorate' (137). Bindings were jettisoned time and again to keep pace with the dictates of fashion, while owners lavished huge sums on cleaning up the pages of books, subjecting them to new and experimental chemical agents to obtain the whitest paper possible – thus making them conform to modern, enlightened notions of what paper should look like. In the process, of course, invaluable information about the original function of books was lost forever – but Jensen reminds us that without such profound physical 'improvement', incunabula may well have been routinely destroyed. Recalling banal, trivial and functional aspects of late medieval life, fifteenth-century books were found to be unworthy of the vast weight of Enlightenment optimism invested in them – their physical rebranding was therefore a crucial condition of their survival, constituting 'the salvation of incunabula from themselves and from destruction' (173).

Although *Revolution and the antiquarian book* is a deeply satisfying exploration of some relatively unfamiliar territory, it is rather narrow in focus. The title gestures expansively towards the enlightened reshaping of the past, but it might have been helpful if the author had spent more time locating the physical remaking of fifteenth-century books more thoroughly in Enlightenment historiography by the likes of Adam Ferguson, William Robertson, David Hume and Edward Gibbon. Their ambitious rewriting of the medieval past formed a central backdrop to the physical 'improvement' of fifteenth-century books in the eighteenth century that might have merited attention here, while there are also echoes of the fate of historical legends like Robin Hood and King Arthur in late Georgian Britain – one espousing the egalitarian principles of the Enlightenment, the other reflecting complacent confidence in the well-meaning despotism of wealth and social exclusion. If the intellectual horizons of the book are rather confined, so too are its implications for our understanding of book culture in eighteenth-century society. We hear very little about the many men from humbler backgrounds that imitated the

collecting impulses of the second Earl Spencer, while there is next to nothing on private collectors in France. If these omissions are justified by the scope of Jensen's argument, his espousal of the relative merits of public and private collections is altogether too neat. Indeed, Jensen might have elaborated much further on the role of public and private libraries in European society in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, locating his own reflections on the availability of incunabula more explicitly in the burgeoning recent interest in less specialised reading habits. Jensen makes much of the contrast between the supposedly open collections of the 'public' Bibliothèque Nationale and the closed collections of the Spencer family library, but we hear little about how precisely the 'unprecedented levels of access and assistance' offered by the Bibliothèque Nationale worked (66), and about how the French reading public might have used its collections. Nor does Jensen recognise the avowedly 'public' function of many British country house libraries in an age when neoclassical architects such as Robert Adam and Henry Holland (responsible for the rebuilding work at Althorpe in the 1780s) remade the library as a principal reception room, fit for sociability and polite conversation centred on books. Some landowners adopted formal borrowing ledgers to keep track of private books as they circulated around the local community, while even the Duke of Roxburgh made his celebrated collections available to *bona fide* researchers like Joseph Ritson and Sir Walter Scott.

In what is a relatively slim volume, there was undoubtedly space to explore these avenues of enquiry more thoroughly. Nevertheless, *Revolution and the antiquarian book* does bring together three very different fields of interest into fruitful conversation, enhancing our understanding of the impact of Enlightenment and the so-called 'consumer revolution' of the eighteenth century on the evolving reputation of fifteenth-century books. It will be treasured by those with a professional or personal interest in 'rare books', but for a text that dwells so heavily on the physicality of books, the careless mis-binding of the bibliography at pp.279-282 is deeply unfortunate.

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Paul F Rice, *British music and the French Revolution*, Newcastle, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010, xv + 399 pp.; ISBN-13: 978-1443821100; £49.99.

Audio CD: ***Great Britain Triumphant***, Caroline Schiller (Sop), Stefanie True (sop), Mária Zádori (sop), Zoltán Megyesi (ten) Reid Spencer (Bar), Capella Savaria, Mary Terez-Smith conductor. Centaur. ASIN: B00795C4BM; £18.14.

Paul Rice's study addresses a major gap in writing on the 1790s, namely the place of music in the politically charged atmosphere of the decade. The theatre more generally has been given recent attention by the late Jane Moody, Gillian Russell and George Taylor but, as Rice points out, their work does not directly focus on the music, even when it points to the way that the non-patent theatres used music in part to circumvent the restrictions imposed by the licensing system. There is scholarly work on aspects of the music of the period: Simon McVeigh's *Concert life in London from Mozart to Haydn* (1993) remains an exemplary, if rather focussed study, and Deborah Rohr's *The careers of British musicians 1750-1850* provides many insights into the players of music and their conditions of existence. But neither really engages with the dynamics of ideological contestation in the revolutionary decade. Rice attempts to do this, but with considerable restrictions. The book focuses on London's theatres, to the exclusion of the regions and provinces, it deals only with music and performances from 1789 to the middle of 1795 (identified as a key point because of the rise of Napoleon?), it shows very little interest in broadside and other ephemeral material, and there is no concerted focus on people like Charles Dibdin, the elder, who is barely mentioned, despite the fact that his songs were an integral part of the political and cultural life of the period and that many of his most popular patriotic songs were composed then. The two introductory chapters betray both a lack of confidence in the detailed political and social history of the decade, and a related desire to produce a few sweeping statements that pass muster. So, we have a radical group 'largely made up of the working class and young Whigs' (26), Wollstonecraft is 'part of a bohemian circle' (27), Godwin, Brand Hollis and 'Holcraft' (sic) are still seeing Paine's work through the press, (28) and habeas corpus is apparently suspended in 1790 (32). Clearly, the history of the popular politics of the period is not the author's forte. Also, the proof reading has been very lax – Susan Moody appears at p. 50 in both text and footnote, and is attributed Jane's work – and the Index is extremely poor. In many respects, no serious historian of

the period should read chapter 1, and all would be better off reading Moody and Taylor's work than reading chapter 2.

The core of the text, however, is made up of five chapters that follow attempts by theatre and musical performances to represent and respond to developing events in France, and to a lesser degree at home – focussing on the Fall of the Bastille, the Fête de la Fédération, the imprisonment of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, the opening and later (until early 1795) stages of the war with France. The chapters generally have a very brief historical introduction to the events, followed by a detailed account of what the minor theatres were performing, what the patent theatres were performing, (in both cases detailing productions, plot and music) and a brief comment on non-theatrical musical performances. In some chapters, this pattern is iterated in relation to different topics – Louis XVI, Marie Antoinette, the inevitability of war, etc. What remains unclear is what the chapters are really meant to be doing. They do provide a wealth of information, with extensive quotation of words, advertisements, and components of scores, and lists of movements. And there are nuggets of information scattered throughout these materials, together with remarks on the character of the music, the way material would have been sung, and evidence of changes to the script. There are also occasional comments, of a rather speculative nature, as to what effects these performances would have had on their audiences, some of which draws on reviews, but without much sense of the politicised character of the press. But there is little by way of a developing argument or thesis about the significance of the material being discussed, and in many cases the reader is simply overwhelmed with detail that is not well framed, either intellectually, or in terms of providing a clear overview or map of the range of performances. The latter is crucial to get a sense of the scale and significance of these representations in relation to the wider quotidian theatre-going experience of Londoners. William Godwin, for example, went to the theatre more than sixty times in this period, and also attended a number of Hanover Square concerts. On a cursory glance it is difficult (not helped by the indexing) to see that he went to any of those represented here. Godwin may well have been averse to patriotic performances but it is important that a great deal of theatre is going on around these performances, and must affect any judgments to be made about their significance for the national mood.

Rice is clearly an expert on music and he has dug up a good deal of the theatrical music of London in this period, but he does little to open up issues of key signatures and tempo, vocal styles, and so on for a

readership that is not similarly informed. This is regrettable, since it is clear that wider mutual understanding between musicologists, ballad experts, and those working on theatre, the press and the public domain more generally could help to deepen our understanding of the period. For all the wealth of material contained in this work, it is presented in a way that is both indigestible and largely unenlightening and, as such, is a major missed opportunity.

The CD, *Great Britain triumphant* (Centaur, 2012) is tied to the book and contains songs by Attwood and Storace on the fate of Marie Antoinette, a couple of pieces by Hook from ‘Royal Orphans Dream’, music and songs by Shield, Atterbury and Hook, and concludes with Hook’s ‘Great Britain Triumphant’. The sleeve notes suggest that all are first recordings, which is probably right, although there is certainly related and equally interesting material on ‘The Romantic Muse: English Music at the time of Beethoven’ (Hyperion, 1994), and on Café Mozart’s recordings (e.g., ‘Hail Windsor’, 2005; ‘The General Election’ 1796). As with the book, there is not a strong sense of why material is included or omitted, and what is included is all resolutely pro-government, so there is no sense of political contestation in and through the music. The recording is good, but it lacks the diversity of artists and types of material covered by ensembles such as Café Mozart – for whom the Dibbins’ importance is not in question. While it is good to see people willing to tackle music and song material with political resonances, this collection gives us a uniformly loyalist and consequently rather dull experience. That may also be in part a function of the reverence with which the material is treated. In the 1790s audiences were vocal, intrusive, and easily bored. That made live performances an engagement on both sides, which the modern world of the CD with perfect sound and passive audience simply cannot capture (although it is less notable in the other collections of the period). Indeed, the generally rambunctious character of the decade, which has inflected its scholarship, is missing from both text and recording. While both are useful sources for particular types of material, they are neither compelling in their own right as works of scholarship or as performances.

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Alan P F Sell, *Philosophy, history, and theology: selected reviews 1975-2011*, Eugene, Oregon, Wipf & Stock, 2012, pp. xii + 324pp. ISBN 978-1-61097-968-9; £24.

I suspect Sylvia Plath's lament that 'I can never read all the books I want' is an all too familiar mantra to most readers. If Pierre Beyard's *How to talk about books you haven't read* is to be believed, perhaps this isn't a problem worthy of too many sleepless nights: what matters is being able to understand the wider significance of a given book in its context and its relation to others in the field. Alan Sell's *Philosophy, history and theology* fits this bill perfectly. The book (with the exception of a short introduction) is comprised entirely of a selection of his various book reviews published over the last thirty-five years. The presentation of these reviews together – just to pre-empt any objection that one might instead read the relevant critiques separately – creates an impressive and rewarding volume that gives the reader a sense of the academic context of the books under consideration, and provokes a greater awareness of the often under-appreciated interrelation between the study of theology, politics, philosophy and intellectual history.

The book is divided into three equal sections: Philosophy, History and Theology. Within these sections, the reviews are ordered roughly according to their subject matter (some examples in Philosophy are the thought of Locke and Rational Dissent; within Theology: the church, ethics and worship). Sell acknowledges in his introduction that a sharp division is impossible and there are many reviews in the philosophy section that would have been at home in either of the other sections (and vice versa) but the categorization makes sense and it works in bringing out the emphases of the books considered. Sell's broad ranging interdisciplinary knowledge is impressive and this volume is not merely some sort of bluffer's guide for those who haven't read the books under scrutiny. Instead, his particular expertise in synthesizing the different academic disciplines of theology, philosophy and history makes for thought provoking reviews of books already familiar to the reader. If a strand of argument can be identified as running throughout the reviews, it is that philosophers and theologians should not treat history with disdain (40) and he makes a strong case for this. Theologians who paint their history with a broad brush (for example those who are keen to blame so many contemporary ills on what is too often depicted as the Enlightenment project) would do well to engage with Sell's careful consideration of seventeenth and eighteenth century history.

Some of Sell's featured reviews are in areas of very specific interest (e.g. J David Hoeveler Jr's monograph on the Scottish Philosopher James McCosh) and others are of books of broader focus (eg. Philip L Quinn and Charles Taliaferro's *A companion to philosophy of religion*) but all are significant in their field. One common theme throughout the reviews is Sell's concern to further debate through careful engagement with different authors and his identification of particularly pertinent questions. The oldest review reprinted (of R S Peters' edited volume, *The philosophy of education*), for example, raises (rather prophetic) issues that are every bit as relevant today as they were when the review was first published in 1975: what is the difference between 'education' and 'training'? Do we not undermine the education of students as an end in itself (and enquiry for its own sake) when we insist on evaluating it by its 'pay-offs' in our consumer society? (66-7).

Sell's astute observations together with his sharp wit makes this book an entertaining read. His critiques are insightful and carefully considered. There is just one occasion where he displays a rather uncharacteristic harshness. It seems a little unfair to assert that David Cornick's *Letting God be God* 'smacks of toadying to radical feminists' (299) because of his use of 'sic' after quoting exclusive linguistic terms. Undoubtedly Sell is right that most historical writers used this language as convention but it is alarming that an attempt to take the concerns of feminists seriously is dismissed as appearing to be self-serving and mere flattery. He makes an important point when he wonders what will be proclaimed from the rooftops (or internet) that we do not appreciate in our own time (299); although this defence of innocence (in the face of so much widely published feminist philosophy – some of it on the internet) cannot be used to dismiss Sarah Coakley's challenge to Richard Swinburne's use of exclusive language as spoiling 'for a fight' (75). That said, however, Sell's thoughts are engaging and rewarding to read. It may not be to everyone's taste to read a collection of book reviews from cover to cover in one sitting but this volume is well-worth dipping into and digesting at leisure, and it should be particularly recommended to theologians and philosophers who wish to develop their study of intellectual history. Perusing this book will either whet the appetite for those books yet unread or refresh the memory of important books read long ago. Either way, Sell's latest volume is a worthwhile and fascinating read.

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Nathaniel Wolloch, *History and nature in the enlightenment: praise of the mastery of nature in eighteenth-century historical literature*, Farnham and Burlington, Ashgate, pp. xviii + 290; ISBN 978 1 4094 2114 6, £61.75.

This is a study of a single idea in Enlightenment intellectual history but a single idea that, as its author affirms, also turns out to be ‘a complicated idea, ‘a compound of several important notions’. When Nathaniel Wolloch articulates the idea itself, that ‘the most essential precondition for the sustained progress of civilization, and the most enduring foundational achievement of human civilization in general, is the degree to which the control of nature, through cultivation, has been achieved’ he reveals two suppositions of his own approach. First, that for all its varieties there is a commonality to the Enlightenment project of understanding history; and second, that any affirmation of that commonality must include huge qualifications as to variables. In short, this is a book that eschews both a monolithic sense of the Enlightenment project and its postmodern dissolution into competing narratives. It is true that its sub-title may mislead a little, since its continued generality suggests a kind of ‘view from nowhere’. A better sub-title would have drawn attention to the book’s leading protagonist – who appears by name at beginning and end – Edward Gibbon.

Where, then, did agreement lie amongst the wide range of thinkers covered by Wolloch? There had been four (or sometimes three if the second and third categories were merged) stages in the progressive development of human society: hunting; pastoralism; agriculture; commerce. A quotation from Hugh Blair’s ‘A Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian’ in the chapter on ‘Rudeness’ effectively shows the accepted wisdom on this point. Where could self-doubt insert itself into so cheering a model of advancement? The answer was plain to see when Gibbon and others wandered the ruins of ancient Rome; advanced civilizations had in the past succumbed to less advanced ones. History could, as it were, run backwards as well as forwards. So the problem lay in explaining both how this could be and how it could be prevented from happening to enlightened Europe. It was no coincidence that the century’s greatest work of historiography, *The decline and fall of the Roman Empire*, would wrestle with precisely this problem.

Gibbon was not alone in observing that the progress of humanity could go into reverse nor in seeking a narrative balm for this disturbing thought. After all, looking back to the sack of Rome one could relatively

cheerfully remark that the barbarians had only managed to defeat Rome by acquiring certain Roman disciplines and refinements, to continue society by adopting Roman institutions and (in the very long run) had preserved enough of Roman civilization for its to find its way through dark ages to the modern era – which could make a further leap forward with its new assets of natural philosophy and commercial sophistication. Yet even this conclusion had a worrying contingency. True, in that case, and perhaps in others too, civilization had eventually re-emerged to progress further: but would that always be the case? One did not have to be David Hume to wonder if any number of empirical precedents could ever add up to a reassuring law of nature. However many examples of civilized Goths and Tartars one might cite, one could not rule out the emergence of a counter-example. Needless to say, Gibbon and others were not short of buttresses to doubt. Modern civilization was far more multi-centred: even should Europe decline into luxury and tyranny, there was always the new bright light safely across the Atlantic. Still, at least a lingering disappointment might remain that the progress of civilization could be contingent, or at least that it depended rather too much on the enlightened world having enough guns, men and money to ensure its ultimate triumph.

Thus we come to Nathaniel Wolloch's sub-title evocation of 'the mastery of nature'. Here was something more tangible. The understanding of nature and the technological advances attendant on that were arguably not subject to change or decay. Surely such knowledge, once gained, must survive somewhere? Whatever the devastations of war, tyranny and anarchy this knowledge bank would one day fuel another leap forward. Wolloch is painstaking in demonstrating how widely this belief was held, tracing it back to the seventeenth century, then through Buffon and the Scottish Enlightenment to the twin luminaries of Adam Smith and Edward Gibbon.

Yet even in the eighteenth century further doubts which might occur to a twenty-first century reader were not absent. Whether quite so much faith could be placed in 'fact, fact, fact' to underpin progress was a key issue. Two centuries before our own unnerving experience of advanced societies lapsing in barbarism, thinkers such as Burke had argued that adherence to core religious values was also necessary. Gibbon himself had noted the general possibilities of civilizations imploding: twin hazards of tyranny and democracy (as he saw them) could result in a reversion of the land to wilderness. (Gibbon's hostile attitude to the French Revolution would be seen by him as a natural corollary of this

pre-existing framework rather than a lurch into reaction). It was indeed very difficult to shake off a cyclical view of history, particularly given the Enlightenment propensity for highlighting the luxurious degradations of its own age. If pursued too enthusiastically this harrying of corruption could offer too many hostages to genuine sceptics about progress such as Rousseau. Was there a way of simultaneously holding on to a realistic view that civilizations might collapse and a reassurance that all not only could be, but must be, well? One answer lay in the more complex notion of a historical spiral. There was an overall upward motion but particular countries might go backwards down the spiral while others leapt ahead. As Turgot, in an early hymn to globalization, wrote: 'Finally, commercial and political ties unite all parts of the globe, and the whole human race, through alternate periods of rest and unrest, of weal and woe, goes on advancing, although at a slow pace, towards greater perfection'. While the century was not without its less optimistic cyclical models, of which Vico's was the most sophisticated, it was in general the more optimistic version of Adam Ferguson which was eventually adopted by Gibbon. This was not just because of the point mentioned earlier, and elegantly phrased by Gibbon that 'before they [the barbarians] can conquer they must cease to be barbarians'. There was also the law of unintended consequences by which even the vices of humanity could give rise to progress. One did not need to be so radical as Mandeville to embrace his paradox of 'private vices, public benefits'. So, despite the abhorrence of war's evils most memorably expressed in *Candide*, it was admitted that war might have its technological advances and advantages – as Adam Smith noted of the development of fire-arms. Of course the modern reader may detect a difficulty here: this Panglossian idea of war was based on the comfortable assumption that modern Enlightened culture would necessarily possess the most advanced weapons and employ them for the best Enlightened ends.

Rather than try and gather all these multifarious Enlightenment perspectives and debates together, Wolloch wisely concludes his book by refocusing on *The decline and fall*. Gibbon, in his view was not in the end consistent in his conclusions. Yet this may be a sign of strength rather than weakness. On the one hand the Roman Empire had indeed fallen, though to explain why was to invoke a multitude of causal factors including over-extension, luxury and a decline of military spirit, the lack of a proper appreciation of commerce and the adoption of Christianity. But on the other its core elements had not disappeared certainly not in 476 as the mass of Gibbon's book devoted to the Byzantine Empire

demonstrated, and arguably not in 1453 either since its values had been transmitted through to the writer's present. That though empires might fall their positive values could survive was perhaps as positive a conclusion as might reasonably be believed in by a rational enquirer. Wolloch articulates this cautious optimism with a properly guarded thoroughness. Although he makes clear his thinkers' Eurocentric biases, Wolloch's painstaking and morally-serious echoing of their search for a positive narrative convinces us that they still have much to teach our more sceptical age about the possibilities of progress.

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Books Received

Sarah Coakley, ed. *Faith, rationality and the passions*, Wiley/Blackwell, 2012, pp. 264; ISBN 9781444361933, £19.99: 17 essays which range over the history of religion (predominantly Christian) up to the present day, drawing upon the insights of historians, philosophers, theologians and scientists.

Voltaire, *A pocket philosophical dictionary*, a new translation by John Fletcher with an introduction and notes by Nicholas Cronk, Oxford World's Classics, 2011, pp. xxxvi + 283; ISBN 978-0-19-955363-1, pbk. £9.99/\$14.95. Perfect reading for a rail journey though don't take it into the 'quiet' carriage – your laughter might disturb the peace.

Raymond Birn, *Royal censorship of books in 18th-century France*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 2012; ISBN 978-0-8047-6359-2, hdbk, £51.50; Daniel Roche notes in the *Preface*, 'What Raymond Birn accomplishes in these essays ... is to describe the transitional phase of acceptable censorship between the last decades of Louis XIV's rule and the rupture of 1789, when the rusting bolts of idea control broke apart before the pressures of supply and demand.'

John Bender, *Ends of Enlightenment*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 2012, pp. xxiii + 294; ISBN -10: 0-847-4212-X; hdbk £72.95, pbk £20.85; Kindle £16.35

This collection of John Bender's wide-ranging essays consistently challenge one's assumptions about Enlightenment, notably those concerning the relationship between fiction and scientific realism, and contain thought-provoking observations on the way we view things today.

Mary-Ann Constantine and Paul Frame eds., *Travels in Revolutionary France & A journey across America*. George Cadogan Morgan and Richard Price Morgan, University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 2012, pp.xvi + 237 pp., ISBN 978-0-7083-2558-2; pbk., £24.99. George Cadogan Morgan was Richard Price's nephew and informant of events in Paris at the time of the fall of the Bastille. His son Richard Price Morgan provides a memoir of his father before recounting his travels in America. These documents, brought to light by Paul Frame and now expertly edited, are essential reading for readers of *E&D*.