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ISSN 0262 7612

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*The University College of Wales, Aberystwyth*

# Enlightenment and Dissent

No. 9 1990



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1991 will, we hope, witness the commemoration of the bicentenary of the death of Richard Price. Under the auspices of Ogwr Borough Council an exhibition will be held at Bridgend. This exhibition is being assembled by Mr Richard Brinkley of the Hugh Owen Library, The University College of Wales, Aberystwyth. Those wishing to host this exhibition in other centres are asked to write to Mr Brinkley at the Hugh Owen Library for further details. *Llafur*, the Welsh Labour History Society, is to hold a day-school at Llangeinor, Price's birthplace, on Saturday 6 April 1991 on the theme *Richard Price and the roots of Glamorgan radicalism*. Both of your editors have been invited to read papers at this meeting. Those interested should apply for further details to the Secretary of *Llafur*, Mr Chris Williams, School of History and Archaeology, University of Wales College, Cardiff, PO Box 909, Cardiff, CF1 3XU.

In the course of the year it is hoped that the following books concerning Price will be published: a comprehensive bibliography of Price's works is scheduled to appear in the St Paul's bibliographies, compiled and edited by D.O. Thomas, John Stephens and P.A.L. Jones; *Richard Price: the political writings* is to be published in the series *Classics in the History of Political Thought* by Cambridge University Press; and the second volume of *The correspondence of Richard Price*, will be published jointly by The University of Wales Press and Duke University Press.

We are very pleased to record that we have been informed by CADW that Tyn-ton, the house in Llangeinor where Richard Price was born, is now a listed building. Price's home will thus be preserved as a building of historical interest, and we are very grateful to Sir Wyn Roberts, the Minister of State at the Welsh Office, for his invaluable help in securing this outcome.

The next issue of this journal will be the tenth, and we are very grateful to our subscribers and contributors for ensuring that we have survived thus far. If we are to go on for another decade we shall still need the help of those who have been so graciously loyal to the venture in difficult times. So please continue your support, and whenever the opportunity arises enlist new subscribers and new contributors. Many heartfelt thanks.

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

## EIGHTEENTH CENTURY BRITISH BIOGRAPHY

The Eighteenth Century British Biography project (EBB) initiated at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, England, in February 1990, aims to bring together the personal records of the English speaking people of that period. The project is chaired by Brian Baumfield, ex-librarian of Birmingham Public Library, and jointly directed by Professor John Cannon of the University of Newcastle, and Dr Frank Robinson, Director of the NSTC. It will include individuals who lived in areas that were then colonies as well as those who lived in the United Kingdom. It is intended that the final compilation will offer far and away the most complete and authoritative listing of the British people of the eighteenth century. Such diverse and prolific sources as directories, society lists, book subscription lists, wills, parish registers, charity subscriptions, obituaries from journals and newspapers, poll books, apprentice returns, will be included. Through using such sources the project will make accessible large amounts of data about the common man as well as heroes of the period.

The project will begin by creating a file of all local and national directories, and all book subscription lists of the period, which because of human lifespan will be taken initially as continuing up to 1830; these sources alone will produce a database of over 3 million records. At the same time some selected data from many other sources will be interfiled, so as to work out the mechanisms of entry and retrieval; it may be that the project will result in a standardized format for biographical data, such as was achieved in bibliography with MARC. The first version of Machine Readable Biography [MARB] will be published in the winter of 1990/91.

The project invites contributions of biographical records. Much research, especially for theses, involves considerable accumulation of data which fails to see the light of day except in summary form or languishes unpublished. The project will interfile all such sources in the data base with full reference to the provenance of the materials. Interested scholars should contact the Project Office.

Secondary sources will also be included in the database; for example author listings from both ESTC and NSTC will be interfiled.

It is expected that EBB will be published in segments, beginning in approximately two years. Publication will be on CD-ROM or whatever medium then best fosters widespread accessibility, down-loading, and manipulation.

A Newsletter will be issued gratis annually, beginning in December 1990; inquiries or requests to be placed on the mailing lists are welcome. A more detailed description of the project is available now from the Eighteenth Century British Biography Project, Park House, Ashow Nr. Kenilworth, Warwickshire CV8 2LE, Tel. (0926)58813.

## REASON RECYCLED: THE ENLIGHTENMENT TODAY<sup>1</sup>

Margaret Canovan

### I.

One of the advantages of middle age is the vantage point it gives one from which to trace the steps of that elusive beast, the *Zeitgeist*. Its ghostly footprints have in recent years led in a most unexpected direction, apparently making a U-turn back toward the Age of Reason. For those of us whose memories go as far back as the 1950s, this is quite a surprise.

Thirty years ago historians who looked back over the intellectual and political developments of the two preceding centuries were able to see a clear pattern, amounting to a *Bildungsroman* in which the hero, Western Man, became wiser and very much sadder. The story began with the rosy dawn of the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century, when, as the mists of superstition cleared away, the rising sun of reason revealed a level classical landscape with clear vistas and broad, straight avenues for human advance. Moving purposefully about that landscape were rational individuals, self-interested, perhaps, but calculating, and therefore capable of being induced to further the welfare of all. The social institutions they inhabited might be cramped, uncomfortable and rickety, but being human constructions they could be demolished and rebuilt on a more regular and harmonious plan, as was happening at that time to the stately homes of England. There seemed no reason why prosperity, justice and perpetual peace should not be achieved. Joseph Priestley expressed the spirit of the time when he wrote,

No maxim may be more depended upon than that, whatever is *true* and *right* will finally prevail, and the more violent the opposition, the more firmly will it be established, in the end.<sup>2</sup>

Experience soon destroyed those youthful certainties. The classical landscape was shaken by the earthquake of the French Revolution and invaded by dark, romantic shapes prowling out of the woods of Germany. The lesson of the French Revolution seemed to be that justice, prosperity and peace are not so easily gained after all, since human beings cannot control their destiny but are swept along helplessly on currents of social change. From Germany came the romantic vocabulary that stressed history and tradition against reason and calculation, the *Volk* against the individual and the local and specific against the universal. As historicist and sociological ways of thinking came to dominate intellectual discourse,

<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to James Canovan for comments on an earlier version of this paper.

<sup>2</sup> 'Political dialogue', 1791, in J.T. Rutt (ed.) *The theological and miscellaneous works of Joseph Priestley* (London, 1817-1832), Vol. XXV, 106.

the scope for individuals to act freely to change the worlds seemed greatly reduced: unless, of course, those individuals could choose the winning side by aligning themselves with powerful social and historical forces. Marx's theory represented a compromise of this kind between Enlightened optimism and Romantic pessimism, in which the classical eighteenth-century vision was shifted to the end of history. According to the Marxist synthesis, men who were pawns of historical forces - and therefore doomed to experience only conflict, inequality and unreason in this world - were at least promised a world to come in which they would realise the Enlightenment's dream of taking control of their lives and establishing justice, prosperity and peace.

While Marxism kept alive this flickering will o'the wisp to lure men into the bogs of revolution, elsewhere the landscape seemed to grow ever darker. As the end of the nineteenth century approached, mankind's capacity to act freely and rationally to build a better world was challenged in the name not only of social and historical forces outside the individual but of psychological forces within. Sceptical critics in the age of Nietzsche, Freud and Pareto stripped off the surface layer of human autonomy and rationality and discovered underneath it writhing tangles of irrationality, cruelty and destructiveness that seemed to give the lie to the Enlightenment dream of rational reconstruction, whether in this world or in the Marxist world to come.

The disillusioned wisdom of this sceptical avant-garde was apparently confirmed by European experience in the first half of the twentieth century. World wars, revolutions that made tyranny worse, mass support for dictators, the Holocaust, the Bomb: events seemed to prove beyond doubt that the men of the Enlightenment had been hopelessly naive, and that wisdom was to be found instead in the less congenial but more profound philosophers of unreason from de Maistre to Nietzsche. By the 1950s, it appeared the sad story was complete. Faith in reason, political optimism, even the notion that a human being is an individual able to act effectively after calculating the pros and cons of a decision, all seemed to be gone beyond recall. The atmosphere of the times was accurately expressed in a reflective work by Judith Shklar entitled *After Utopia: The decline of political faith*. In her introduction, headed 'The Decline of the Enlightenment', the author stated without fear of contradiction that, 'If the Enlightenment still figures in the realm of ideas it is as a foil for attack, not as an inspiration to new ideas.'<sup>3</sup> After Auschwitz and Hiroshima, that seemed a safe thing to say.

But the *Zeitgeist* is a playful beast, even fonder than the rest of us of playing what Chesterton called the game of 'cheat the prophet' - waiting until all the experts have prophesied what is going to happen, and then

<sup>3</sup> J.N. Shklar, *After Utopia - The decline of political faith* (Princeton, 1957), 3.

going quietly off to do the exact opposite.<sup>4</sup> When we look around at recent trends, what should we find but, of all things, a revival on all sides of the Age of Reason.

There is more to the rebirth of eighteenth-century fashions than the neo-classical columns with which out-of-town shopping malls are newly adorned, or even than the more solid neo-Georgian architecture beloved of the Prince of Wales. Academic thinking about politics, economics and society in general has seen a dramatic return to ideas dominant two hundred years ago, often with surprisingly little by way of up-dating. These intellectual trends were spectacularly reinforced by events in 1989, as regimes based on the quintessentially nineteenth-century creed of Marxism fell before appeals to liberal politics and *laissez-faire* economics. Let us therefore look in a little more detail at the resurrection of eighteenth-century ideas.

## II.

The remarkable change in the temper of the times must be a source of particular satisfaction to Friedrich Hayek, whose restatements of classical liberal principles in economics and politics make him the representative thinker of the period. This is not to say that Hayek can be held responsible for the shift; on the contrary, the change in his reputation over the last thirty years is a good illustration of the importance of intellectual fashion, for what he said over that period altered very little, while the reception he was accorded changed enormously. Essentially, his case was the familiar classical liberal one that both freedom and prosperity demand limits on the arbitrary power of governments, coupled with the warning that the chief bastion of arbitrary governmental power in the modern world is socialism. Thirty years ago this message was not just unfashionable; it seemed much too *old-fashioned* to be taken seriously. Although Hayek's combination of conviction and intellectual power guaranteed his works a certain notoriety, readers outside a small circle of enthusiasts generally assumed that *The Road to Serfdom* and *The Constitution of Liberty* were more useful for target practice than as guides to action.<sup>5</sup>

The aspect of Hayek's neo-classicism that has enjoyed the most striking revival is of course his praise of the *market* as at once the most efficient promoter of economic prosperity and the best guarantee of individual choice. Adam Smith's 'invisible hand', which leads economic men to promote general prosperity while seeking their own interest, used to strike socialists as one of the crudest fictions of bourgeois ideology, a

<sup>4</sup> G.K. Chesterton, *The Napoleon of Notting Hill* (London, 1904), 13.

<sup>5</sup> F.A. Hayek, *The road to serfdom* (London, 1944); *The constitution of liberty* (London, 1960); *Law, legislation and liberty* 3 volumes (London, 1973-9).

transparent example of the way in which the dominant class can put a rational gloss on its own special interests. The remarkable feature of our times is that this same hated principle of the market has now been adopted not only by Thatcherites but, to a greater or lesser extent, by almost everyone in sight, from Chinese Communists and Hungarian ex-communists to British socialists. Looking at any particular case - Neil Kinnock's revolution in the Labour Party, for example, with John Smith's accompanying 'prawn cocktail offensive' among City financiers - one might be tempted to dismiss this as a matter of short-term electoral expediency, of no great intellectual significance. But what is more interesting than the number and range of such political examples is the new tendency at an intellectual level to rethink socialism in terms that incorporate market relationships, and with them assumptions about human nature and human motivation that are strongly reminiscent of the Enlightenment. Rational, free-standing, largely self-interested individuals now appear in socialist as well as in liberal thinking, and the difference between the two no longer involves complete disagreement about human nature, but has more to do with smaller-scale differences over aims and institutions. Left-wingers would once have taken as axiomatic the belief that individual character is determined by society, and therefore that while a competitive society produces competitive individuals, a socialist society will produce unselfish individuals. Far more of them are now prepared, in Rousseau's words, to 'take men as they are and laws as they might be'<sup>6</sup> and to consider devices such as the free market which enable 'private vices' to be turned into 'public benefits'.<sup>7</sup>

This is part of a new attitude to the relationship between individuals and institutions that represents a return to eighteenth century notions about humanity. With some exceptions, the thinkers of the Enlightenment tended to assume that human nature is universally the same, whereas the Romantic movement impressed upon the nineteenth century the idea that the individual is a social product, varying enormously from one time and place to another. No wonder, therefore, that the eighteenth-century belief in Natural Rights, briefly proclaimed at the start of the French Revolution, should have lost its plausibility so fast in the nineteenth century. For how could anyone aware of the specific histories and cultures of England, France and Germany suppose that Englishmen, Frenchmen and Germans were sufficiently similar to have the same rights? *A fortiori*, in a century when Europeans came face to face with the full range of human differences around the globe, how could it make sense to talk of Germans and Chinese, Englishmen and Zulus having the same nature and the same rights?

<sup>6</sup> J.J. Rousseau, *The social contract* (Harmondsworth, 1968), 49. Rousseau did not follow his own advice, in this as in many other matters.

<sup>7</sup> B. Mandeville, *The fable of the bees* (Harmondsworth, 1970), 51. Cf. J. le Grand and S. Estrin, *Market socialism* (Oxford, 1989).

By the time of the Second World War, the notion of natural rights seemed utterly discredited in European intellectual circles. Its recent dramatic revival in the guise of Human Rights is traceable to a number of pragmatic reasons that have in their various ways helped to lead Western opinion back toward the Age of Reason. There was, in the first place, the increased post-war influence of the USA, where the idea had been kept alive by the anachronistic survival of an eighteenth-century constitution. There was also, overwhelmingly, the shock of the Holocaust, which provided a brutal demonstration of what is liable to happen when a regime explicitly rejects any commitment to equal humanity. Political thinkers who had been deeply influenced by the moral relativism of late nineteenth-century thought, and who had prided themselves on their 'realism' about shallow notions like equality and democracy, found themselves recoiling when the abyss opened up by Nietzsche turned out to contain the gas chambers. For practical purposes, it seemed, the 'heavenly city of the eighteenth century philosophers'<sup>8</sup> was an indispensable myth.

Although the post-war proclamation of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights was received with scepticism in many philosophical circles, the lack of respectable philosophical grounds for the idea has to some extent been rendered less urgent by subsequent experience. As historians of the Enlightenment have pointed out,<sup>9</sup> the notion of 'humanity' that played so important a role in the thought of the Age of Reason had a lot to do with the cosmopolitanism generated by travellers' tales. A universal mankind with a single human nature and common natural rights was the dream of a generation that had heard that some savages were noble, some heathens godly, and some barbarians more civilised than Europeans themselves. During the nineteenth century, of course, closer acquaintance with the other inhabitants of the globe tended to impress Europeans with the *differences* between peoples rather than their similarities. Since 1945, however, the trend of experience has been to reinforce the notion of universal humanity once again, partly because, with the rapid spread of Westernization, modern people on opposite sides of the globe really *are* more similar than ever before, but also because even when they remain different, television brings their humanity vividly before us. When we can actually see Chinese students facing the tanks in Tiananman Square, or children starving in Ethiopia, the notion that we are all members of a common human race entitled to the same basic human rights gains greatly in plausibility.

<sup>8</sup> C.L. Becker, *The heavenly city of the eighteenth century philosophers* (New Haven, 1932).

<sup>9</sup> P. Hazard, *The European mind 1680-1715* (Harmondsworth, 1964), Ch.1; I.O. Wade, *The intellectual origins of the French Enlightenment* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1971), Ch.9.

At any rate, and whatever the reasons, the ever-increasing frequency of appeals to the notion of human rights in international politics is one of the striking signs of the contemporary revival of attitudes and ideas characteristic of the Enlightenment. Indeed, the idea of human rights forms part of a cluster of political ideas current in the eighteenth century, to a greater or lesser extent discredited in the nineteenth, and now making a come-back. Other elements in this cluster are the idea of deliberately constructing a republic with a constitution to ensure 'the rule of laws, not men', and the belief that leadership may be vitally important in getting it going. All these characteristically eighteenth-century ideas had long been overshadowed by the nineteenth-century emphasis on 'society', which implied on the one hand that it was *social* reforms rather than political ones that really mattered, and on the other hand that constitutions and leaders were in any case only expressions of deeper social forces. If we look a little more closely at some of these points we may be able to pinpoint more accurately the current return to Enlightened thinking.

One postwar political thinker who remained loyal to eighteenth rather than to nineteenth-century traditions was Hannah Arendt, and nowhere was this more apparent than in her analysis of revolutions. Ever since Marx, it had been axiomatic that revolutions are essentially *social* happenings, in which political changes are merely the surface reverberations caused by the volcanic eruption of deeper social forces such as class conflict. In defiance of this orthodoxy, Arendt asserted in *On Revolution* that revolutions are originally and essentially *political* uprisings concerned with the founding of free republics, although in most cases this initial concern with political freedom has been swamped by the social pressure of mass poverty. From this standpoint, the American Revolution was one of the very few successful revolutions, whereas not only the French but the Russian was a failed revolution. From the orthodox standpoint, of course, which defines revolution primarily in social terms, it is doubtful whether the American example can be considered a revolution at all.<sup>10</sup>

Arendt's highly idiosyncratic analysis of revolution has acquired an unexpected relevance in a year that has seen revolutions all over Eastern Europe that are undoubtedly revolutions of the kind she described: not the eruption of social transformations into the political realm, but revolutions for political freedom, throwing off one political system and constructing another. Whether or not they will be shipwrecked by social tensions remains to be seen, but in the meantime their concerns are characteristically political and eighteenth-century concerns: how to construct a constitution that gives the people access to politics; how to protect citizens' rights; how to limit the power of governments and make them obey the law; how to diminish the risk of war by agreements between

<sup>10</sup> H. Arendt, *On Revolution* (Harmondsworth, 1973).

republics. On this last point, one commentator on the events in Eastern Europe, Timothy Garton Ash, has explicitly drawn on Kant's principle that the only states that can be trusted not to go to war with one another are those based upon a republican constitution.<sup>11</sup>

Although this 'republican' agenda has acquired a new urgency as a result of events in Eastern Europe, there had in fact been increased interest in such topics for several years, one small straw in the wind being the growing number of campaigners for a written British constitution. This was itself a considerable change. For many years 'social' concerns had taken precedence over political and legal arrangements, partly because left-wing reformers were inclined to be dismissive of 'bourgeois' freedoms, and partly because political scientists had stressed that constitutions were not a reliable guide to the way political systems worked. Both groups seem now to have come to the conclusion that although laws and institutions are by no means a panacea, they really do make a lot of difference. That born constitution-monger, Jeremy Bentham, would be in his element among the present projects for constitutions: constitutions for Britain, for the East European countries, for a new South Africa, and, of course, for that United States of Europe that may or may not be ultimately created on the basis of the European Community.

Along with this rediscovery of the eighteenth century's enthusiasm for the deliberate construction of republican institutions goes a renewed belief in the significance of political action, and therefore of having the right leadership at the right time: the Founding Fathers. This is something else that the nineteenth-century legacy of 'social' thinking tended to underplay. It is true that the Romantics liked to talk about 'heroes', but heroes were envisaged not as mere individual human beings but as vehicles for super-human forces, the spirit of a people or of a time, even (as Napoleon appeared to Hegel) as a 'World-soul' on horseback.<sup>12</sup> On the left, meanwhile, individuals seemed to disappear altogether into society. Marxists argued that even Napoleon had not actually made any difference to European history, since if he had been carried off by measles in infancy the objective social forces would have thrown up some other figurehead to carry on the dialectic of history.<sup>13</sup> Within the sociological tradition coming down from the nineteenth century there was a persistent tendency to attribute events to general 'social' causes, and therefore to deny not only the impact of specific individuals, but also the sheer contingency of historical events.

<sup>11</sup> *Kant's political writings* ed. H. Reiss (Cambridge, 1970), 100; Timothy Garton Ash in *The Independent* 10 May 1990.

<sup>12</sup> S. Avineri, *Hegel's theory of the modern state* (Cambridge, 1972), 63.

<sup>13</sup> *The Marx-Engels reader* ed. R.C. Tucker (London, 1978), 768.

As the great tide of 'social' thinking has retreated, there has in recent times been a much greater willingness to believe that prominent individuals and their decisions really can make a difference, particularly in politics. One example of this change of emphasis from social determinism to political responsibility is the work of the Dutch political scientist, Arend Lijphart on the politics of deeply divided societies. In the face of an orthodox and (it must be admitted) very plausible consensus in political sociology according to which stable democracy is virtually impossible in societies that are deeply divided between ethnic or religious groups (like Lebanon or Northern Ireland) Lijphart put forward his own theory of 'consociational democracy'. This accounted for the few cases where deeply divided societies *had* achieved stable democracies by pointing to special institutional arrangements on the one hand, and political will among the leaders on the other. Furthermore, with an incurable optimism that is strongly reminiscent of Bentham, Lijphart has been ready not only to account for these successes in the past but also to prescribe for the future, notably by proposing elaborate and ingenious constitutional arrangements for a democratic South Africa.<sup>14</sup> Like Hayek, Lijphart seems to be turning out to be a spokesman of the *Zeitgeist*. Where a sociologically-minded generation would until recently have assumed that politics in South Africa could not be other than a dismal reflection of its oppressive and unstable society, neo-Enlightened optimists see only a particularly tough challenge to political will and constitutional ingenuity.

This swing back to Enlightened modes of thought has been greatly assisted by the spectacle of dominant and highly idiosyncratic leaders in Britain and the Soviet Union. It would be difficult to deny that Mrs Thatcher and Mr Gorbachev have each, for good or ill, made a difference to events, and equally difficult to maintain that any alternative leader in their shoes would have behaved in the same way. Furthermore, there were occasions when supporters of each leader found themselves in a characteristically eighteenth-century dilemma. For if one is committed to freedom (whether *laissez-faire* or *perestroika*), should one deplore the concentration of power in the hands of a strong leader, or should one support an enlightened despot who can sweep away vested interests and act as 'legislator' of a new order? For Margaret Thatcher, read Catherine the Great. Difficult though this dilemma may be, it does illustrate the renewed sense in contemporary politics that choices *matter*, that the future is open and will be affected by the ideas, projects, decisions and agreements of the present generation.

<sup>14</sup> A. Lijphart, *Democracy in plural societies* (New Haven, 1977); *Power-sharing in South Africa* (Berkeley, California, 1985).

This sense of an open future, so characteristic of the Enlightenment, particularly in that 'dawn' in which it was 'bliss...to be alive', was replaced in the nineteenth century by the notion that history has its own mysterious destination, to which we are being carried whether we like it or not. The early, optimistic version of this gave way in the late nineteenth century before pessimistic images of decline, and these in their turn to an early-twentieth century cult of dictators which might seem to indicate a faith in the human power to act. But the cult of personality fostered by Mussolini, Hitler and Stalin was peculiarly ambiguous in its attitude to action. Fascism was deliberately irrationalist, exalting 'the deed' while refusing responsibility for its consequences, while both Hitler and Stalin claimed that they were allying themselves with historically inevitable forces. Movements like this only contributed to the sense of human helplessness fostered by the prevailing sociological assumption that individuals, institutions and ideas are, after all, only expressions of a greater social whole. One of the main aspects of the current return to the Enlightenment is, by contrast, the rise of much less sociological and more individualistic ways of thinking.

This climate of individualism can be observed not just in Thatcherite politics and market economics but in more recondite current trends. Rawls' successful revival of social contract theory is a notable example.<sup>15</sup> If ever any classic motif of political theory seemed dead beyond resurrection, it was surely the idea of the social contract. In the 1950s it seemed about as plausible a candidate for revival as the notion of the divine right of kings. Its premises - the notions that individuals can be usefully imagined apart from the societies to which they belong, that those societies can be constructed according to a plan, and that rational argument can determine what that plan should be - had all, apparently, been exploded by the sociological relativism of the nineteenth century. As in the case of Hayek, the enormous impact of Rawls' ideas must surely be attributed as much to a change in the intellectual climate as to the sheer force of the ideas themselves.

One of the sources of this change in intellectual climate is surely the post-war shift in the balance of political and economic power from Europe to the USA. The double evolution whereby English has become the world's dominant intellectual language at the same time that American intellectuals have lost their former deference toward Europe means that specifically American habits of thinking about politics, economics and society now have much greater impact than before. As we saw earlier, the revival of natural rights was made possible partly by the fact that Jeffersonian ideas were still alive in America, preserved and sanctified by the political system. There is no doubt that although the current revival of

<sup>15</sup> J. Rawls, *A theory of justice* (London, 1972).

individualism has many sources - early twentieth century Vienna in the case of Hayek, for instance - the renewed confidence and wider spread of American attitudes is one of them. One very characteristic example of the genre is the current flowering of rational choice theory, a study concerned with the implications of interactions between rational and self-interested individuals that would have delighted the heart of Jeremy Bentham. All the same, it would be a great mistake to understand neo-Enlightenment simply as evidence (to be set alongside the spread of MacDonald's hamburgers even to Moscow) that America is taking over the world. After all, one of the most respected European intellectuals of recent times has been Jurgen Habermas, whose intellectual explorations have led him to reinterpret a neo-Marxist concern for emancipation in terms of an emphasis on reason, communication and public discussion that consciously echo the Enlightenment.<sup>16</sup>

### III.

Are we to conclude, then (to adapt Burke) that 'the age of society is dead, and that of sophisters, economists and calculators has succeeded?' Not entirely. Citing Burke reminds us that early Romanticism was itself an eighteenth-century phenomenon, and invites us to look for parallels today. And indeed, just as in the Age of Reason, the revolt against the Enlightenment is under our noses. Neo-Rousseauism actually emerged at about the same time as the revival of Enlightenment, and with considerably more immediate impact. The movements stemming from 1968, with their hostility to form and structure, their cult of authenticity, their celebration of personal relations, their craving for the simple life and closeness to nature, are strikingly Rousseauian. Rousseau in some of his moods was surely the original hippy. Among the great texts of the eighteenth century that have recently gained a new relevance is not only Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* but Rousseau's *Discourse on the origin of inequality*. That diatribe against progress is very much in tune with the views of those Greens for whom the original sustainable society was that of the hunter-gatherers. In contrast to nineteenth-century Romantic Conservatives, who tended to celebrate a peasant existence that was hierarchical, anti-individualistic, male chauvinist and devoted to honest toil, Rousseau's more radical vision of free, equal, leisured primitives is a much more timely vision to set against industrial society. In a sense, therefore, one might argue that this Rousseauist shadow is merely another demonstration of the solidity of Neo-Enlightenment.

<sup>16</sup> See J. Habermas, *The philosophical discourse of modernity* (Cambridge, 1987) for a defence of Enlightenment against post-modern critics.

But the Green revolt is only one of the forces beginning to marshal themselves against the new Age of Reason in an eerie repetition of Romanticism. As nationalism once again divides humanity, and reviving religious fundamentalism once again challenges rational consensus, there are signs once more, as there were two hundred years ago, that the cleverest and most creative intellectuals are bored with Enlightenment. At the end of the eighteenth century, the most intellectually exciting ideas were those of the German Romantics, who were challenging the bland certainties of sober universal rationality. In place of universalism they asserted relativism; in place of unity, plurality; in place of reason, creativity; in place of classic gravity, a spirit of play; above all, in place of science, poetry. Their modern counterparts are the Postmodernists, mainly French, but deeply influenced by two German thinkers, Heidegger and Nietzsche.<sup>17</sup>

Perhaps we should think twice, therefore, before we celebrate the rebirth of Enlightenment. It is certainly remarkable that so many of the themes of the Age of Reason should have been picked out of the dustbin of history and polished up for use in our time. It is particularly poignant that in 1989, two hundred years after those of progressive views were congratulating one another on the spread of freedom and the lifting of the dark cloud of unreason from more of humanity, we also should have been celebrating revolutions for freedom, the rule of law and human rights. But revivals of this kind cannot help but arouse disquieting speculations about natural cycles in history. Two hundred years ago, after all, that bright dawn was just beginning to be clouded. Fanaticism was replacing reason, violence driving out the rule of law, nationalism taking the place of individualism, and the net effect of the experience was to leave Europeans with a sense of helplessness before the forces of history and society that almost two centuries were required to dispel. Perhaps Nietzsche, hero of the Postmodernists, should have the last word.<sup>18</sup>

What if a demon crept after thee into thy loneliest loneliness some day or night, and said to thee, 'This life, as thou livest it at present, and hast lived it, thou must live it once more, and also innumerable times; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and every sigh, and all the unspeakably small and great in thy life must come to thee again, and all in the same series and sequence...'

<sup>17</sup> For a characterisation of 'postmodernity', see the first chapter of A. Heller and F. Feher, *The postmodern political condition* (Polity, 1988).

<sup>18</sup> F. Nietzsche, *The joyful wisdom* (London, 1910), 270.

\* The author would again like to make grateful acknowledgement to the owners and curators of manuscript collections cited in Part I of this paper (*Enlightenment and Dissent*, n.8, 1989, 44-68). She would further like to thank for generous assistance and permission to quote from manuscripts in their collections, the American Philosophical Society, the British Library, the Syndics of the Cambridge University Library and the Library of the Royal Society.

Jenny Graham

It was as a respected if increasingly controversial leader of opinion, of whose political views there could be no doubt; who had arguably played an important and influential role in the shaping of the political philosophy of his generation; who, as Professor Kramnick has indeed gone so far as to claim, "qualifies as the central intellectual figure" amongst the middle class radicals of England,<sup>1</sup> that Priestley, in the summer of 1789, joined in the general jubilation on the outbreak of Revolution in France. He had, he wrote, had "very minute accounts of all that passed", from his son William. He was much interested, as were many other Englishmen, in the prospect of a similar revolution in Flanders; and, he wrote, "other countries, I hope, will follow in due time; and when civil tyranny is all at an end, that of the church will soon be disposed of."<sup>2</sup> "The present times are highly favourable to liberality of every kind", he declared in a Sermon preached in Birmingham on 5 November, on the subject of the impending campaign of the Dissenters for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts.<sup>3</sup> But it was the first public comment on the Revolution in France of his close friend and political sympathiser, Richard Price, delivered on 4 November from the pulpit of the Meeting House in the Old Jewry, immediately before the annual meeting of the London Revolution Society,

<sup>1</sup> Isaac Kramnick, "Republican Revisionism Revisited", *American Historical Review*, 87.3 (June 1982), 645; and cf. also Kramnick, "Eighteenth Century Science and Radical Social Theory: The Case of Joseph Priestley's Scientific Liberalism", *Journal of British Studies*, 25.1 (January 1986), 3-6; 17-22.

<sup>2</sup> J.T. Rutt, ed., *The theological and miscellaneous works of Joseph Priestley*, 25 vols. (London, 1817-1831), I, *Life and correspondence*, pt.2. 38: Priestley to Adam Walker, 21 October 1789. For William Priestley's presence in Paris, cf. *ibid.*, I.2. 27: Priestley to Lindsey, 22 July 1789; and also D.W.L. MSS., Priestley to Lindsey, 14 August 1789: "We have not yet heard that Wm. has left Paris. When we heard last, he was very well, and much interested in the great scene before him": passage omitted in Rutt, *Works*, I.2. 28. Cf. also W. Chaloner, "Dr Joseph Priestley, John Wilkinson and the French Revolution 1789-1802", *Trans. Royal Historical Society*, 5th ser., 8 (1958) 25.

<sup>3</sup> Priestley, *The conduct to be observed by the dissenters in order to procure the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. Recommended in a sermon preached before the congregations of the old and new meetings, at Birmingham, November 5, 1789*, *Works*, XV. 399. Cf. also Priestley, *Works*, I.2. 41,42,47: Priestley to Lindsey, 10, 18, 29 November 1789; and *ibid.*, I. pt.2 44, 48: Priestley to Belsham, 18 November, 4 December 1789.

which Priestley was above all anxious to see. "I long much to see Dr Price's sermon", he wrote to Lindsey: "I hear so much of it from all quarters."<sup>4</sup>

Price delivered his *Discourse* frail and in ill health, and in it expressed the sense of gratitude and relief of an old man whose labours have not been in vain: "I have lived", he said:

to see a diffusion of knowledge, which has undermined superstition and error ... the rights of men better understood than ever, and nations panting for liberty, which seemed to have lost the idea of it ... THIRTY MILLIONS of people ... indignant and resolute, spurning at slavery ... their king led in triumph, and an arbitrary monarch surrendering himself to his subjects.

A king, said Price, in the language of Jebb, Burgh, Cartwright and Priestley, "is no more than the first servant of the public, created by it, maintained by it, and responsible to it." His "Majesty was by no means" his own ... but the MAJESTY OF THE PEOPLE ... You cannot be too attentive to this observation. The improvement of the world depends on the attention to it."<sup>5</sup>

"It is, indeed, most excellent" wrote Priestley: "I was moved, even to tears, towards the conclusion." The implications of Price's extremism he clearly recognised: "His friends need be under no apprehension. The court will be galled, but they will never hurt him." And he wrote that he hoped that it would be reprinted "in a cheap form, to distribute through the country ... It may have as great an effect as his tract on Civil Liberty. Now is the time", he wrote, "to speak out without any fear, both on civil and religious subjects, while the advocates for tyranny are overawed."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Priestley, *Works*, I. pt.2. 46: Priestley to Lindsey, 29 November 1789; and *ibid.*, I. pt.2. 49: Priestley to Lindsey, 4 December 1789: "You raise my curiosity to the highest pitch about Dr Price's Sermon". And cf. also *ibid.*, I. pt.2. 47: Priestley to Belsham, 4 December 1789.

<sup>5</sup> R. Price, *A Discourse on the love of our country, delivered on 4 Nov., 1789, at the meeting-house in the Old Jewry, to the Society for Commemorating the Revolution in Great Britain* (London, 1789), 48-9; 22-4; 34ff; D.O. Thomas, *The honest mind: the thought and work of Richard Price* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 283; 296-302; A. Goodwin, *The friends of liberty: the English democratic movement in the age of the French Revolution* (London, 1979), 106-110; and also J.G.A. Pocock, "Radical criticism of the Whig order", in M. and J. Jacob, *The origins of Anglo-American radicalism* (London, 1984), 49.

<sup>6</sup> Priestley, *Works*, I, pt.2, 49-50: Priestley to Lindsey, 10 December 1789.

In the first campaign in England to be directly affected by the events in France, this advice of Priestley's was, to the dismay of many, widely followed. The repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, now in what was hoped to be its final phase, was an object pointed out by Price in his *Discourse*, and was a cause to which both he, and even more conspicuously Priestley, had devoted much of their lives. Priestley's outspoken extremism on the need for disestablishment of the Anglican Church - in particular in his notorious *Letter to Pitt* of 1787 - was indeed the reason why, as he wrote, in the campaign of 1789-90, he "purposely kept out of the way, lest my presence should impede the business." But his later statement, in his *Memoirs*, that the campaign was "altogether without any concurrence of mine",<sup>7</sup> can be seen, from only a cursory inspection of his letters, to be false. Priestley, it is clear, was closely involved in the management of the campaign in Birmingham: in selecting pamphlets to be published; in discussing the agenda of meetings; and also, in one letter to Lindsey, making a spirited defence of provincial independence of action - which was, indeed, to be one of the hallmarks of this campaign, and a legacy which it handed on to the reform movement in general. "You do not sufficiently consider", he wrote, "that, large as London is, the country is larger." In the *Familiar Letters* which he was writing throughout the campaign, his intransigence was not abated: "We shall even ask more than we have hitherto done, and shall not be refused."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Priestley, *Familiar letters, addressed to the inhabitants of Birmingham* (Birmingham 1790), *Works*, XIX. 213-4; J. Lindsay, ed., *Autobiography of Joseph Priestley* (Bath, 1970) 129; cf. however, Priestley, *An appeal to the public on the subject of the riots in Birmingham*, Part II (London, 1792), *Works*, XIX. 462, where Priestley does admit to drawing up some at least of the resolutions during the campaign - although not, he categorically states, in Birmingham.

<sup>8</sup> Priestley, *Works*, I, pt.2. 44: Priestley to Lindsey, 25 November 1789; Priestley, *Familiar letters*, *Works*, XIX. 169; and cf. Priestley, *Works*, I, pt.2. 37, 45, 49, 52, 54, 58; and also J. Johnstone, *The works of Samuel Parr*, 8 vols., (London 1828), I. *Memoirs*, 345-6; and C.U.L. Add. Mss., 7886, 152: Lindsey to Friend, 14 January 1790: Priestley, wrote Lindsey, "has been very much occupied in their proceedings at Birmingham, tho' he has kept out of sight."

For the campaign in general, cf. R.B. Barlow, *Citizenship and conscience; a study in the theory and practice of religious toleration in England during the eighteenth century* (Philadelphia, 1962); G.M. Ditchfield, "The Parliamentary Struggle over the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, 1787-1790", *English Hist. Review*, 89 (July 1974), 551-77; U. Henriques, *Religious Toleration in England, 1787-1833* (London 1961); J. Money, *Experience and Identity: Birmingham and the West Midlands, 1760-1800*, (Manchester, 1977), 219-23.

It was in the wake of the defeat of the campaign for repeal that for many English reformers, France became very clearly the model to be followed. Amongst those who crossed the Channel in July 1790 was Priestley's close political confidant Benjamin Vaughan, who sent to his patron Lansdowne detailed reports of the French celebration of 14 July on the Champs de Mars.<sup>9</sup> In England, too, on 14 July 1790, at the Crown and Anchor, Price had assembled a gathering of some six hundred and fifty "friends of the Revolution in France". Amidst hopes from Stanhope and Sheridan of the great benefits to be expected from the Revolution - it would perhaps, said Stanhope, "hasten the day when all men, even kings, would regard themselves as brothers, without regard to primogeniture" - Price also delivered a speech, similarly rejoicing in another of "the fruits of that glorious revolution", the proposal by the National Assembly for an alliance between France and England. Such an alliance, said Price, would make the two kingdoms "omnipotent: they will soon draw into their confederation *Holland*, and other countries on this side the globe, and the United States of *America* on the other side." And he proposed a toast for such an alliance, "for perpetuating peace and making the world happy."<sup>10</sup>

From Birmingham Priestley expressed his satisfaction at the "glorious effulgence of liberty in France", of its probable spread, and of the part which Price had played: "I do not know any man who appears to have lived to better purpose."

The commemoration of the French Revolution at the Crown and Anchor was most happily conceived, and the success of it gives me the greatest pleasure. Your speech I admired exceedingly, but especially your toast. Little things have sometimes great effects, and such I cannot help auguring from this. But I do not wonder at the hatred and dread of this spirit of revolution in kings and courtiers.<sup>11</sup>

On 1 November Burke's *Reflections* were published, constituting to some a "quite frantic", but also grossly offensive attack upon Price and the innovatory and revolutionary principles of the English reformers, now, as it seemed to Burke, taking on an increasingly alarming aspect from the very propinquity of the experiment in government in France.<sup>12</sup> In the reply which he very swiftly started to write, Priestley was to allow his own hopes of the great changes he expected to see in the government of England as a result of the alteration in affairs abroad, full expression.

<sup>9</sup> B. Vaughan to Lansdowne, 11/12, 15, 30 July 1790; Bowood Mss.

<sup>10</sup> D.O. Thomas, *The honest mind ... Richard Price*, 307; A. Goodwin, *The friends of liberty*, 122; Priestley, *Works*, I, pt.2. 79-80, note; 89-88, note.

<sup>11</sup> Priestley, *Works*, 1, pt.2. 79-81: Priestley to Price, 29 August 1790.

<sup>12</sup> C.U.L. Add. Mss., 7886: 162: Lindsey to Friend, 2 November 1790, and cf. D.W.L. Mss., Wodrow to Kenrick, 10 January 1791.

Priestley began his *Letters to Burke* in November, and completed them, writing with his usual rapidity, by the end of December.<sup>13</sup> Distributed by Johnson in London in January 1791, they were amongst the earliest of the many replies to the *Reflections*. Priestley's evident suitability for the task had been expressed by Lindsey: "if the thing strike our friend in Birmingham and he would sit down to it in earnest", he wrote, "he would do it effectually."<sup>14</sup> Little regarded now by historians, by contemporaries the *Letters* - until the appearance of the works of Mackintosh and Paine - were thought to be "almost the best answer given to Burke", and within a month Priestley was making corrections for a second and then a third edition.<sup>15</sup> The *Letters* were, as he wrote, much preoccupied with "ecclesiastical matters". And although he did devote considerable space to refuting Burke's doctrine of prescriptive rights, he did not attempt, as Mackintosh and Paine were to do, a detailed defence of the Revolution in France.<sup>16</sup> In the final chapter, however, "Of the Prospect of the general

<sup>13</sup> Priestley, *Works*, I. pt.2. 87-9; 97-8; D.W.L. Mss: Priestley to Lindsey, 26 November, 13, 23, 27 December, and n.d. (December) *bis* 1790.

This series of letters from Priestley to Lindsey contains as printed by Rutt considerable confusion. The letter of 13 December (signed and dated by Priestley), and also one of those not dated, are printed in *Works*, I.2. 87-9 as October. But Rutt's own annotations make it clear that he recognised that the work to which Priestley was referring in them was the *Letters to Burke*. The *Reflections* were not published until 1 November, and that Priestley, unlike Paine, was not preparing his reply beforehand is indicated by Lindsey's letter to Tayleur of 10 November 1790 (below, n.14).

<sup>14</sup> J.R.L. Mss., Lindsey to Tayleur, 10 November 1790. And cf. Priestley, *Works*, I. pt.2. 87-9; 97-8, Priestley to Lindsey, 26 November, 13, 23 December, n.d. (December) 1790, for Priestley's reliance on Lindsey's judgement, and his apprehensions of his criticism: as printed by Rutt, there is much omission.

<sup>15</sup> D.W.L. Mss., Wodrow to Kenrick, 28 March 1791; D.W.L. Mss., Priestley to Lindsey, 9 January 1791: passage on corrections omitted by Rutt, I. pt.2. 98; D.W.L. Mss., Priestley to Lindsey 17 January 1791: "Desire Mr Johnson to get extracts ... selected from my *Letters to Mr Burke* in the public papers", Priestley wrote: letter omitted by Rutt. Cf. also Warrington Public Libraries (W.P.L.) MS 2 (Priestley Mss), Priestley to Wilkinson, 20 January 1791: "I am printing the third edition; one thousand for each of the two first and fifteen hundred for this." And cf. also Priestley, *Works*, I, pt.2.99: Priestley to Lindsey, n.d. (January 1791).

In these two later editions, Priestley did, as the original letters make clear, reinstate, on the advice of his Birmingham friend, William Russell, some material which Lindsey had censured.

<sup>16</sup> R.E. Schofield, ed., *A scientific autobiography of Joseph Priestley, 1733-1804* (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1966), 255-6, Priestley to de la Rochefoucauld, 28 April 1791; Priestley, *Letters to the Rt Honourable Edmund Burke, occasioned by his Reflections on the Revolution in France* (Birmingham, 1791): *Works*, XXII. 149, 166ff; and cf. below, n.26.

enlargement of Liberty, civil and religious opened by the Revolution in France", Priestley set out his own version of the sentiments of Price's *Discourse*. "The generality of governments have hitherto been little else than a combination of *the few* against *the many*", he wrote: "and to the mean passions and low cunning of these few, have the great interests of mankind been too long sacrificed." "How glorious, then, is the prospect, the reverse of all the past, which is now opening upon us ... Government, we may now expect to see, not only in theory and in books, but in actual practice, calculated for the general good." "In this new condition of the world", he wrote

"there may still be *kings*, but they will be no longer *sovereigns*, or *supreme lords*, no human beings to whom will be ascribed such titles as those of *most sacred*, or *most excellent majesty* ... There will be *magistrates*, appointed and paid for the conservation of order, but they will only be considered as the first servants of the people, and accountable to them."

"Government", wrote Priestley, "being thus simple in its objects, will be unspeakably less *expensive* than it is at present, as well as far more *effectual* in answering its proper purpose." And it was in drawing the comparison of the mounting national debt in England to that which had occasioned revolution in France, that he wrote of "this *great crisis* of our affairs". If, he said, Burke and his friends could "steer the ship of the state through the storm which we all see to be approaching", then he had "more wisdom and steadiness than has yet been found in any who have hitherto been at the head of our affairs."<sup>17</sup>

"I think them most admirable", wrote Lindsey: "such as ... must greatly serve the cause of civil and religious liberty, and by no other powder explosion but the force of truth bringing on the downfall of hierarchical powers." But, even to those who similarly admired them, it seemed that, if Burke had treated with too much respect "the Prejudices of Mankind the Dr ... treats them with contempt, such," wrote James Wodrow, "as will not answer in the present state of things, and even hurt the great cause he means to serve."<sup>18</sup> The *Letters* did indeed bring Priestley much obloquy. But, he wrote, "I am perfectly indifferent to it, and even rather amazed and pleased with it. Indeed, no great good was ever done without risking

<sup>17</sup> Priestley, *Works*, XXII. 237; 241-3.

<sup>18</sup> J.R.L. Mss., Lindsey to Tayleur, 24 December 1790; D.W.L. Mss., Wodrow to Kenrick, 28 March 1791; and cf. above, n.12.

and incurring much dislike.”<sup>19</sup> And, invited by the Dissenters at Hackney to deliver their Annual Oration in April, he had, by the time he wrote this letter, composed a Discourse for the occasion which strikingly reflects his mounting extremism. “It will lead me ... to say several very strong things on the subject of civil and religious liberty”, he warned Price. And his Discourse, completed by 18 February, was sent to Lindsey under conditions of the strictest secrecy: if he should show it to Price, wrote Priestley, “give him a strict charge, as also any other to whom you may chuse to show it, to say nothing of the contents of it.”<sup>20</sup> It was shortly after this that Priestley was writing of his eagerness to see “Mr Paine’s answer to Mr Burke”; and when, on 24 February, he had obtained one of the few copies to be distributed of the *Rights of Man* (which was withdrawn from circulation on the day of publication by the normally intrepid Johnson, for fear of prosecution) he wrote to Lindsey - in a letter which Rutt omitted altogether from his *Works* - that he admired it “exceedingly. I own”, he added, “it has made me more desirous of delivering my discourse than I was before.”<sup>21</sup> “Have you seen Mr Paine’s answer to Mr Burke?” he asked Wedgwood on 26 February: “It is most excellent, and the boldest publication that I have ever seen.” And in subsequent letters he enquired anxiously after its fate:

<sup>19</sup> D.W.L. Mss., Priestley to Lindsey, 24 February 1791: this letter is omitted by Rutt.

<sup>20</sup> Priestley, *Works*, I. pt.2. 102: Priestley to Price, 16 February 1791; D.W.L. Mss., Priestley to Lindsey, 18 February 1791: “You may keep it till I come”, Priestley added, “as it will be then time enough to make any corrections that you wish for in it”: letter omitted by Rutt. And cf. J.R.L. Mss., Lindsey to Tayleur, 23 February 1791: “I have (it) in my Bureau.” Cf. also Priestley to Lindsey, 23 February 1791: passage omitted by Rutt, *Works*, I. pt.2. 103, on the Discourse; and D.W.L. Mss., Priestley to Lindsey, 24 February 1791, for Lindsey’s doubts about it: this letter is omitted by Rutt.

<sup>21</sup> Priestley, *Works*, I. pt.2. 103, Priestley to Lindsey, 23 February 1791; D.W.L. Mss., Priestley to Lindsey, 24 February 1791: letter omitted by Rutt. For the stoppage of Part I of the *Rights of Man*, cf. A. Aldridge, *Man of reason, the life of Thomas Paine* (London, 1960), 134-6; and M. Philp, “Godwin, Holcroft and the Rights of Man”, *Enlightenment and Dissent*, I (1982), 37-42. Priestley apparently obtained one of the first copies, and with great despatch. Cf. J.R.L. Mss., Lindsey to Tayleur, 23 February 1791: “Mr Paine’s book against Mr Burke has some fine things upon the subject as ever I read and which must affect every mind: but the book is so entirely republican the full of most excellent matter, and contains such reflections on the Brunswick princes, that Mr Johnson, for whom it is printed, is advised not to sell it.” Cf. H. McLachlan, ed., *Letters of Theophilus Lindsey* (Manchester, 1920), 131.

What is the case with respect to Mr Paine’s pamphlet?  
Is the edition cancelled, or will it be sold in France  
and America, and a new one be printed for England?  
Was Mr Johnson threatened, or did he take the alarm  
himself?

“It will be read the more on account of the stoppage”, he confidently predicted.<sup>22</sup> The similarity of political sentiment of Priestley and Paine in 1791, and, too, their similarity of roles as propagandists in the cause (as Priestley’s letters, when shorn of the editing of his biographer, Rutt, make unmistakably clear) should make it the less surprising that by contemporaries their names were to be so frequently linked, their political works cast jointly into the flames in the reaction of the ensuing year.

Early in April 1791 Priestley was in Manchester, his son Joseph recently established there and helped, as Priestley recorded, by his “many friends” there. Priestley’s own discussions with the leading reformers of Manchester, whose Constitutional Society was in the process of issuing its public declaration, are clear from his later letters to Lindsey.<sup>23</sup> In the middle of April, however, he was in London, and there, shortly before delivering a Funeral Sermon for his friend Dr Price, he delivered, from the pulpit in the Old Jewry, his eagerly awaited Oration to the young dissenters of Hackney. The Dissenting Academies, he said, were small in number, and impoverished in funds: but, he hoped, they might nevertheless find, in the present times, a Locke or a Hartley, a Hampden, a Sidney, a Penn, a Franklin or a Washington “or one such illustrious character as those which are now conducting the glorious revolution in France”. And in treating of the important changes now under way in government abroad, he enunciated again for his youthful audience the sentiments already expressed in the *Letters to Burke*:

<sup>22</sup> H.C. Bolton, *Scientific correspondence of Joseph Priestley* (New York, 1892, repr. 1969), 106-7, Priestley to Wedgwood, 26 February 1791; Priestley, *Works*, I. pt.2. 105, 106-7, Priestley to Lindsey, 11, 14 March 1791.

<sup>23</sup> D.W.L. Mss., Priestley to Lindsey, 13 February 1791: “Joseph inclines much to settle in Manchester, on account of the liberal society he finds there ... I have many friends very zealous to serve him there, and they are exerting themselves to the utmost for him”: passage omitted by Rutt, *Works*, I. pt.2., 101-2. And cf. also D.W.L. Mss., Priestley to Lindsey, 23 February 1791: “Joseph leaves us today to settle in Manchester”: passage omitted by Rutt, *Works*, I. pt.2. 103. Cf. also Priestley, *Works*, I. pt.2 107-110, Priestley to Lindsey, 25 March, April 1791.

While so favourable a wind is abroad, let every young mind expand itself, catch the rising gale, and partake of the glorious enthusiasm; the great objects of which are ... the extinction of wars, with the calamities incident to mankind from them, the abolishing of all useless distinctions, which were the offspring of a barbarous age (producing an absurd haughtiness in some, and a base servility in others); and a general release from all such taxes and burdens of every kind, as the public good does not require. In short, to make government as beneficial, and as little expensive and burdensome, as possible.<sup>24</sup>

It was for Priestley's outspokenness on religious issues in his Hackney Oration that some, according to Lindsey, thought it actionable.<sup>25</sup> But its very free expression of political sentiment should not be overlooked. Priestley added his influential voice - and to an exceptionally impressionable audience - to the mounting chorus of praise of revolutionary France, at a time when Paine's equally outspoken work was beginning to enjoy its extraordinary success, recommended in resolutions of the reviving Society for Constitutional Information, and shortly to be abridged and distributed by reformers such as Thomas Cooper in the provinces. It was in April 1791, also, that Fox, a great admirer of the *Vindiciae Gallicae*, made his indiscreet pronouncements in favour of republican governments in general, and France in particular, which led to his public estrangement from Burke. On 28 April, the day after his Hackney Oration, Priestley wrote of this outpouring of enthusiasm in a letter to de la Rochefoucauld. He had, he wrote, sent "by Mr Vaughn", a copy of his *Letters to Burke*. "There have been already about twenty-five answers to Mr Burke", he

<sup>24</sup> Priestley, *The proper objects of education in the present state of the world, represented in a discourse, delivered on Wednesday 27 April 1791, at the Meeting-House in the Old Jewry, London; to the supporters of the New College at Hackney*, Works, XV. 422, 434.

Cf. American Philosophical Society (A.P.S.), Miscellaneous Mss. Colln., J. Aikin to A. Aikin, 14 April 1791: "Pray do not forget to remember me very particularly to the Dr when you see him at the examination. I dare say his sermon will have a full audience." Cf. also J.R.L. Mss., Lindsey to Tayleur, 27 April 1791: writing "as I am going to the Old Jewry to hear Dr Priestley, and afterwards to dine at the college", Lindsey described how Priestley's two other sermons which he delivered in London were "preached to the largest audiences that were ever seen in our chapel."

<sup>25</sup> J.R.L. Mss., Lindsey to Tayleur, 21 May 1791; and cf. D.W.L. Mss., Kenrick to Wodrow, 18 May 1791: "his bold decisive spirit has raised him many enemies."

wrote, "and only one or two defences, so that you must not judge of the sense of the English nation, by that of the Court."<sup>26</sup> Writing to Lindsey, on his return to Birmingham, this optimism had certainly waned: "In spite of all we can write or do an attachment to high maxims of government gains ground here, and the love of liberty is on the decline." But it was nevertheless in this same letter that he informed Lindsey of the forming of a Constitutional Society in Birmingham, "similar to that in Manchester", of which he enclosed "the rules and principles". "We propose to have two annual dinners", he added, "viz. the 14th of July and 4th of November." And he wrote openly too of his own continued propagandising in the cause. "I also enclose a copy of my *Political tract*, which will not be printed off till I hear from you. We propose", Priestley wrote, in a passage part of which Rutt omitted, "that it shall be issued here as a tract recommended to us from Manchester, tho", he added "there is nothing in it that is at all objectionable; being the calmest discussion of important subjects."<sup>27</sup>

Early in July 1791 Priestley, it is clear, was active in promoting the proposed Warwickshire Constitutional Society, and almost certainly, too, personally urging his acquaintances to go to the Dinner on 14 July. On 6 July, as William Hutton's daughter recalled, Priestley asked her father, and a Roman Catholic clergyman, to join the dinner - an invitation which they refused.<sup>28</sup> And the more credence can be given to this account by the discovery, by Eric Robinson, of two letters, one from Priestley to James Watt, the other from Boulton and Watt to Priestley, on the subject of the proposed Warwickshire Constitutional Society. To James Watt Priestley wrote as "a friend of liberty civil and ecclesiastical", asking him to join the Society and enclosing, as he had done for Lindsey, its principles and resolutions. It was an invitation however which both Boulton (who, as Dr Robinson remarks, must have received a similar letter) and Watt, thought it prudent to refuse. They could not, they wrote, agree to all the principles of the Society, and they feared the spirit which their dissemination might arouse:

<sup>26</sup> Schofield, *Scientific autobiography*, 255-6: Priestley to de la Rochefoucauld, 28 April 1791. "Mr Paine's is a much more proper answer", he wrote, "as it relates to the Revolution itself, the history of which I did not pretend to be master of. Mr Christie has half printed another and most excellent answer, containing more valuable information than even Mr Paine's work."

<sup>27</sup> D.W.L. Mss., and Priestley, *Works*, I. pt.2. 113-4: Priestley to Lindsey, 29 June 1791.

<sup>28</sup> C.H. Beale, ed., *Reminiscences of a gentlewoman of the last century: letters of Catherine Hutton* (Birmingham 1891), 72.

ought it not to be seriously considered, whether it is prudent during the present effervescence in other countries, to risk the raising a Spirit in this, that may in the end overturn all good government & may not subside during the short period of our lives? God grant us peace in our days!<sup>29</sup>

The Principles of the Warwickshire Constitutional Society - some thousands of printed copies of which, it was asserted, were found at the house of William Russell,<sup>30</sup> Priestley's closest political associate in Birmingham - enshrined all that Priestley had been writing upon political liberty since the publication of his *Essay* of 1768. They were novel however in their proposal that "meetings should be held ... to enlighten the minds of all the Citizens, in order that they may proceed steadily, and without tumult to procure the redress of grievances."<sup>31</sup> Whether Priestley was their author cannot be ascertained, but the "tract" which he sent to Lindsey, and which has survived, noticed only briefly however by historians,<sup>32</sup> places beyond all doubt his personal involvement in the political propagandising which preceded the Bastille Day Dinner in Birmingham in 1791. It stands as a remarkable re-affirmation of his own philosophy, and as an advance on his own public position at least, of the spring. Set in question and answer form - as had been his 1769 *Essay on the present state of liberty in Great Britain*, and indeed specifically referring to it at the outset - towards the close it poses the question, whether the author had not changed his views on the "great excellence" of the English government since then. To this Priestley as the anonymous author, replied:

<sup>29</sup> Birmingham Public Libraries, Boulton and Watt Letter Book, 15: Boulton and Watt to Priestley, 8 July 1791; and E. Robinson, "New light on the Priestley riots", *Historical Journal* (1960), 3 (1), 73-5.

<sup>30</sup> H.O. 42/19: cf. below, n.31; R.B. Rose, "The Priestley riots of 1791", *Past and Present*, VIII (November 1960), 72.

<sup>31</sup> "The Principles of the Warwickshire Constitutional Society": H.O. 42/19; and cf. below, Appendix A.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. however, J. Fruchman, "The apocalyptic politics of Richard Price and Joseph Priestley, a study in late eighteenth century English millennialism", *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, 73, pt.4 (1983), 73-4; and C. Bonwick, "Joseph Priestley, emigrant and Jeffersonian", *Enlightenment and Dissent*, 2 (1983), nn.25,28. In neither, however, is Priestley's *Dialogue* placed in its historical context. For Priestley's amnesia on the subject of the *Dialogue* in 1794, cf. Rutt's comment, *Works*, XXV. 83, n. For its inclusion in Priestley's political works at his death, cf. *Memoirs of Dr Joseph Priestley: and observations on his writings by Thomas Cooper ... and the Rev. William Christie*, 2 vols., (London, 1806-7), II. Catalogue, iii.

I am not ashamed to acknowledge that this has been the case ... Nothing human, we will allow, is absolutely perfect; but what is imperfect may be borne with; which I think to be the case with the constitution of England. I have not, I own, that high veneration which I once had for it: since I have seen others which appear to me to be better.

Of the immediate reforms necessary in England, the Commons, he said, must be properly reformed, the power of the king very considerably reduced: and "if it be said that such a government as this would be more properly called a *republic*, than a *monarchy*, I have no objection."<sup>33</sup>

The *Political dialogue* contained Priestley's essential political philosophy, enunciated afresh for the "favourable" circumstances which he now very clearly believed to be prevailing. The great problem in government, he wrote, was the control by the majority of their interests in society:

The great difficulty ... is, how to bring this about, or how to construct a government so that the labouring and industrious part of the community shall have an effectual check upon their *governors*, or, to call things by their proper names, their *servants*. And since we must, in all these cases, consider mankind as governed by interest, the government must be constructed in such a manner, as that no person shall be interested to bring things into this state, or that if they be, it shall not be in their power to do it.<sup>34</sup>

The extending of "sensible maxims of government" through a large kingdom could only, he wrote, be achieved by a system of delegated representation - and he cited the National Assembly of France as a model. It could, he wrote, be chosen annually, and, he added:

It is needless to say that a national assembly thus constituted and frequently changed, could not have any other object in their consultations than the interest of the whole community.

<sup>33</sup> Priestley, *A political dialogue on the general principles of government* (London 1791), *Works*, XXV. 84, 106-7.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, XXV. 86.

Furthermore, if salaries were small, and the perquisites of office reduced, then "every man will then govern as he would wish to be governed." And this would inevitably lead to the eventual extinction of hereditary privilege:

Every thing in society will now be brought to the plain test of use and expedience; and if exclusive privileges of any kind appear to be of no use but to the possessors of them, and if these possessors, who of course are few, be gainers in exact proportion to the loss and degradation of the rest of the community, who are *the many*, these many (who will soon find that they have the power, and that those distinctions so degrading to themselves depend upon their pleasure) will level them all, and it will soon be found that the whole community, and even those who seem to be the greatest losers, will in reality be gainers by the change.<sup>35</sup>

The extinction of all hereditary nobility, if not hereditary monarchy, would, Priestley believed, take place within a few years. "If hereditary distinctions be not voluntarily abandoned, they will come to be considered as even reproachful. In France", he wrote, "an *aristocrate* is already a term of contempt." The unicameral form of the French Constitution he was prepared to defend: "in every state, as in every single person, there ought to be but one will, and no important business should be prevented from proceeding, by any opposite will." And in considering the means whereby a people could become sufficiently enlightened to exercise their power, the greatest difficulty was, he said, their want of union.

But even this might be remedied by committees of correspondence, and other means, so as sufficiently to overawe the governing powers. And though so many, even of the common people, are directly or indirectly influenced by the court, that very little is to be expected from this quarter in the present state of things, it is highly proper that their minds should be enlightened, and that they should have a full sense of their natural rights, in order that they may be prepared to act with intelligence and effect in any new state of things that may occur.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*, XXV. 86-92.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, XXV. 95-6; 103; and also 104.

"In reality", wrote Priestley, "it is *opinion* that governs the world, and till the general opinion in any country concerning the foundation, the nature, and the uses of government, be changed, all useful revolutions will be impossible, or not permanent."<sup>37</sup>

"These Dialogues will perhaps be continued, and by different hands", wrote Priestley at the conclusion. Whether his "Political Dialogue No.1", as it was originally entitled, was distributed in Birmingham before the Bastille Day Dinner is not certain. If it was not in print at the end of June, when Priestley sent Lindsey a copy, nevertheless a later statement of Priestley's suggests that some copies at least were in print early in July, intended, moreover, as a declaration of principle for the proposed Warwickshire Constitutional Society.<sup>38</sup> On 12 July, however, a far more avowedly "inflammatory handbill" was distributed in the town, which contributed markedly to raise the already mounting atmosphere of tension. In this latter respect, indeed, Birmingham was not unique. In London, there was much tension prevailing; in Manchester, violence was expected against the reformers.<sup>39</sup> The republican handbill distributed in Birmingham urged its citizens to demonstrate "on the 14th of this month" that "you will sacrifice to public tranquillity, till the majority *shall* exclaim, *The Peace of Slavery is worse than the War of Freedom*. Of that moment let tyrants beware." It was immediately disowned by the organisers of the Dinner, and a warrant for its author's arrest issued by the magistrates. "At

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*, XXV. 104.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. above, n.27; below, n.45; and *Works*, XXV. 108; cf. also W.P.L. Mss., Priestley to Wilkinson, 8 September 1791: "I ... enclose a Dialogue, which has made some noise at Birmingham, from being supposed, in the present state of men's minds, to contain much treasonable matter. It has been represented to be as bad as the handbill, and the printer's boy has been in custody. The printer advertised, and says that the writer would appear when called for. At length, they have found nothing treasonable in it." And also *ibid.*, Priestley to Wilkinson (n.d., September 1791): "I hope you received the frank with the Political Dialogue." For the handbill, cf. below, n.40.

<sup>39</sup> T. Walker, *A Review of some of the political events which have occurred in Manchester during the last five years* (Manchester 1794) 22-3 and note; J.R.L. Mss., Lindsey to Tayleur, 21 May 1791. In London, Fox, Sheridan, Stanhope, Tooke and also Paine absented themselves from the proceedings.

the corner of almost every street", ran one account, "the handbill was the prevailing topic".<sup>40</sup> It was apparently at this stage that William Russell engaged in a heated dispute with the master of the hotel at which the Dinner was to be held, declaring that "the dinner should go forward at all events, if he dined by himself." But it was, according to another account, Russell who on the morning of 14 July, urged Priestley not to attend.<sup>41</sup> The prevailing mood can be further seen in Mrs Priestley's decision, shortly before 14 July, to burn all her letters. "I had often taken them out, and burnt part before", she wrote: "but that morning I determined to burn all. I consumed every parcel ... A great quantity of Mrs Galton's, more from good luck than foresight, I burnt: she living on the spot would have made the letters more attended to."<sup>42</sup>

The terrible havoc which was wreaked by the Birmingham mob was, however, foreseen by none of the principal sufferers. Taken by surprise, Priestley and his wife narrowly escaped, many believed, with their lives. "When I wrote my last", Priestley wrote to Lindsey as he left Birmingham for Heath, on 15 July, "little did I foresee what soon after happened, but the will of God be done... I had not presence of mind to take even my MSS; and after we were gone, the mob came and demolished everything, household goods, library and apparatus."<sup>43</sup> "Thus stript of everything", as Lindsey wrote; "driven about for four nights running, without being able to go to bed, except for a few hours", Priestley arrived, on 18 July, "betwixt six and seven" in the morning, at Lindsey's house, in London.<sup>44</sup> There he remained, outwardly calm - "undismayed by his

<sup>40</sup> Priestley, *An appeal to the public on the subject of the riots in Birmingham*, Part II (London 1792), Works, XIX. 539: Appendix VII; R.B. Rose, "The Priestley riots of 1791", 72-3; E. Burn, *A reply to the Reverend Doctor Priestley's appeal to the public, on the subject of the riots in Birmingham, in vindication of the clergy and other respectable inhabitants of the town* (Birmingham, 1792), 42-3. Cf. also J. Kenrick, *A Biographical Memoir of the late Rev. C. Wellbeloved* (London 1860), 23-4, for the statement that the handbill was "really written by a young man, fresh from the delivery of a very revolutionary oration at Hackney". Cf. also W. Hutton, *The life of William Hutton, including a particular account of the riots at Birmingham in 1791* (Birmingham, 1816), 161-2.

<sup>41</sup> Burn, *Reply to Priestley*, 56-7; *The Christian Reformer*, May 1835, XVII. 2, 293: "Journal relating to the Birmingham riots", Martha Russell's account.

<sup>42</sup> Priestley, Works, I. pt.2. 365-7, Mrs Priestley to Mrs Barbauld, 26 August 1791.

<sup>43</sup> Priestley, Works, I. pt.2. 123, Priestley to Lindsey, 15 July 1791.

<sup>44</sup> Royal Society, Priestley MS. 654, Yates Memorial Volume, 45(i): Lindsey to Tayleur, 19 July 1791; J.R.L. Mss., Lindsey to Tayleur, 16 July 1791; W.P.L. Mss., Priestley to Wilkinson, 20 August 1791; and cf. Works, I. pt.2. 127: Priestley to A. Walker, 30 July 1791; Priestley, *Appeal*, pt.I., Works, XIX. 377-8; and F.W. Gibbs, *Joseph Priestley, adventurer in science and champion of truth* (London, 1965), 199-202.

calamities and dangers", as Lindsey described him - and composed, for publication in the *Morning Chronicle* of 20 July his *Letter to the inhabitants of Birmingham*. It was, Lindsey wrote, "calculated, if any reasoning can effect it, to allay their heats, but at all events", he added,

must have a good effect upon the Public. There will be a thousand printed to dispose of to friends; and as this will be followed by other numbers, it will in time grow into a size to be sold.<sup>45</sup>

In London, Priestley, while not declining "going about", and indeed dining with Sheridan in the hope of meeting Fox, was nevertheless reluctant to "show himself much in public places." "The shock was no doubt very great", he wrote to Wedgwood. "This invasion of the Goths and Vandals I little foresaw, and hope it will never be repeated, as I fancy the *experiment* will not be found to answer." "The same bad spirit pervades the whole kingdom", he wrote however to Russell on 29 July, enclosing a letter from Thomas Walker, giving an account of "the spirit that prevails in Manchester".<sup>46</sup> And when, towards the end of the month, he moved to stay in the house of another old friend, William Vaughan, who, as Priestley later described it, showed "no small degree of courage

<sup>45</sup> Royal Soc. Mss., Lindsey to Tayleur, 19 July 1791; and cf. *ibid.*, 53(i), Lindsey to Tayleur, 4 August 1791; and J.R.L. Mss., same to same, 30 July 1791. Cf. also Bolton, *Scientific correspondence*, 108-109: Priestley to Keir, 22 July 1791; Priestley, *Appeal*, Works, XIX. 378-379; 540-542; and *Morning Chronicle*, 20 July 1791.

<sup>46</sup> Royal Soc. Mss., Lindsey to Tayleur, 4 August 1791; Bolton, *Scientific correspondence*, 109,113, Priestley to Wedgwood, 26 July, n.d. (July) 1791; and cf. *ibid.*, 109-111, Priestley to Keir, 29 July 1791: "You were certainly a better judge than I was of the *spirit of the times*. But even you could not have expected such brutal excesses as have taken place; and yet I am willing to hope much from time ..." Cf. also Priestley, Works, I. pt.2. 124-126, Priestley to Russell, 29 July 1791; and *ibid.*, XV. 520,n.

For Russell's presence in London, where he also arrived on the morning of 18 July, his interview with the ministry, and his letter to the *Morning Chronicle*, cf. Royal Soc. Mss., Lindsey to Tayleur, 19 July 1791; *The Christian Reformer*, May 1835, XVII. 2. 303-4: Martha Russell's account; Bolton, *Scientific Correspondence*, 108-109: Priestley to Keir, 22 July 1791; and Priestley, *Appeal*, Works, XIX. 379-380; 545-548; *Morning Chronicle*, 21 July 1791.

and friendship”<sup>47</sup> in offering him his house as a refuge, he lost no time in composing the first part of the lengthy *Appeal* to his fellow-countrymen which was to plunge him into further and bitter controversy.

“I never wanted you more than I do now, that I am composing my *Appeal*”, he wrote to Lindsey on 30 August from William Vaughan’s:

I have thought it right to speak with great freedom on many subjects, because I am pretty sure to be heard. At the same time, I wish to be on my guard not to pass the bounds of decency and propriety; and in this your cooler and better knowledge of the world, would be of the greatest use to me. However, I shall not print any part of it till you have seen it. Mr Russell, and my friends in general, wish that I would not defer the publication unnecessarily, and therefore I shall be ready.

“By all accounts”, he added, “the spirit of party is higher than ever, and is likely to increase for some time. It is, indeed, a sad prospect that is now before us. But we must not despair, or discover any timidity. I rather fear going into the opposite extreme, which, however, I think is the better of the two.”<sup>48</sup> His *Appeal*, however, was to be a curious mixture of the two. In it, Priestley was concerned to demonstrate that the rioting in Birmingham was entirely the result of religious bigotry; that political questions, controversy and prejudice did not enter into the consideration

<sup>47</sup> Lindsay ed., *Autobiography of Priestley*, 130. Cf. also Bolton, *Scientific Correspondence*, 113-114, Priestley to Wedgwood, July 1791, and W.P.L. Mss., Priestley to Wilkinson, 20 August 1791, for Wilkinson’s generous offer of help to Priestley. For Wedgwood and Galton’s outstanding courage in offering Priestley support at this time, cf. Bolton, *ibid.*, 113-4, Wedgwood to Priestley, July 1791, Priestley to Wedgwood, July 1791; and R.E. Schofield, *The Lunar Society of Birmingham; a social history of provincial science and industry in eighteenth century England* (Oxford, Clarendon Pr., 1963), 361; and below, n.51.

<sup>48</sup> Priestley, *Works*, I. pt.2. 149-51: Priestley to Lindsey, 30 August 1791; cf. also *ibid.*, I. pt.2. 175, Priestley to Russell, 11 November (August) 1791: “I am busy in writing my *Appeal* to the Public.” (Both this statement, and other internal evidence suggest that Priestley wrote this letter in August 1791. Priestley suggests in his letter to Lindsey of 30 August that the *Appeal* was all but complete; the letter from his congregation referred to in the letter to Russell, Priestley received on 3 August (Lindsey to Tayleur, 4 August 1791); and the address from the dissenters at Yarmouth, which he implies that he has just received, is dated 29 July 1791 (*Works*, I. pt.2. 126; and cf. *ibid.*, I. pt.2. 136-7, Priestley to Russell, 5 August 1791).

of them: that, by implication, and indeed, assertion, he and his friends had done nothing of an overtly political nature to provoke any animosity; but that - in tacit contradiction of this - insofar as their celebration of the French Revolution on 14 July had been a cause of trouble, he himself had had very little to do with it. “The celebration of this great event by a public dinner”, he wrote, in a passage of masterful but by no means entirely creditable ambiguity,

... was no measure of mine ... However, when the friends of that Revolution proposed it, and wished to have my company, I did not decline their invitation, and we had a meeting or two, partly for that purpose, and partly to settle the rules of a CONSTITUTIONAL SOCIETY, such as that which is established at Manchester, the chief object of which was to promote a more equal representation of the people of this country in parliament, and we had printed two copies of *General Principles of Government*, to be subscribed by all the members, and one copy of *Particular Rules* for our conduct, copied chiefly from those of Manchester; but we had not pleased ourselves with them, and nothing was absolutely settled.

“With the dinner itself”, he continued, “I had, in a manner, nothing to do. I did not so much as suggest one of the proper and excellent *toasts* provided on the occasion, though it was natural” he admitted, “for my friends to look to me for things of that kind, if I had interested myself much in it.” When “opposition was talked of” in respect of the dinner, and threats made to himself in particular, he yielded to the solicitations of his friends, and did not attend.<sup>49</sup>

Priestley’s *Appeal*, which he finally published in November 1791, stands as the first occasion when, defending himself from the savage public hostility towards him, he gave what can only be described as a less than frank account of his political involvement in England. His instinctive desire to justify himself, however, and to propagandise for the cause, had not yet entirely dissipated. In writing the *Appeal* at all he realised, as he wrote to Withering, that he would “more exasperate my enemies.” And, “I think that if I write at all”, he wrote to Wedgwood, “it should not be with less spirit than I have usually shown and that there is nothing more violent and offensive in *this* than in several of my preceding publications.”

<sup>49</sup> Priestley, *Appeal*, Part I. *Works*, XIX. 373-4.

It was his friends in Birmingham who were, even more perhaps than Priestley himself, acutely apprehensive now for their own personal safety, who urged him in no uncertain terms not to publish the *Appeal*; and at their behest Priestley did, apparently, cancel some eleven of its pages.<sup>50</sup>

In the very understandable fear which, from this time onwards, motivated the actions of the Birmingham circle of reformers, halting their efforts to establish a centre of reform, and leading them - with the honourable exception of Wedgwood and Samuel Galton - to dissuade Priestley from realising his much cherished wish of attending the next meeting of the Lunar Society, in September,<sup>51</sup> they were not alone. "I had proposed to go by Manchester", wrote Priestley of this abortive visit to Birmingham: "but I find, by a letter received from Joseph, that my friends there are afraid to receive me."<sup>52</sup> Much of Priestley's carefully collated correspondence had been ransacked in the pillage of his house in Birmingham: and some at least had been sent to the authorities in London. His letters, from his private friends, "from the earliest period of my correspondence" as he wrote, had been examined by the curious and impertinent and, "as I am informed, eagerly perused, commented upon, and their sense perverted, in order to find out something against me." Some had been sent to

<sup>50</sup> Bolton, *Scientific correspondence of Priestley*, 118-21: Priestley to Withering, 5 November, 2 December 1791; Priestley to Wedgwood, 22 November 1791; cf. also Schofield, *The Lunar Society*, 362-3; W.P.L. Mss., Priestley to Wilkinson, 23 November 1791; and Keir to Priestley, n.d. (November 1791), cit. T.E. Thorpe, *Joseph Priestley* (London, 1906), 141.

<sup>51</sup> Schofield, *The Lunar Society*, 360-2; and W.P.L. Mss., Galton to Priestley, 5 September 1791: "I will meet you at the Coach, accompany you in your perambulation about the Town ... Happy in an Occasion to avow the most explicit attachment to a Person whose Friendship does me the greatest honour ... It never shall be said that Dr Priestley was not received with open Arms by one on whom he has conferred such obligations." Cf. also Schofield, *Scientific Autobiography*, 261-2, Priestley to Wedgwood, 7 September 1791: "about the middle of next week I shall probably have the pleasure of calling on you at Etruria ... on my way to Castlehead." And W.P.L. Mss., Priestley to Wilkinson, 8 September 1791: "I propose to leave London on Sunday evening next to go to Mr Galton's"; but subsequently, to Russell, (B.M. Add. Mss., 44, 992), 14 September 1791: "As... most of my friends on the road are evidently afraid of receiving me, especially at Manchester, I have given up thoughts of leaving London or the neighbourhood this year". And cf. also below, n.52.

<sup>52</sup> W.P.L. Mss., Priestley to Wilkinson, 8 September 1791; and cf. Add. Mss., 44, 992, Priestley to Russell, 14 September 1791; and above n.51. For the dissensions within the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society over Thomas Percival's proposed address to Priestley - the refusal to agree to which led to the resignation of Thomas Walker, Thomas Cooper, and James Watt jr., cf. *Memoirs of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society*, 3rd Series, IX. 173.

London, to the secretary of state.<sup>53</sup> Even the most zealous amongst the circle of metropolitan reformers, who were, as Priestley wrote, foremost in urging him to publish his *Appeal*,<sup>54</sup> were conscious of the need in such circumstances of caution in their private correspondence.<sup>55</sup> "It was a very good plan to commit to the flames the letter I sent", Lindsey was also writing at this time to William Tayleur: "and I dare say that I need not desire that the same way may be taken with respect to any confidential letters I may have formerly sent. One cannot be too cautious." And from Manchester, in August 1791, even the intrepid Thomas Cooper - whose efforts in the cause were to be by no means abated by the events of the summer - was urging Horne Tooke to burn the Preface which he had sent to him for his proposed abridged edition of the *Rights of Man*.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Priestley, *Appeal*, Part 1, *Works*, XIX. 382; and cf. *ibid.*, I. pt.2, 136-7, Priestley to Russell, 5 August 1791: "The circulation of my *private correspondence* through the town, which my wife mentions, is an unpleasant circumstance, though nothing unfavourable to my character or conduct can be inferred from it." Cf. however, *ibid.*, I. pt.2, 132, for his letter to the *Birmingham Gazette*; and also below, n.55.

<sup>54</sup> Bolton, *Scientific correspondence*, 119-20, Priestley to Wedgwood, 22 November 1791; W.P.L. Mss., Priestley to Wilkinson, 23 November 1791; and below, n.58.

<sup>55</sup> Archives Nationales, 4774. 70, J. Hurford Stone to Pétion, 12 February 1792: quoted in M. Rheinhard, "Le Voyage de Pétion a Londres, 24 Octobre - 11 Novembre 1791", *Revue d'Histoire Diplomatique*, 84 (1970), 21. Letters of his had, Stone wrote to Pétion, been seized in the pillage of Priestley's house during the riots, and sent to London to the Secretary of State, and had been "found to contain criminal material". For one extant letter of Stone's to Priestley, now in H.O. 42/19, dated 11 March 1790, cf. J. Money, *Experience and identity*, 221-222, n.79. Stone expressed his entire approval of the church settlement in France, and wrote of the situation in England: "it requires no uncommon marks of sagacity to foresee that an idiot king, a slavish Hierarchy and the delusion of the People must melt away like snow before the sun of truth." (In the autumn of 1791, after Priestley had settled into a house in Hackney, Stone was a neighbour and saw much of him: cf. Rheinhard, *op. cit.*, 50. In the spring of 1792, shortly after his letter to Pétion, Stone left England for France, from where he maintained a regular correspondence with his friends in England: T.B. and T.J. Howell (eds.), *State trials* (London, 1809-1826), XXV, 1173; 1208-1227; 1229-30; and T.S. 11/555/1793. For his correspondence with Priestley at this time, cf. below, nn.74,78.

<sup>56</sup> J.R.L. Mss., Lindsey to Tayleur, 3 December 1791; *State trials*, XXV. 122, T. Cooper to Tooke, 29 August 1791.

From the summer of 1791 onwards, as the addresses of sympathy poured in on Priestley from Societies in England and France, the realisation of the strength of the reaction which they had aroused is evident in the correspondence and pronouncements of many English reformers.<sup>57</sup> And yet, as Priestley's publication of his *Appeal*, in defiance of the wishes of his Birmingham friends, indicates, they had by no means abandoned their hope for reform in England. In August Priestley had written to Wilkinson that he hoped that the *Appeal* would have some "effect". In November he wrote that his London friends "are for its speedy publication, or about the time of the meeting of parliament."<sup>58</sup> And, in spite of his disclaimers of personal involvement in the political proselytising which does seem to have preceded the Bastille Day Dinner in Birmingham,<sup>59</sup> he was not yet, it is clear, prepared to abandon his publicly declared extremes of political sympathy: Englishmen, he warned, in one of several passages which must have been the cause of his Birmingham friends' great alarm, when prevented from expressing their sentiments in a lawful way, might resort to others:

if this outlet to their natural feelings be shut, they will certainly find some other, much more alarming than dinners, toasts, and songs. It may be like the stopping the mouth of a volcano, the consequence of which would be the convulsion of all the country. If there is to be a revolution in this country, similar to that which has taken place in France (though our situation is such as by no means to require it) attempts to deter men by illegal violence from doing what the law does not forbid, will, I am confident, bring it on in half the time. Men, who do not like to be insulted, will at length be prepared to resist violence by violence; and from such accidental and inconsiderate sparks as these, a civil war may be lighted up, and

<sup>57</sup> Cf. D.W.L. Mss., Wodrow to Kenrick, 27 September 1791: "The Wise they say should wonder at nothing"; and Kenrick's reply, *ibid.*, 4 January 1792: "If anything could be an object of wonder, as you observe, the revolution that has taken place here is not less strange than that in France."

<sup>58</sup> W.P.L. Mss., Priestley to Wilkinson, 20 August, 23 November 1791; Bolton, *Scientific correspondence*, Priestley to Wedgwood, 22 November 1791.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. the accusations made against George Humphreys, that he allowed his clerks to read "seditious and republican literature" in his warehouse: R.B. Rose, "The Priestley Riots", 76, n.57.

consequences may follow which the wisest among us cannot foresee.<sup>60</sup>

Of his continuing support for the Revolution which had occurred in France, and of its salutary influence, he was candid:

As to the *French Revolution*, the defence and commemoration of which has been imputed to myself and others as so great a crime, you will soon see it in a different light. The enormous expenses of all modern European governments have opened the eyes of men to the nature and uses of government in general ... This will necessarily produce a convulsion that will be felt in every state in Europe. All nations must ultimately be benefited by it, though they may suffer by the temporary shock. But be assured,

he added,

that those countries will suffer the least in which great *revolutions* will be prevented by temperate and seasonable *reforms*.<sup>61</sup>

"Having always been an avowed advocate of public liberty, civil and religious, which led me to write in defence of your late glorious revolution", he wrote to Condorcet, in a letter published in the *Morning Chronicle* on 6 September, in reply to the Address to him from the French Academy of Sciences,

the great body of the clergy in this country, and many who call themselves the friends of the king, have long been my enemies; and, in accomplishing my ruin, they have not spared the instruments of that *science*, my application to which gave some degree of weight to my labours in another field...

<sup>60</sup> Priestley, *Appeal*, Part I. *Works*, XIX. 411-412; and cf. *ibid.*, 413: "A more equal representation of the commons in parliament is most evidently wanted; and if this, and other necessary reforms, be long withheld, the whole system will be endangered."

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, XIX. 350.

But do not, Sir, suppose that *these* friends of the Church and King are the English nation. They are no more than a faction, whom a failure in the way of argument has rendered desperate.<sup>62</sup>

"I am glad that you approve of my views with respect to France", Priestley was writing at this time to his brother-in-law Wilkinson: "Now, I think, it must be evident to everybody, whether they will acknowledge it or not, that *that* country must rise, and that *this* cannot well go higher."<sup>63</sup> And at the London Tavern on 4 November 1791, Priestley joined in a celebration of the Revolution of 1688, in company with Paine, Lindsey, Godwin, Brand-Hollis, Thomas Walker, and many other English reformers, whose opinions undoubtedly corresponded with his own. "On parla beaucoup du gouvernement anglois", wrote Pétion, the mayor of Paris, of a gathering of English reformers at the house of John Hurford Stone: "et il n'eut pas un seul des convives anglois qui en prit la défense." And at the dinner of 4 November, which he also attended, he was overwhelmed with the fervour of the sentiment in favour of France. Many of the diners at the London Tavern wore, as he recorded, the French tricolor; they sang with spirit, as Lindsey also wrote, "the famous French revolution tune", the *ça ira*; and they toasted, to rapturous applause, the names of Priestley and Paine.<sup>64</sup>

"Another excellent man, Dr J. Jebb hoped he should live to see a general hunt of Kings. How near the time", Thomas Brand-Hollis was writing in a letter to a correspondent in America.<sup>65</sup> And in the spring of 1792, Priestley, who had indeed written in the *Political Dialogue* that it might be necessary for a people to "dethrone their prince by violence", wrote of his unqualified approval of the most violently republican works yet to appear

<sup>62</sup> Priestley, *Works*, I. pt.2. 127-30; *Réimpression de l'Ancien Moniteur* (Paris, 1858-63), IX. 500; and cf. Clarke Garrett, "Joseph Priestley, the millennium, and the French Revolution", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, XXXIV.1 (1973), 59. Cf. also, Schofield, *Scientific Autobiography*, 258-262, Wedgwood to Priestley, 2 September 1791; Priestley to Wedgwood, 7 September 1791; and *Morning Chronicle*, 6 September 1791.

<sup>63</sup> W.P.L. Mss., Priestley to Wilkinson, 4 October 1791.

<sup>64</sup> M. Rheinhard, "Le Voyage de Pétion a Londres", 50-1, 54-5; J.R.L. Mss., Lindsey to Tayleur, 6 November 1791, and cf. also H. McLachlan, *Letters of Lindsey*, 89; Philp, "Godwin, Holcroft and the Rights of Man", 39; and Goodwin, *The friends of liberty*, 187-8.

<sup>65</sup> *Proc. Mass. Hist. Soc.*, 43 (1910), 634, Brand-Hollis to Willard, 4 November 1791.

in England. His *Appeal* had sold sufficiently well for a second edition to be called for; but he would not, he wrote to Russell, reply any further to the Rev. Burn: "The public attention", he wrote, "will be sufficiently taken up with *Mr Paine's second publication*, which is indeed striking and excellent much beyond the *first part*. There is also an excellent pamphlet just printed called *Advice to the Privileged Orders*, which you will like much. Such boldness in political discussion was never seen before in this or any other country."<sup>66</sup> At the Assizes at Warwick in April, however, Priestley's claim for damages arising out of the riots was realised only in part; he himself was vilified in court and publicly abused in the streets, and a riot was seriously apprehended. In May, Priestley's faith in his fellow countrymen was further shaken when Whitbread's Motion in the Commons for an enquiry into the riots was refused. "I see that the country is against us", he wrote to Russell, "and that no justice is to be had for us in it."<sup>67</sup> His interest in France in these circumstances continued unabated. "I have written to Mr Français on the subject of your naturalisation", he wrote to his son William, after the latter was granted French citizenship in a much publicised ceremony on 8 June: "I am much interested in what is now passing in Paris, and wish you would write often and fully."<sup>68</sup>

As late as the autumn of 1792, Priestley was not without thoughts himself of settling in France. "In case of more riots, of which we are not without apprehension", he wrote to Lavoisier, "I shall be glad to take

<sup>66</sup> Priestley, *Dialogue on the general principles of government*, *Works*, XXV. 97; B.M. Add. Mss., 44, 992, Priestley to Russell, 24, 31 January, 15 February 1792; and cf. J. Barlow, *Advice to the privileged orders in the several states of Europe* (London, 1792).

<sup>67</sup> *The Times*, 9 April 1792; F.W. Gibbs, *Joseph Priestley*, 210-214; Priestley, *Works*, I, pt.2. 183, Priestley to Russell, 12 June 1792; Priestley, *Works*, XV. 523: Preface to *Fast Day Sermon* (1794); and Priestley, *Appeal*, Part II, *Works*, XIX. 435, 442-43, 490-499. And cf. also Add. Mss., 44, 992, Priestley to Russell, 24 January 1792; and Bolton, *Scientific correspondence*, 126-8: Priestley to Mr. Lee, 13 March 1792; Priestley to Thomas Wedgwood, 13 March, 15 May 1792.

<sup>68</sup> *Notes and Queries*, 3rd Series, XI. March 1867, Priestley to W. Priestley, 25 June 1792; cf. also Priestley, *Works*, I. pt.2. 185-6, Priestley to Russell, 22 June 1792; *Annual Register*, 1792, *Chronicle*, 25; Chaloner, 25; *Réimpression de l'Ancien Moniteur*, XII, 605; and also Priestley, *Works*, XXI. 594-595, for Français' speech, and his unqualified praise for Priestley also on this occasion. C. Garrett, "Joseph Priestley, the millennium, and the French Revolution", 59, states that William Priestley's citizenship was sponsored by Français, "with his father's support." But Priestley first heard of it, as he wrote to Russell, "from the public papers." Cf. Gibbs, *Joseph Priestley*, 214-215.

For the correspondence which Priestley clearly had from his son at this time, cf. his letter to Hurford Stone (13 September 1792): below, n.74.

refuge in your country, the liberties of which I hope will be established notwithstanding the present combination against you.”<sup>69</sup> Amongst those English sympathisers shaken, but undeterred, by the “horrid violences” committed during the overthrow of the monarchy,<sup>70</sup> Priestley was, on 26 August 1792 amongst those select few who, “for their opinions, their writings, and their courage”, were, at this momentous period in the history of the Revolution, deemed worthy by the French Assembly to have citizenship conferred upon them.<sup>71</sup> And, in a further striking demonstration of the regard in which he was held in France, Priestley, with Paine, was shortly afterwards elected a member for one of the departments of France, for the forthcoming National Convention.<sup>72</sup>

These marks of confidence, Priestley wrote to the Assembly, in a letter which was read in a session of the newly established Convention, on 28 September, under the presidency of Pétion - the proceedings of which were recorded and published in more than one newspaper in England - he considered “the greatest of honours”, and a demonstration of “a generous disposition to associate all nations in the common cause of liberty and the

<sup>69</sup> Bolton, *Scientific correspondence*, 129-30, Priestley to Lavoisier, 2 June 1792; and cf. *ibid.*, 116-7, 130-1, 132-3: Priestley to Thomas Wedgwood, 18 October 1791; Priestley to Withering, 2 October 1792; Priestley to Mrs Crouch, 31 December 1792. Cf. also Add. Mss., 44,992, Priestley to Russell, 14 September 1791; and W.P.L. Mss., Priestley to Wilkinson, 4 October 1791; and also Chaloner, 27-28.

<sup>70</sup> Priestley, *Works*, I, pt.2, 183-4, Priestley to J. Hurford Stone, 17 June (13 September) 1792. For the dating of this letter, cf. below, n.74.

<sup>71</sup> *Réimpression de l'ancien Moniteur*, XIII, 541: “Considérant enfin qu’au moment où une convention nationale va fixer les destinées de la France et préparer peut-être celle du genre humain, il appartient à un peuple généreux et libre appeler toutes les lumières, et de déférer le droit de concourir à ce grande acte de raison à des hommes qui, par leurs sentiments, leurs écrits et leur courage, s’en sont montrés si éminemment dignes.” The list of eighteen names, who included Paine, Bentham, Wilberforce, Mackintosh, Hamilton, Washington and Kosciusko, was headed by Priestley. Cf. also Garrett, *Joseph Priestley*, 59.

<sup>72</sup> *Ancien Moniteur*, XIII, 654, 658: 10,11 September 1792 for the announcements of Priestley’s election for the department of l’Orne. Cf. also G.S. Veitch, *The genesis of parliamentary reform* (London, 1913, repr. 1965) 219-20 and note. For Paine’s election and acceptance, cf. Aldridge, *Paine*, 171-2, 334. And for two English reactions to these developments, cf. O. Browning, ed., *The despatches of Earl Gower* (Cambridge, 1885) 237, 238, 250: 8,9, 17 September 1792; and P.J. Marshall and J.A. Woods, eds., *The correspondence of Edmund Burke* (Cambridge: Chicago, 1968), VII, 229: Burke to Fitzwilliam, 5 October 1792.

rights of men.”<sup>73</sup> The offer of citizenship he accepted, as he also wrote to his friend Hurford Stone, with gratitude.<sup>74</sup> His seat in the Convention, however, he, unlike Paine, politely declined. “Such an office”, he wrote in a further explanatory letter to Rabaud - one of the electors for the department which had bestowed upon him the honour -

is certainly at this time of the utmost importance on the theatre of the world, as the peace and happiness, not only of your country, but of all Europe, and perhaps of the whole human race, are very particularly interested in everything which may be decided in that Assembly; but my imperfect knowledge of your language, local circumstances, and the important duties of my present situation, prevent me from accepting your invitation. Besides, my studies having been principally directed towards philosophy and theology, and not particularly towards legislation, little could be expected from me in respect to that science; but in every case in which my abilities will permit me to advance an opinion of any weight, it shall always be at their service, through the

<sup>73</sup> *Ancien Moniteur*, XIV, 74-5; Priestley, *Works*, XXV, 118-9n: Priestley to the National Assembly of France, 13 September 1792. Cf. also *ibid.*, XV, 525-6, n; *Morning Chronicle*, 4 October 1792; *Manchester Herald*, 6 October 1792; and Burke, *Correspondence*, VII, 229, Burke to Fitzwilliam, 5 October 1792. Garrett, “Joseph Priestley”, 59, and also in Garrett, *Respectable folly: millenarians and the French Revolution in France and England* (John Hopkins Univ. Pr., 1975) 135, dates the reading of Priestley’s letter to 20 September. Cf. also Appendix B.

<sup>74</sup> Priestley, *Works*, I, pt.2, 183-4, Priestley to Hurford Stone, 17 June (13 September) 1792. Rutt dates this letter 17 June 1792, but from internal evidence, in particular the reference to the fate of Priestley’s “old friend and correspondent the Duke de la Rochefoucauld” (who was murdered by his tenantry in August) and also Priestley’s reference to his “citizenship and nomination to the Conventional Assembly”, this must be in error. And the date on the manuscript, now in the possession of the American Philosophical Society, can certainly be read as 13 September 1792 (A.P.S. Misc. Mss. Colln.). Cf. also Priestley, *Works*, XXV, 118-119, where Rutt prints Priestley’s Address to the Assembly, dated 13 September 1792 (above, n.73) - “now first printed from a copy sent by Dr Priestley to Mr J H Stone in Paris.” Priestley was, as his letter makes clear, enclosing one copy of his letter to the Assembly, for delivery by Hurford Stone. Cf. also Appendix B and below n.78.

medium of my friend and correspondent Français, who is also chosen a member of the Conventional Assembly.<sup>75</sup>

“Be assured that though absent from you, my heart is with you”, Priestley wrote in his letter to the Assembly.<sup>76</sup> And to Roland, the Minister of the Interior, he reiterated his sense of pride on his election to the Convention. He wrote also, in this letter which was recorded in the *Manchester Herald* on 6 October, and which had already provoked an extreme reaction from Burke by 5 October, of his admiration of Roland’s conduct in the troubles in Paris; of the sadness which these had given to the friends of the Revolution in England; and of the necessity of asserting the sovereign authority of the elected representatives of the people:

Certes, si on ne met un frein puissant à de si grands outrages faits à la justice et à l’humanité; et si une assemblée législative, choisie librement par la nation, ne peut commander le respect de cette même nation, et faire obéir à ses décrets, il faut désespérer de la cause de la liberté, non seulement en France, mais dans toute l’Europe,

<sup>75</sup> Priestley, *Works*, I. pt.2. 190-1, Priestley to Rabaud, 21 September 1792 (4th Year of Liberty); Garrett, “Joseph Priestley”, 60; *Manchester Herald*, 6 October 1792. For Burke’s reaction to this letter, and to that which Priestley sent, on the same date, to Roland (below, n.77), cf. Burke, *Correspondence*, VII, 234. The editors comment that “Burke appears to have seen letters of Priestley which were not genuine. His summary of them corresponds with none of those which Priestley is known to have written.” (Ibid., 234, note). But Burke’s description of the letters, as “besides the answer to the assembly... in which he censures some excesses; or indeed rather laments them for no other reason than as tending to hurt so good a cause”, fits very well with the letters to Roland and Rabaud. It was almost certainly, moreover, these letters which Burke had in mind when he launched a further attack upon Priestley in the spring of 1793 (below, n.82). Cf. Garrett, *Respectable folly*, 135. Cf. also Appendix B.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. above, n.73.

après avoir formé les espérances les plus flatteuses.<sup>77</sup>

And to Hurford Stone, with whom he was in regular communication at this time - “your letters”, he wrote, “are peculiarly acceptable in the present state of affairs, and I hope you will not fail to communicate them as you find leisure” - and who had been entrusted with a copy of his letter to the Assembly, he made even clearer his close involvement in the events which he believed were about to transform the face of Europe. “I shall now consider the politics of France more particularly”, he wrote,

and communicate my sentiments occasionally through M. Français to the Conventional Assembly; and in order to form a better judgement, shall be happy to be instructed by you with respect to the state of *facts*, and *opinions* in France. Do you think that the French could bear to be excluded from being spectators of the Assembly? If they could keep their debates to themselves, and publish only the *results* of them, as was done by the American Congress, it would add greatly to their dignity.<sup>78</sup>

“Indeed I am no politician”, Priestley was writing in December 1792 to John Adams, “and I would gladly confine myself to my theological and philosophical pursuits, if I might be permitted to do.”<sup>79</sup> But, as his letters to the Convention, to Hurford Stone, to Roland, and to Rabaud make clear, his deep interest in politics had not abated, nor his willingness even now to identify himself publicly with a cause in which he clearly

<sup>77</sup> *Ancien Moniteur*, XIV. 75; Priestley to Roland, 21 September 1792; Garrett, “Priestley”, 59-60; *Respectable folly*, 135; and cf. also *Manchester Herald*, 6 October 1792; Priestley, *Works*, XV. 525-6, n.; and *ibid.*, I. pt.2. 191, note. Cf. also Appendix B.

<sup>78</sup> Priestley to J. Hurford Stone, 17 June (13 September) 1792: cf. above, n.74. And cf. T.S. 11/955/1793: J.H. Stone to William Stone, 23 August 1792 for a reference to the letter to which Priestley’s was almost certainly a reply: “the folly of kingship to say nothing of its knavery”, wrote Stone, “is now so evident in the eyes of Frenchmen at least that there seems no division of opinion whether the Monarchy shall continue or a Republic or federate Government be revised ... I inclose you a letter ... which you will be so kind as to Seal and send as well to Dr Priestley.”

<sup>79</sup> Adams Papers Reel 375, Mass. Hist. Soc. Colln., Priestley to Adams, 20 December, 1792, and endorsed “Dec. 20 1792, and Feb. 17 1793”. This letter is dated by Bonwick, “Joseph Priestley, emigrant and Jeffersonian”, n.24, to 1791, but from internal evidence, as well as the manuscript date, this is unlikely. Priestley’s letter is in reply to Adams’ of 19 February 1792 (cf. “Revolutionary Philosopher, Part I”, 50, n.33); and it refers to emigration, and impending war with France.

profoundly believed. To Adams, however, he was shortly to write - in one of his few comments implying criticism of France - that "I cannot say but I now think more favourably of a pure republic than I have done. A comparison between the American and French governments some years hence will enable us to form a better judgement than we can at present."<sup>80</sup> And in the spring of 1793, increasingly alarmed at the harassment to which he was once again subjected, and, in private, even critical of the excesses of the French,<sup>81</sup> he issued, when challenged in the Commons by Burke, the first of his complete denials of political involvement. Burke's charge that he had effectively countenanced the sentiments contained in the now published correspondence between the reformers of the Revolution Society with the Jacobin Societies of France, he totally rejected. And, he added,

I am not nor ever was, a member of any political society whatever; nor did I ever sign any paper originating with any of them. This I do not say because I have any objection to such societies, but my studies and pursuits have been of a different kind.

Nothing that he had written, he claimed, could be construed as saying anything against the English Constitution.<sup>82</sup>

In the spring of 1794, after he had come to his reluctant conclusion to leave England for America, and by now acutely apprehensive of his personal safety, and the danger of imminent prosecution, Priestley delivered the Fast Day Sermon in which he deliberately stated his complete denial of political involvement.<sup>83</sup> At the same time, he was publishing his *Heads of lectures on a course of experimental philosophy*, as delivered to the young dissenters at Hackney. He prefixed them with an Address, "the same in substance with that which I delivered to them at the close of the session of 1791. In it", he wrote, "may be seen a specimen of the language we hold to them on the subject of *politics*, which, with reasonable men, will serve as an answer to the many calumnies, that have been thrown out against us, as disaffected to the government of this country." "Shew, then", he wrote to his young charges, in a passage which could truly be described as Socratic,

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Bolton, *Scientific correspondence*, 135, Priestley to Withering, 15 April 1793; W.P.L. Mss., Priestley to Wilkinson, 16 May 1793; Priestley, *Works*, I. pt.2. 196, Priestley to Russell, March 1793; and cf. "Revolutionary Philosopher, Part I", 45.

<sup>82</sup> *Parl. Hist.*, XXX. 551-2; Priestley, *A Sermon Preached at the Gravel-Pit Meeting in Hackney, April 19, 1793* (London, 1793): Preface: *Works*, XV. 497-501; *Morning Chronicle*, 9 March 1793; Priestley, *Works*, I. pt.2. 196-7, Priestley to Russell, March 1793.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. "Revolutionary Philosopher, Part I", 47-8.

by your general conversation and conduct, that you are the friends of peace and good order; and that, whatever may be your opinions with respect to the best form of government for people who have no previous prejudices or habits, you will do everything in your power for the preservation of that form of it which the generality of your countrymen approve, and under which you live, which is all that can be reasonably expected of any subject. As it is not necessary that every good son should think his parent the wisest and best man in the world, but it is thought sufficient if the son pay due respect and obedience to his parent, so neither is it to be expected that every man should be of opinion that the form of government under which he happens to be born is the best of all possible forms of government. It is enough that he submit to it, and that he make no attempt to bring about any change, except by fair reasoning, and endeavouring to convince his countrymen that it is in their power to better their condition in that respect, as well as in any other. Think, therefore, speak and write, with the greatest freedom on the subject of government, particular or general, as well as on any other that may come before you. It can only be avowed tyranny that would prevent this. But at the same time submit yourselves, and promote submission in others, to that form of government which you find to be most approved in this country, which at present unquestionably is that by *King, Lords and Commons*.<sup>84</sup>

On 30 March 1794, only a week before he set sail for America, Priestley delivered to his congregation at Hackney his farewell Discourse. "The persons present", it was reported,

could not at the most moderate computation amount to less than twelve or thirteen hundred. Many, who had come from a distance, were obliged to return unsatisfied; and a great number hovered about the walls of the meeting-house, whether in expectation of hearing some part of the sermon, or of gaining

<sup>84</sup> Priestley, *Heads of lectures on a course of experimental philosophy particularly including chemistry, delivered at the New College, Hackney, (1794)*, *Works*, XXV. 385-6; 390. Cf. "Revolutionary Philosopher, Part I", 50 and n.33 for contemporaries' likening of Priestley to Socrates.

intelligence of the substance and tenor of the discourse, is difficult to determine.<sup>85</sup>

To this crowded congregation, Priestley expressed the satisfaction he felt in the "candid attention" with which he had lately been heard "by unusually crowded audiences, consisting chiefly of strangers; thinking it to be a symptom of abating prejudice, and of the prevalence of better information than has hitherto obtained. The time, I hope", he said,

is approaching when all delusion will vanish; when men and things will be seen in their true light; and the prevalence of truth will, no doubt, be attended with an increase of general happiness.<sup>86</sup>

On his arrival in America, at the beginning of June, the need even for such veiled allusions had vanished. "The wisdom and happiness of republican governments, and the evils arising from hereditary monarchical ones, cannot appear in a stronger light to you than they do to me", he declared in an Address to the Republican Natives of Great Britain and Ireland.<sup>87</sup> "Be cheerful, dear Sir; you are going to a happier world, the world of Washington and Franklin", the Society of United Irishmen had assured him.<sup>88</sup> And if, even in America, Priestley was to be surrounded by controversy, and subjected once again to harassment for his political opinions, of his republican principles, and his continuing dedication to the revolutions on both sides of the Atlantic which had attempted to put them into effect, there was never any doubt.

<sup>85</sup> *Morning Chronicle*, 31 March 1794; and cf. also "Revolutionary Philosopher", Part I, 51, n.38 for Lindsey's description; and *Works*, I, pt.2. 223, and n.

<sup>86</sup> Priestley, *A sermon delivered at the Gravel-Pit Meeting in Hackney, March 30 1794, being the author's farewell discourse to his congregation (London, 1794)*, *Works*, XV. 553.

<sup>87</sup> Priestley, *Works*, I. pt.2. 253, Priestley to the Republican Natives of Great Britain and Ireland, 13 June 1794.

<sup>88</sup> Priestley, *Works*, I. pt.2. 218, Society of United Irishmen to Priestley, 28 March 1794.

## APPENDIX A

The Principles of the Warwickshire Constitutional Society  
H.O. 42/19

As every Society should be formed on certain acknowledged principles we the members of the Warwickshire Constitutional Society agree in

Maintaining -

- 1st That the sole object of all civil Government is the temporal Interest of the people who compose any civil society.
- 2d That the people at large are the only judges in what manner their own interest is to be promoted; that they have the sole right of making Laws, or regulations for that purpose, and of appointing the persons who are to administer them.
- 3rd That when abuses are introduced into any Government, the people who are aggrieved by them, ought to inquire into their source, and apply whatsoever remedy shall to them appear adequate to the purpose whether by making new laws, repealing old ones or removing the persons who administer them.
- 4th That it is adviseable that meetings should be held for this purpose, that everything relating to so important a subject may be freely discussed, and measures taken to enlighten the minds of all the Citizens, in order that they may proceed steadily, and without tumult to procure the redress of grievances.
- 5th That the representation of this country in the House of Commons is by no means equal, so that it cannot be depended upon as speaking the sense of the people, but that, were it made complete, and its duration shortened, it would be the means of procuring the redress of every other grievance.
- 6th It is therefore our determination to use every method in our power to apprise the people at large of this great abuse, which has gradually crept into the constitution of this Country, and to adopt every peaceable method of procuring the removal of it.

## APPENDIX B

Priestley wrote three letters to public men in France in September 1792 on his nomination for citizenship and election to the National Convention of France. (He wrote also to his friend John Hurford Stone, enclosing a copy of the first of these: cf. above, n.74).

The following references are to the known texts of these letters:

1. Priestley to the National Assembly of France, 13 September 1792: *Ancien Moniteur*, XIV. 75; Priestley, *Works*, XXV. 118-9.
2. Priestley to Rabaud, 21 September 1792: Priestley, *Works*, I.2. 190-1.
3. Priestley to Roland, 21 September 1792: *Ancien Moniteur*, XIV. 75.

## ENLIGHTENMENT, TOLERATION AND LIBERTY

Mark Philp

*Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one's own understanding without the guidance of another ... The motto of enlightenment is therefore: Sapere aude. Have courage to use your own understanding! ... For enlightenment of this kind is all that is needed for freedom. And the freedom in question is the most innocuous form of all - freedom to make public use of one's reason in all matters.<sup>1</sup>*

Kant's view of enlightenment is doubtless contentious, the more so if it is used as an account of the distinguishing feature of the Enlightenment. His quotation of Horace's *sapere aude* is surely enough to suggest that some elements of his account are not distinctive to the eighteenth century. However, the Enlightenment is so multi-faceted - a set of assumptions about the order of the world and humanity's place in it, a philosophical method founded on scepticism, an intellectual movement, a cultural revolution, and so on - that there are certain attractions to Kant's formulation, when couched in the lower case. Enlightenment and Dissent can be taken as a reference to a particular historical juncture, but by using the lower case it can also be taken as a reference to states of mind and opinion. Taken in this way they have an obvious connection: the former involves the unrestricted exercise of one's understanding, the latter tends to be the outcome of doing so when prevailing orthodoxies are enshrined in political, social or ecclesiastical institutions. Under such circumstances, both terms have a logical enough connection with a third - toleration (the institutional forms of which are also associated with the historical juncture of Enlightenment and religious Dissent). Enlightenment demands the unfettered exercise of the understanding, out of which dissent from prevailing orthodoxies grows. And it demands, at the very least, toleration, the protection by the state of the right of the individual to the full exercise of his or her understanding, irrespective of how offensive we might find the outcome of that exercise. The only just constraint on that exercise is where it fails to recognize the equivalent right of others.

The demand for toleration, while formulated before the Enlightenment, comes of age, as we shall see, at its end. It does so in that it is only towards the end of the eighteenth century that a rights based argument for full toleration, expanded into something like Kant's freedom to make public use of one's reason in all matters, emerges grounded on secular principles. Indeed, this right is one of the fruits of the Enlightenment. However, although I will discuss some of the features of the historical

<sup>1</sup> Immanuel Kant, 'An answer to the question: 'What is enlightenment?' in Kant's political writings, ed. H. Reiss (Cambridge, 1970), 54-5.

relationship, my major concern in this paper is with the strength of the arguments for the right to toleration, and subsequently for freedom of thought and expression, within Western liberal political thought. I shall suggest that the project of enlightenment, as understood by writers like Kant, and the associated demand for toleration and for the full and free exercise of the understanding is one which now lacks the force it might once have had. One consequence of this is that Western liberalism will find that its credentials on the issue of toleration are more tarnished than it might have supposed, and that they are so because of the extent to which they remain informed by Enlightenment assumptions and rhetoric.

Three elements in this account need to be clarified before we proceed further: what do we mean by toleration, and by a right, and what is the relationship between toleration of religious beliefs and the broader Kantian freedom to make public use of one's reason in all matters?<sup>2</sup>

Toleration is circumscribed by two limits. On the one hand it makes no sense to talk about our tolerating beliefs to which we have no objection. We are only tolerant when we are tempted not to be, and where 'the intolerant inclination is in itself worthwhile or desirable.'<sup>3</sup> On the other, toleration stops at the point where a person's behaviour violates the equal rights of others. The justificatory structure of a rights argument runs roughly from a foundational principle or value which grounds a claim to an abstract right, from which in turn derivative rights are then deduced. Leaving aside the grounding for a moment, we can recognize that one common way of proceeding is to invoke as the most fundamental right, an abstract right to liberty, which is then fleshed out in terms of freedoms of speech, association, religious belief and so on. The constraints on a right to toleration would, then, be fixed by the extent to which the public use of reason violates other forms of liberty rights which can claim a more direct derivation from the abstract right to liberty. Clearly, much weighs on the foundational principles appealed to and on the form of the abstract right claimed. As we will see, some arguments for the right to toleration draw quite sharp limits, to modern eyes, on what can be tolerated without violating the foundational value or principle.

<sup>2</sup> This could also be couched as a right to private judgment as defended by Godwin - see W. Godwin, *An enquiry concerning political justice* (London, 1793) and the discussion in my *Godwin's Political Justice* (London, 1986), ch.1 and 4 in particular.

<sup>3</sup> J. Raz, 'Autonomy, toleration and the harm principle', in S. Mendus, *Justifying toleration* (Cambridge, 1988), 163; see also Raz, *The morality of freedom* (Oxford, 1986), 403.

The weight of the existing literature on the nature of rights legitimates a degree of brevity. I take it that we find it important to couch arguments for toleration, free speech and so on in terms of rights because we think they should be respected on moral grounds, even where they are not recognized by law, and because we believe that they are sufficiently weighty considerations that we should not over-ride them except for the strongest kind of reason, such as when they violate other rights. That is, we are concerned with moral rights (not just legal or positive rights), and we think that they give the subject claims against us, and against the state, which impose duties upon us to respect their freedom to choose and act in a certain respect without interference. A's right is thus a claim for protection against interference by others and an assertion of A's sovereignty or discretion in a particular area. We cannot interfere with A on the grounds that we find A's choice morally repellent because A's right against us precludes our acting on the basis of certain reasons towards A. That is, it prevents us interfering with A's actions on the grounds of our racial, sexual, religious, etcetera, beliefs, because A's claim against us will either be of the form that no interference can ever be justified, or of the form that only a certain narrow set of reasons are appropriate reasons for interfering with A's actions (such as harm to others). One rights claim which has often been taken to hold off all interference by others is the right to the free exercise of private judgment or conscience.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, it is generally recognized that the right of freedom of speech and freedom of association rules out only a certain range of reasons which might motivate interference - we want to defend these rights against those who wish to interfere with them because they do not like what is being said, but we also recognize cases where other reasons come into play, like preserving public order, where it is appropriate to intervene.

To think of a right as an area of discretion and as a claim against B's interference for a certain range of reasons also helps illuminate the idea that A can have a moral right to do wrong.<sup>5</sup> For example, if A is very wealthy while all around are poor and needy, it is plausible to claim that A has a *prima facie* moral duty to assist the others. But A has a right to her private property if the fact that she does not do what she ought to do fails to provide the others with an adequate reason for interfering with her holdings. Similarly, one might read Mill's proposal of the harm principle, in *On Liberty*, as identifying the extent of the right to liberty which he wished to grant; where the right is precisely a right to do wrong or right,

<sup>4</sup> For example Godwin; but also see Paine's distinction between perfect and imperfect rights, where perfect rights carry the claim that no state interference can be justified: T. Paine, *Rights of man*, ed., Eric Foner (Penguin, 1985), 68-9.

<sup>5</sup> I have benefited from an illuminating discussion of this issue by L. Jacobs, *Rights and derivation* (Oxford University D.Phil. thesis, 1990).

as one chooses, except where allowing the individual to act causes harm to others. The idea that a core element of a right is a sphere of discretion, and thus that a component of a right is that it necessarily involves the right to do wrong, is a central element in the view that rights claims can 'trump' or block direct welfarist or utilitarian interventions.

The third area which we need to clarify concerns the relationship between toleration of religious beliefs and the broader Kantian freedom to make public use of one's reason in all matters. Rights to toleration have mainly been invoked in matters of religion. Indeed, the claims for religious toleration have sometimes, as we will see, taken a narrow view of what counts as religious toleration in the hope of more easily securing a narrow range of discretion. However, I shall not take the question of toleration to be solely a matter of religious toleration. There are two reasons for not doing so: that the boundaries between religious and other forms of cultural practice are not now easy to draw, if ever they were; and because the issues raised by religious toleration in the seventeenth century have become more generalized by the time the secular account of toleration emerges at the end of the eighteenth century. The secular, rights-based account of toleration is one which necessarily goes beyond the original religious claims.

A final area of concern needs to be broached. That is, the complex question of the relationship between belief, expression and action. The complication arises, at its crudest, because it is plausible to claim that where action is constrained so too is expression, and where expression is constrained so too is thought and belief. If people are prevented from acting on the basis of their religious, political or other beliefs then, in many instances, we are also denying them the right to express those beliefs - since expression and action frequently overlap (the expression of a political belief can also be a directly political act). But in denying them the right to express those beliefs are we not also denying them the right to hold those beliefs? In a religious context, it seems implausible to claim that someone has freedom of conscience where they lack freedom of religious expression or worship. One reason this is a problem is that a common justification for state intervention invokes the distinction between the public and private realm in the form of claiming that although the state must have the right and power to control the expression and practice of beliefs - regulating demonstrations, political associations and so on - the right of conscience remains. Yet the public-private divide is inherently contestable, in a way that makes the liberal state's pretensions to toleration of a diversity of belief highly suspect. For example, claiming that the state tolerates all religious beliefs equally, but that the state reserves the right to supervise the character of the education that all children within its boundaries receive, clearly runs up against the problem that religions with strong and integral beliefs about the kind of education the children of their

adherents should receive are not being accorded the kind of toleration that a religion without such beliefs receives. Indeed, depending on the depth of the commitment to education within the religion, it is not implausible to claim that in some cases the state would be acting in a way tantamount to a denial of toleration for that religion. On the other hand, the recent and recurrent controversy in the United States over prayers in schools shows that it is possible to claim that a 'hands off' approach to religion in schools can be seen by some groups as failing to respect the religious convictions of parents and their children. Yet in both cases the state might still claim that it accorded absolute respect to the right of conscience.

Freedom of conscience, speech and expression, and other freedoms in which it is not possible to draw a clear line between defending the right to belief and defending the right to act upon that belief, further illuminate the distinction between rights which block all interference, and those which block interference on the basis of certain sorts of reasons. But they also raise the question of how far allowing interference for any reason other than preserving another more fundamental right, or to meet Kantian universalizability criteria, can provide us with the kind of rights defence we require.

I want to begin my discussion of the right to toleration by locating the argument historically. I will question one common judgment about the force of the original grounding of the right to toleration, and I will suggest that modern liberal democratic societies have substantial difficulties reproducing the powerful arguments used by their ancestors.

### Historical grounding

The claim that freedom of speech or expression is a fundamental right is associated historically with the view that each person has the right to the free exercise of conscience, and the right to worship in conformity to their beliefs.

Almighty God hath created the mind free. All attempts to influence it by temporal punishments or burthens are a departure from the plan of the holy author of our religion ... No man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship or ministry or shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions

or beliefs, but all men shall be free to possess and by argument to maintain, their opinions in matters of religion.<sup>6</sup>

Prior to the mid-seventeenth century, the right to liberty of conscience was simply not recognized in the West. Persecution of heretics was justified on both political and religious grounds, and both as a matter of expedience and as a matter of principle. Kings persecuted heresy as a threat to the security and stability of their states, or because they accepted religious arguments for persecution. Religious justifications were more concerned with the saving of souls: it is our Christian duty to root out evil and to rescue those souls who stray from the true path, and if we cannot win them by argument we must do so by force, rather than let them suffer the loss of their immortal souls. Calvin seems to have had no doubt that it was his duty to burn the heretic Miguel Servetus:

Who ever shall maintain that wrong is done to heretics and blasphemers in punishing them, makes himself an accomplice in their crime and guilty as they are. There is no question here of man's authority: it is God who speaks and clear is it what law he will have kept in the Church even to the end of the world. Wherefore does he demand of us so extreme severity; if not to show us that due consideration, so that we spare not kin nor blood nor life of any and forget all humanity when the matter is to combat for his glory?<sup>7</sup>

This is not to say that toleration was unknown prior to the seventeenth century. The argument from expedience could work both ways: some rulers were persuaded as sects proliferated and as persecution provoked resistance that coercion was ineffective and divisive and that toleration could earn the loyalty of the heterodox. Moreover, principle might also be appealed to: some theologians argued that faith and belief had to be sincere to ensure the salvation of the soul; persecution could only encourage hypocrisy and so was ineffective as a route to salvation. This reasoning was not, however, impregnable: for many, the obdurate heretic

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Jefferson, from Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, edited and displayed on the Walls of the Jefferson Memorial, Washington D.C., from C. Smout, 'Jeffersonian religious liberty and American pluralism' in M.D. Peterson and R.C. Vaughan eds., *The Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom: its evolution and consequences in American history* (Cambridge, 1988), 201. Note the highly edited character of the excerpt displayed in public, and see Smout's discussion of this.

<sup>7</sup> Calvin, *Defensio orthodoxae fidei* (1554 ed.), 46-7, cited in J.W. Allen, *A history of political thought in the sixteenth century* (London, 1957), 87. Allen also draws attention to Calvin's citation of Deuteronomy xiii, 15-16. See also T.H.L. Parker, *John Calvin* (Dent, 1975), 145.

had to be persecuted, less for his own sake, than to avoid corrupting the multitude, who are weak and find the demands of the Christian way of salvation burdensome. Either way, the question of whether or not to tolerate a belief was contingent upon questions of expedience. That is, there was no sense that the state was constrained by any *prima facie* principle concerning toleration - no sense of there being a right to toleration. Rulers tolerated if they chose to, and they might choose to because they judged it was beneficial; equally they might choose not to if they saw it as their Christian duty to stamp out heresy.

It was not until John Locke's *Letter Concerning Toleration* (1689) that liberty of conscience was unequivocally claimed as an inalienable right, arising from our duty to submit our consciences to God's sovereign rule:

... no man can so far abandon the care of his own Salvation, as blindly to leave it to the choice of any other, whether Prince or Subject, to prescribe to him what Faith or Worship he shall embrace. For no 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 perswasion of the mind; and Faith is not Faith without believing.<sup>8</sup>

The right of conscience is a natural right, derived from our duty to God as our maker and sovereign, and such rights are indefeasible. Locke mobilizes both a claim about natural rights and a claim about natural powers. It is morally impermissible to surrender the right of judgment in matters of religion to another, but it is also a fact of human nature that 'no Man can, even if he would conform his Faith to the Dictates of another'. The natural right and power cannot be surrendered, nor can it be legitimately usurped by a temporal sovereign. The civil magistrate has no right to seek to rule in matters of faith, for doing so trespasses on the rights of individuals to fulfil their duties to God, and arrogates to him or herself a matter which falls within the province of God:

The care of souls cannot belong to the Civil Magistrate, because his Power consists only in outward force; but true and saving Religion consists in the inward perswasion of the Mind, without which nothing can be acceptable to God ... the magistrate's Power extends not to the establishing of any Articles of Faith or Forms of Worship, by the force of his Laws.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> John Locke, *A letter concerning toleration*, ed. J. Tully (Hackett, Indianapolis, 1983), 26.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 26-7 (see also 47).

The arguments for a right to liberty of conscience arose in a period where there were deeply held, indeed dogmatic beliefs. There was nothing more important in life than correct belief, because there was nothing more important in this life than our next, and nothing more important for salvation than true belief or faith. Under such conditions it is hardly surprising that each sect could hold the views of other sects to be not just wrong, but positively harmful, even evil and offensive to God. To recognize toleration as a right required moving from the view that 'all people must have the one true faith' to the view that 'every person must be allowed to live by the faith which seems true to him.' That is, it required that each tolerate the consciences of others, even while believing they are wrong, and even if components of others' beliefs are found offensive - because, for example they present God in a light which from another perspective seems deeply sacrilegious.

The best justification for this move rested on the view that to interfere with the individual's relationship to God was to put human above divine authority. Yet the justification is hardly cast iron. Consider the arguments at their most forceful. Faith, or true belief, is necessary for salvation; faith is a direct relationship between the individual and God; and human intervention in the individual's relationship to God cannot secure correct belief or faith. These are inadequate grounds for claiming a right to liberty of conscience because they remain silent on the question of the content of belief (what God communicates to the individual conscience). Yet if the subject's relationship to God is sacrosanct (if nothing is more important), and if my belief instructs me to eliminate heretics and infidels, then their claims for toleration are effectively seeking to place human constraints on my relationship with God and my exercise of his, or her, will. That is, we seem to be back to square one. The state may tolerate diversity from expedience, but the individual's relationship to God does not justify a right to toleration. Each individual's relationship to God trumps the right of the convinced conscience to act to enforce his or her reading of God's will only if God's will *vis-a-vis* the sanctity of the individual conscience is taken as over-riding any particular reading of his/her will which may emerge. But for this to happen, we need to share this reading of God's will - and, as the example of Calvin shows, it is possible to take a different view. At base, the argument only works if there is agreement on the existence of a fundamental injunction from God against intervention with individual conscience, but there are no more secure grounds for such a 'meta' reading, than there are for the particular readings of God's will that we use in guiding our actions.

The first attempts to ground arguments for toleration on an appeal to God's will do not withstand critical scrutiny. Nor do the arguments for toleration on the basis of scepticism.<sup>10</sup> Scepticism shares a substantial number of problems with relativism, the most destructive being that confessing the weakness of one's arguments, or their relative nature, only works with those who are similarly sceptical or relativist. Denying access to knowledge puts one in a fundamentally weak position *vis-à-vis* those who have no such doubts.<sup>11</sup>

Given the weakness of these arguments it is not surprising to find certain incentives in operation in the late seventeenth century which might have encouraged people to accept the individual conscience argument - for example, the mutual massacre of believers. But while this helps explain the attractiveness of the argument, it does not eradicate its weaknesses. Moreover, even if one is persuaded of the force of the argument from the sanctity of conscience, as Locke was, neither the right of conscience nor the right of expression is thereby rendered absolute. A right of this form imposes a *prima facie* duty of respect on the part of governments and fellow citizens. Rulers must judge not on the attractiveness or otherwise of the particular beliefs held or expressed, but on the basis of whether an individual's exercise of a particular right puts at risk the state's capacity to protect all citizens equally. If our exercise of the right threatens the security of the state or inflicts harm on others, it may be over-ridden. Locke, for example, denied Catholics and atheists the right. Catholics because they owe allegiance to another power - Rome; atheists, because they cannot be trusted:

Those are not to be tolerated who deny the Being of a God. Promises, Covenants, and Oaths, which are the Bonds of Humane Society, can have no hold upon an Atheist. The taking away of God, tho but even in thought, dissolves all.<sup>12</sup>

There are, then, bounds to the right; but they are fixed by the duty of the government to maintain order and security - what it is for it to be a right is that only a certain range of reasons are acceptable grounds for intervening - its exercise cannot be infringed simply because it is inconvenient or offensive.

<sup>10</sup> See R. Tuck, 'Scepticism and toleration in the seventeenth century' in Susan Mendus, ed., *Justifying toleration* (Cambridge, 1988), and Susan Mendus's excellent 'Introduction'.

<sup>11</sup> See for example the reaction to the Rushdie affair in Shabbir Akhtar's 'Whose light, whose darkness?', *Guardian* 27.2.89, p.21.

<sup>12</sup> Locke, *A letter concerning toleration*, 51; that is, not only cannot atheists be trusted, but atheism destroys the very fabric of trust within a society - it 'dissolves all.'

## The secular argument

The fundamental weakness of the argument from God's 'meta' instruction and of the argument from scepticism, did not seem to prevent the rise of toleration: by the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth there is an increasing willingness to justify toleration in secular terms. The Enlightenment, both in its principles and practices, placed substantial weight on the individual's personal judgment. In Kant's dictum on enlightenment, in Godwin's defence of private judgment, as well as in Rousseau's quest for independence and authenticity, there is a consistent claim for the right of each individual to live his or her life in the light of the dictates of his or her own reason and conscience.<sup>13</sup> If we can characterise the Enlightenment, without overly caricaturing it, as involving a shift from faith to reason, and from a sense of the world as directly ruled by God, to one which found an order in nature (accessible to reason) which could ground positive moral principles, and which saw in this order the basis for a progressive development of truth and (by the end of the century) the progressive development of human capacities, powers, and, perhaps above all, happiness, we can see why the free exercise of conscience and the understanding would be defended as a *sine qua non* for a liberal and progressive state. The key secular argument for toleration advanced in the Enlightenment, which did not rely on scepticism, was the argument from the progress of truth. We have seen this in Kant, and it is also there in Godwin, and in Helvétius, Holbach, Condorcet and numerous others. Moreover, it is an argument which retains its resilience even after the French Revolution and forms a central plank in Mill's argument in *On Liberty*. Indeed, there is good reason for taking Mill as a paradigmatic expression of this Enlightenment principle, because in addition to this claim Mill also advances a further claim upon which a right to toleration and other liberties might be based, one which owes much to other strands of enlightenment thinking.

Mill's case is put in entirely secular terms: he sought to ground liberty of conscience and freedom of expression in the 'permanent interests of a man as a progressive being.'<sup>14</sup> That is, by advocating freedom of opinion as the only road to the increase of knowledge, and by insisting that 'the only freedom which deserves the name, is that of pursuing our own good in our own way, so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of theirs, or impede their efforts to attain it.'<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> For Rousseau see 'The creed of the Savoyard Priest' in *Emile*. See also F.M. Barnard, *Self direction and political legitimacy: Rousseau and Herder* (Oxford, 1988), Part 1.

<sup>14</sup> J.S. Mill, *On liberty* in *Utilitarianism*, ed. Mary Warnock (Collins/Fontana, Glasgow, 1962), 136.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

Mill rested his case on two lines of argument. The first, having much in common with Enlightenment claims about truth, argues that we can never be confident that the suppression of a belief will not involve the suppression of an important truth; that even error contains a portion of truth, so that it is only through the clash of opinion that truth can fully emerge; and that to prevent truth from collapsing into dogma, and thereby losing its meaning, the clash of opinion and thereby the grounding of conviction in reason must be encouraged.

There is little in this which cannot be found in Godwin's defence of private judgment<sup>16</sup> - indeed there are quite striking similarities. In both, liberty of opinion and expression are given a formulation which meets the criteria we have identified for a rights-based argument: they identify an area of discretion in which the person is protected from interference when this is motivated by others' first order preferences. The ground for this discretion, incorporating a right to do wrong, is (on this line of Mill's argument) that it is only by allowing the free play of opinion and its expression that truth can make progress and the human race advance. Godwin's view is similar. Both also see this freedom as essential for the development of human powers and capacities. Truth, self-improvement, and the broadest possible field of freedom, go hand in hand. There is also much in this view which would have been commended by a great many writers of the late eighteenth century. How well does this line of the argument stand up?

This is a difficult question to answer. Some aspects of the argument turn out to be very weak while others are much more substantial, but the more substantial ones are better assessed alongside the other line of Mill's argument. Perhaps what is most striking, and weakest, about the argument is its inherent rationalism. The rise of 'truth' as the new 'God' of the late enlightenment, and the rise of science in nineteenth century positivism as the new priesthood,<sup>17</sup> now seem grotesquely grandiose pretensions on the part of science and philosophy. Even in the works of such atheists and materialists as Holbach and Helvetius there is a belief in truth and in the potential for a reasonable order to the moral universe which they ground in a view of nature which is hardly compelling. As De Sade pointed out: '... nothing is more immoral than nature; she has never

<sup>16</sup> Or, indeed, in the works of many in Rational Dissent at the end of the eighteenth century, on which see M. Fitzpatrick, 'Toleration and truth' *Enlightenment and Dissent* 1 (1982), 3-32. See also my 'Rational religion and political radicalism in the 1790s' *Enlightenment and Dissent*, 4, 1985, 34-46.

<sup>17</sup> Literally so in the works of Saints Simon and Comte.

imposed limits upon us, nor has she dictated us laws.’<sup>18</sup> Neither nature nor reason provide the kind of under-pinning which would be required to allow us to give ‘truth’ the significance it has in these arguments. Indeed, just as it is tempting to see behind the rhetoric of truth and nature a reformulation of providence, so it is tempting to see remnants of theism in the claims for truth.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, there is a parallel between this argument for toleration and that of the liberal theist which we have discussed. Where the latter implicitly assumed a common interpretation of God’s ‘meta’ injunction, the former assumes a common set of criteria for truth which can under-pin the injunction for mutual tolerance in opinion.<sup>20</sup> But just as the former seems implausible in a more secular age, so too does the latter in a more sceptical age.

There is, however, another line of argument in Mill which is more promising because it is less dependent on a direct appeal to the progress of truth. For Mill, freedom of opinion can be grounded in terms of respect for persons: each individual has an interest in developing and pursuing his or her own plan of life and conception of the good. Not to respect this interest, is to deny respect for persons, and to deny their capacity for autonomy, self-cultivation, and progress. Again, this too is a line of argument which is prefigured by many Enlightenment writers. However, while it lacks the more obvious problems of its companion’s claims for truth it is not without its flaws. As I argue below, respect for persons provides only equivocal support for the rights of conscience and expression.

As we have seen, recognizing a right to toleration or to freedom of conscience requires that we put up with beliefs and opinions which we do not like, or which we think are wrong, or find offensive. For Locke, we do this because not to do so puts human above divine authority. No similar argument is open to Mill. Instead, we must respect others’ claims to our forbearance because of the positive values which flow from allowing them the maximum possible area of liberty. This claim, however, is a substantially less powerful one than its predecessor. Invoking God had the effect of ruling out of court personal preferences as a ground for intervention. Mill’s argument faces more difficulties in doing so. One reason for this is that the scope of the argument is

<sup>18</sup> Cited in Charles Taylor, *Sources of self: The making of the modern identity* (Cambridge, 1990), 336. The quotation is from *Juliette*.

<sup>19</sup> I have argued this in Godwin’s case in chapter 1 of my *Godwin’s Political Justice*.

<sup>20</sup> Paine’s *Age of reason: part one* (London, 1794) provides just a further instance where the combination of deism and a faith in the progress of truth is meant to provide a grounding for moral principles enjoining a respect for rights.

gradually extended during the eighteenth century so that, in Mill, toleration is only a part of a larger claim for maximum liberty. In this broadening a good deal is lost. For example, in the debates on freedom of conscience there was never any suggestion that those who set out to offend others should be tolerated. The right of conscience arose because of the variety of practices which derived from devout belief. As we have seen, Locke had no time for those who failed to take their duty to God seriously, such as atheists or Catholics. But the argument for the maximum possible area of discretion cannot discriminate between serious and frivolous intent. The ‘right to do wrong’ aspect of the right to liberty allows us to live a life in which we pursue our interest in our own good in our own way; but it also allows us to live reckless, worthless and offensive lives if we so choose. Mill needs the emphasis on the progressive nature of human beings and the advancement of truth if he is to defend the claim that you can achieve progress if and only if people are given the maximum possible area of discretion. If we drop this dubious line of argument and stick to the claim based on respect for persons, we have to ask how far this principle can support liberties which allow some people gratuitously to offend others. There is less of a problem about offence caused when pursuing one’s own way of life with integrity, but in the absence of integrity the grounds for justifying liberty seem far weaker. The late Enlightenment move, which put together demands for the free exercise of the understanding with a theory of the progressive development of truth, does encourage us to move to a maximum liberty stance, since the disingenuous will be moved to contrition with the tide of truth. The same principle informs Mill’s account. But if we reject the ‘march of truth’ argument, the remaining respect for persons component cannot do the work required for a right to the widest area of liberty. It cannot do so because it faces three major areas of difficulty: it stumbles on the question of integrity, on the problem that profound offence falling short of harm can render respect for persons meaningless, and on the claims it makes to neutrality as a principle.

Without some conception of integrity of purpose, the defence of maximum liberties seems self-defeating. If the liberal principle of freedom of expression is taken as permitting everything, it is open to the objection that it can do so only if it values nothing. By allowing pornography, blasphemy, racism and so on, by allowing people gratuitously to offend deeply others’ sensibilities by living or expressing support for ways of life which are utterly abhorrent to other members of the community - liberalism devalues the very idea of respect for persons. There may be reasons for according the same rights to a Soho pornographer as to a devout Christian, but it is difficult to see that we can justify doing so on the grounds that we are respecting the interest each has in the development and pursuit of his or her own conception of the good. If we simply appealed to expedience to justify giving them the same rights we

might be on stronger grounds (for example, if we claim that it is too dangerous to invest any individual or group with the power of determining which lives are lived with integrity and which are not). We do not, I think, have to hold that pornography harms third parties to take the view that it is not something that we have to permit on grounds of respect for persons. As I have suggested, there may be reasons for wanting to give people as wide an area of discretion as possible, but it is difficult to believe that this has the positive grounding which Mill's principle of respect for persons might provide for those pursuing lives with integrity.

The second problem for Mill's principle, or indeed for any principle of wide toleration which stops only at the boundary of harm to others, is that it comes up against the category of profound offence. As Feinberg's recent and persuasive analysis has argued, this involves recognizing that one can be offended in a deep, distressing and even obsession producing way by the bare knowledge that an event has taken place.<sup>21</sup> For example, knowing that a book exists in which one's most fundamental beliefs are ridiculed and cast in a prurient and salacious light, can itself be cause for profound offence. Moreover, the offence caused is to the highest order sensibilities - so that it offends because it is believed wrong (rather than being wrong because it offends) - and the judgment has an implicit impersonal dimension. These elements raise the status of the belief which has been offended from a first-order preference to a second-order, impersonal and value-tracking judgment. It then meets on equal terms the claim that we are each owed an equal respect in view of our equal interest in pursuing our own conception of the good. If the priority of the liberty claim is to be established we have to have some fairly powerful arguments to show why it should trump the values which underlie the profound offence. If it is difficult to see where these might come from when the offender acts conscientiously, it is impossible to see any other grounding than the distrust of state enforcement when there is no integrity of intent.

The sceptical claim upon which a distrust of enforcement is based would have some weight if it could be combined with a claim that the liberal state is, as a consequence, neutral between competing ways of life. Neither claim would carry much weight in a monist culture, but in a pluralist society, the two combined might provide a relative firm basis for a highly tolerant culture. Unfortunately, the claim for neutrality is not a strong one. Liberal 'neutrality' when used to justify maximum equal liberties necessarily favours the lowest common denominator. It is unable to distinguish between lives which pursue a conception of the good with integrity, and those which are motivated by deeply corrupt or malignant forces. Different plans of life and different conceptions of the good are not given equal weight; rather, no attempt is made to discriminate between

<sup>21</sup> J. Feinberg, *The moral limits of the criminal law: Vol.II, Offense to others* (Oxford, 1985), 50-96.

them. Of course, it is difficult to see how to weigh different conceptions of the good, but this does not mean that opting for maximum liberty is an equivalent method of ensuring neutrality. A Muslim seems to have good grounds for complaining that no respect is accorded to his deepest beliefs and his way of life in a culture where those beliefs can be profoundly offended with impunity. It is not at all difficult to see where some of the animus in the recent Rushdie affair comes from. On such occasions we witness a substantial failure of communication: the rights which liberal communities proclaim and are willing to defend appear to those confronting them as empty of moral content - merely a licence for malignant attacks; while liberals find themselves unable to comprehend those who challenge their protestations of neutrality. Not only is dialogue difficult, the two cultures escalate their threat to each other - liberalism protects, and thus is seen as condoning, the offending individuals; while those offended resort to public, and illiberal demonstrations of their outrage. Both sides claim the high moral ground, one through the neutrality of the state and the rights of individuals, the other through its defence of sacred traditions and beliefs. Yet neither persuades the other: in particular, liberalism's claim to neutrality between beliefs cannot cut much ice when it puts unlimited freedom of expression above people's right to live their chosen way of life without being subjected to profound offence.

## Conclusion

There is no doubt that a defence of freedom of conscience, expression, and so on, can be given in a rights-based form. There is something obviously right in the idea that unless one allows people a degree of discretion, and thereby a right to do wrong, human life is robbed of agency and integrity - although this might be a more distinctively Western idea than we have previously assumed. But there is also something obviously right in the idea that where everything is possible, nothing matters; that is, that removing all constraints encourages licence, not liberty and autonomy. It is doubtful that the Enlightenment understood this, just as it is doubtful how far we now understand it. Enlightenment confidence in the inevitable spread of truth covered a multitude of shortcomings in their arguments, while also serving to spread the effects of those arguments over a much wider terrain. We move from toleration of religious belief through to the free exercise of the understanding in all matters, and full freedom of expression. But in the process there ceases to be any room for the idea of the 'sanctity of belief', or of people's commitments. The consequence is that respect for persons, once a foundational tenet upon which rights claims could be based, is increasingly given a form which is insufficient to ground a right to freedom of conscience and expression - since the things which these rights permit go against any meaningful interpretation of according a respect for persons.

There just is very little intrinsic moral value in allowing people to believe, say, write or in some way act or perform anything they want to do. Flawed as the appeal to the relationship with God was, at least it sought to defend the right on deep moral grounds. Moreover, Mill's confident view that the right was demanded by the progress of truth and the interests of a progressive being also gave it some moral weight. But when robbed of these claims, as it has been as we have become an increasingly sceptical and secular culture, the view that freedom of belief and expression has an intrinsic moral value seems substantially less compelling.

In so far as the grounding of a rights-based claim for freedom of conscience and freedom of expression is undermined so also is the case for treating such matters as a matter of rights rather than as liberties granted and protected on the basis of expedience. That is, we seemed pushed increasingly towards the position which existed prior to the formulation of the original right to toleration. How far this return is to be laid at the door of Enlightenment excesses is a difficult, but fortunately different question. What matters here is less that we apportion responsibility, and more that we recognize that the confident tone which western liberalism inherited from the Enlightenment is one we can no longer afford to adopt when faced with new challenges to our traditional liberties from members of our own society who feel that they are being wronged. We cannot legitimately assume that the principle of respect for persons gives us the high moral ground against those who seek to curtail liberties by invoking religious, political or personal beliefs, since it is clear that our view of what respect for persons demands is neither neutral between competing conceptions nor obviously persuasive in its content. At the very least this means that when we enter into negotiation and debate with those we cast as illiberal, we do so on at best equal terms.

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## IN THE WAKE OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT: THE ADJUSTMENTS OF JAMES MARTINEAU AND ALEXANDER CAMPBELL FRASER

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It may well be that, as some Biblical scholars advise us, prophecy is more a matter of forthtelling than of foretelling; but foretellers are ever with us. Thus, according to Dr Bebbington, 'At the beginning of 1863 *The Record* announced that "the good sense of LOCKE, the analogies of BUTLER and the "Common Sense" of REID, will preserve us from the vagaries of Prussian or German Rationalists..."'<sup>1</sup> No nineteenth-century scholar worked more assiduously to harvest the choicest philosophical fruits of the British Enlightenment and to issue warnings concerning encroaching absolutism than Alexander Campbell Fraser (1819-1914).<sup>2</sup> Not, indeed, that Fraser was uninfluenced by the thought of his day; but his philosophical position was undergirded by an epistemology which owed more to Berkeley and Reid than to any others, and he sought to adjust both earlier and subsequent thought to this. Such a task could not be accomplished overnight. On the contrary, as Fraser wrote, 'The perfection of philosophical opinion, and any well-grounded assurance of certainty in these high matters, are the results only of cautious, long-continued and patient reflection.'<sup>3</sup> Despite his efforts, however, Fraser lived to see his work eclipsed and *The Record's* prophecy unfulfilled. By

<sup>1</sup> D.W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in modern Britain, a history from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London, 1989), 143, quoting *The Record*, 2 January 1863, 2.

<sup>2</sup> For Fraser see DNB; A.S. Pringle-Pattison's memorial notice in *Proceedings of the British Academy*, VI, 1913-14; idem, 'Alexander Campbell Fraser 1819-1914', *Mind*, NS XXIV, July 1915, 289-325; J.M. Barrie, *An Edinburgh eleven* (3rd edn. 1896) ch.VI. This last is a collection of sketches first published in *The British Weekly* in 1888. In a letter of 9 January 1921 Barrie reminded W. Robertson Nicoll that Dr W.G. Grace had tossed Barrie's volume aside 'on discovering that none of my eleven could bowl'. See T.H. Darlow, *William Robertson Nicoll, life and letters* (London, 1925), 299. DNB describes Barrie's book as 'a skit on his professors' - but skits, though humorous, can be revealing too: 'I see [Fraser] rising in a daze from his chair and putting his hands through his hair. "Do I exist?" he said, thoughtfully, "strictly so-called?"... It is no wonder that the students who do not go to the bottom during their first month of metaphysics begin to give themselves airs, strictly so-called.' Op. cit., 58,59. We shall refer later to the contrast between Fraser's patient probing for answers which he genuinely sought, and the articulation by Edward Caird and his pupil Henry Jones of the vision from which they set out. Cf. n.90 below.

<sup>3</sup> A.C. Fraser, *Essays in philosophy* (Edinburgh, 1856), iv.

the end of the nineteenth century large tracts of British philosophy had been overtaken by an absolute idealism which could rejoice that 'The unity is as real as the differences and the differences as ideal as the unity.'<sup>4</sup> But with this testimony of Henry Jones against the philosophy of James Martineau (1805-1900)<sup>5</sup> we come to the second of our two authors, and to another prophecy.

Concerning Martineau, John Watson wrote in 1902: 'No one can anticipate what the readers of fifty years hence may think of the writers whom we counted masters; but one may suggest with fair grounds of reason that the critic of 1950, as he examines the department of religion in the nineteenth century, will give a foremost place to the names of Newman and Martineau.'<sup>6</sup> With Newman we are not here concerned, but as for Martineau, we may now report that he was receiving little attention

<sup>4</sup> Henry Jones, *The philosophy of Martineau in relation to the idealism of the present day* (London, 1905) 27. For the development of British philosophy of religion from the heyday of idealism onwards see Alan P.F. Sell, *The philosophy of religion 1875-1980* (London and New York, 1988).

<sup>5</sup> For Martineau see DNB; J. Julian *Dictionary of hymnology*; James Drummond and C.B. Upton, *The life and letters of James Martineau*, 2 vols. (London, 1902); A.W. Jackson, *James Martineau, A biography and study* (London, 1900); J. Estlin Carpenter, *James Martineau, theologian and teacher* (London, 1905); James Martineau, *Biographical memoranda*, at Manchester College, Oxford; S.H. Mellone, 'James Martineau as an ethical teacher', *International Journal of Ethics*, X, October 1899 - July 1900, 380-6; P.T. Forsyth, 'Dr Martineau', *The London Quarterly Review*, XCIII, 1900, 214-250; A. Caldecott, *The philosophy of religion in England and America* (London, 1901) 343-353; John Watson, 'James Martineau: A saint of theism', *The Hibbert Journal*, I, 1902-3, 253-71; A.M. Fairbairn, 'James Martineau', *The Contemporary Review*, LXXXIII, 1903, 1-10; Alexander H. Craufurd, *Recollections of James Martineau* (Edinburgh, 1903); C.B. Upton, *Dr Martineau's philosophy: a Survey* (London, 1905); A.S. Pringle-Pattison, 'Martineau's Philosophy', in idem., *The philosophical radicals and other essays* (Edinburgh, 1907, 78-107; John Dickie, *Fifty years of British theology* (Edinburgh, 1937), ch.II; Horton Davies, *Worship and theology in England. From Newman to Martineau, 1850-1900* (Princeton, 1962), 271-5; A series of studies in *The Hibbert Journal*, LXI, 1963; H.L. Short in C.G. Bolam et al., *The English Presbyterians* (London, 1968); J.B. Schneewind, *Sidgwick's ethics and Victorian moral philosophy* (Oxford, 1977); Ralph Waller, 'James Martineau: The development of his religious thought', in *Truth, liberty and religion, Essays celebrating two hundred years of Manchester College*, ed. Barbara Smith (Oxford, 1986); and the following unpublished doctoral theses: G. McCulloh, *The theism of James Martineau* (U. Edinburgh, 1938); R. Waller, *James Martineau: his emergence as a theologian, his christology and his doctrine of the church* (U. London, 1986).

<sup>6</sup> J. Watson, art. at n.5 above, 253.

circa 1950. B.M.G. Reardon accords him four pages in *From Coleridge to Gore* (1971)<sup>7</sup> while Alasdair Heron can write on *A century of Protestant theology* (1980) - a work which justifiably reaches back to the Enlightenment - without mentioning Martineau at all. As for those who have written on twentieth-century Christian thought, neither John Macquarrie (*Twentieth century religious thought*, 1963 etc.) nor the present writer (*The philosophy of religion 1875-1980*, 1988) have seen reason to refer to Martineau. As Ralph Waller has said, 'It would be difficult to escape the impression that Martineau's influence on the twentieth century has been negligible.'<sup>8</sup>

What, then, is our justification for returning now to Martineau and Fraser (for, like Martineau, Fraser has not regularly been invoked in the philosophical discussions of this century)? Simply this: that these two nonagenarians lived through most of a century in which it proved necessary both to harvest the results of the Enlightenment and to apply those results to a rapidly changing world of thought. In the new intellectual climate Deism was no longer the 'enemy', and debate restricted entirely to the field of Christian doctrine<sup>9</sup> would have entailed the shelving of the apologetic task made urgent by current materialism, naturalism, agnosticism and pantheism. Against all of these Martineau and Fraser set their faces, and nowhere were their adjustments more agonising (and in Martineau's case more ambiguous) than in respect of the last. By the time (largely in their retirement years) they felt ready to publish their philosophical summations absolute idealism was a philosophical force in Britain. They both charged absolutism with pantheising tendencies, and in face of it they sharpened their eighteenth-century philosophical tools. Their philosophical progress was interestingly different. During the course of his career Fraser worked patiently through the major British philosophers of the eighteenth century (with sidelong glances at Leibniz, Spinoza and others) in the order of Berkeley, Locke and Reid. Hume provided an ever-present challenge. It was only following his retirement from the Chair of Logic and Metaphysics at the University of Edinburgh at the age of seventy-two that Fraser's appointment as Gifford Lecturer

<sup>7</sup> Subsequently republished under the title, *Religious thought in the Victorian age*, (London, 1980).

<sup>8</sup> R. Waller in *Truth, liberty and religion*, 259.

<sup>9</sup> There was, of course, a good deal of nineteenth-century discussion of Christian doctrine - and Martineau contributed significantly to it. Here, however, we must concentrate upon themes on which both Martineau and Fraser wrote. Undeniably, Martineau's writings cover a much wider range - philosophical, theological, pastoral, homiletic, ecclesiastical, political - than do Fraser's.

elicited from him his *Philosophy of Theism* (1896). In this work he finally drew the strands of his world view together.

Martineau, on the other hand, reached his main conclusions much earlier in life, but the exigencies of his teaching and public duties gave him no leisure to offer his major works to the public until he was in sight of his retirement from the Principalship of Manchester College, Oxford in 1885. Whereas Fraser's thought matured to its conclusion towards the end of his long life, Martineau's major works, on publication, seemed even to the friendliest of critics, to bear the marks of the debates of fifty years earlier.<sup>10</sup> Since truth is not determined by weight of numbers, or by accordance with prevailing philosophical fashion, this does not, of course, render Martineau's contribution worthless.

Martineau and Fraser were led, by somewhat different routes, to espouse ethical theism. Their accents are not identical, however. We shall find that while neither failed to grasp 'the fundamental facts of moral experience'<sup>11</sup> Fraser's emphasis is more epistemological, Martineau's more psychological. Where Fraser asks, 'What can we know (that is, what can our minds encompass)?' Martineau's question is, 'What is the ground of our moral experience?'

We shall first discover how Martineau and Fraser adjusted themselves to their Enlightenment inheritance, and then see how they used it in their own time. As we proceed we shall be greatly assisted by the accounts of their philosophical pilgrimages which have come down to us from their own hands.

## I

'It is with deliberate conviction that I profess adherence to the English psychological method, and build all my hope for philosophy on accurate self-knowledge.'<sup>12</sup> Thus Martineau in his address at the beginning of the 1854 session of Manchester New College, London. But this 'deliberate conviction' was that of one who had served a protracted period of seeking and questioning, as a result of which he repudiated the philosophical tradition in which he had been nurtured.

<sup>10</sup> See e.g. Carpenter, *James Martineau*, 550; P.T. Forsyth, art. cit. at n.5 above, 226; A.S. Pringle-Pattison, *The philosophical radicals*, 80; J.H. Muirhead, *Reflections by a journeyman in philosophy* (London, 1942), 67.

<sup>11</sup> The phrase is J.E. Carpenter's, see op. cit., 546.

<sup>12</sup> James Martineau, 'A plea for philosophical studies', in his *Essays philosophical and theological* (1869), 424.

In his Preface to *Types of ethical theory*, dated 1 January 1885, Martineau explains that he had brought to 'moral and metaphysical speculations' a scientific background and a training in civil engineering. He was thus predisposed towards empiricism and necessarianism, and he 'served out successive terms of willing captivity to Locke and Hartley, to Collins, Edwards and Priestley, to Bentham and James Mill.' When his allegiance to this tradition was threatened by the 'dogmatism and acrid humours' of Bentham and Mill, personal contact with John Stuart Mill drew him back.<sup>13</sup> In the philosophical discussion groups which Martineau conducted during the early years of his Liverpool pastorate (1832-40) he was content to expound James Mill's *Analysis of the phenomena of the human mind* (1829) and the views of Thomas Brown - especially those concerning cause and effect, concepts which Brown cashed in associationist terms.

But a change of direction was pending. Negatively, and owing to its exaltation of actions above motives, Bentham's *Deontology*, which Martineau reviewed in *The Monthly Repository*, fuelled his conviction that disinterested affections have a worth which eudaemonianism may not be permitted to deny. On this matter Martineau was at one with Carlyle, whom he held in high esteem; and he reiterated his opinion in *The rationale of religious enquiry* (1836). Positively, he came increasingly under the influence of his favourite poets, Wordsworth and Coleridge; and his affection for F.D. Maurice was deep.<sup>14</sup> Martineau could also learn from Newman, and he was later to place the erstwhile Anglican in the company of Coleridge and Carlyle (with generous accompanying references to Maurice), speaking of them all thus: 'when they are interpreted by their inner spirit, rather than by their outward relations, one thought will be found secreted at the heart of all - the perennial Indwelling of God in Man and in the Universe...however threatening the mists from which

<sup>13</sup> James Martineau, *Types of ethical theory*, [1885], 3rd edn., 1891, viii-ix.

<sup>14</sup> See *Life and Letters*, I, 452; Carpenter, *James Martineau*, 438. See also Jeremy Goring's illuminating Essex Hall Lecture for 1987, *Where to belong religiously: Martineau, Maurice and the Unitarian dilemma*, London: Unitarian Publications, 1987. Interestingly, Coleridge, Maurice and Martineau were all raised in Unitarianism, Martineau alone remaining there - but in his own way. In 1850 Fraser, then on a visit to London, found a 'sympathetic friend' in F.D. Maurice: 'I found in him a larger humanity than in the abstract theology and ecclesiastical polemic of Scotland.' See his *Biographia philosophica* (Edinburgh, 1904), 140-1. Fraser eventually left the Free for the Episcopal Church.

[this idea] has to clear itself, it is the dawn of a truth... To them, and not to the noisy devotees and pharisees of party, do we look for the faith of the future.<sup>15</sup> Again, from Channing, Martineau was learning of the God within, in respect of whom Biblical literalism and external theistic 'evidences' were alike redundant.<sup>16</sup> As Carpenter has it: 'Listen to the proclamation of the Christian's duty - "To set up within our mind an ideal of perfected goodness, the very image of Christ, to aim at expressing its beauty in the life, and, in spite of failure, to renew the faithful effort day by day, to feel a fresh penitence at every fall, and rise again saddened but not defeated", and you detect the devotional idiom, not the follower of Priestley, but the student of Channing'.<sup>17</sup> Above all, as his Liverpool lecture on 'The Christian view of moral evil' makes plain, Martineau could not square necessarianism with the idea of a *holy* God who could not be implicated in evil. Appointed to teach at Manchester New College, Manchester in 1840, Martineau found that

the more I scrutinised the physical science assumptions, which I had carried as axioms into philosophy, the less could I rest in them as ultimate and valid for all thought. Above all, I had to concede to the self-conscious mind itself, both as knowing and as willing, an autonomous function distinct from each and all the phenomena known and changes willed, - a self-identity, as unlike as possible to any growing aggregate of miscellaneous and dissimilar experiences. Visiting me first as mere suspicions, these ideas insensibly loosened the set attitude of my convictions, before I became distinctly conscious of a gradual veering in the direction of my thought: the same text-books were still in use, though doubtless with more frequent comments of dissent; but in effect I was educating myself out of a school into which I supposed that I was educating others...

<sup>15</sup> James Martineau, 'Personal Influences on our present theology: Newman-Coleridge-Carlyle', [*National Review*, October 1856], in *Essays philosophical and theological*, 404-5. The sermon quoted 'Christian self-reverence' (John xii: 24,25), was delivered in Liverpool in 1835 and London in 1870.

<sup>16</sup> See Geoffrey Rowell, *Hell and the Victorians* (Oxford, 1974), 52-3. Were we concerned with the total scope of Martineau's thought, and not only with his philosophy, we should have to note his critique of that 'priestly' religion of external rites to which his inwardness led him, and in which connection he learned from Joseph Blanco White, who arrived in Liverpool from Dublin in 1835. See Waller, *Truth, liberty and religion*, 240-2. For Martineau on Channing see his 'William Ellery Channing: Memoir and Papers', [*Prospective Review*, August, 1848, and *Westminster Review*, 1849], *Essays, reviews and addresses*, 1890, I, 81-148.

<sup>17</sup> Carpenter, *James Martineau*, 174, quoting Martineau's *National duties and other sermons*, 1835, 261.

It was the irresistible pleading of the moral consciousness which first drove me to rebel against the limits of the merely scientific conception...The secret misgivings which I had always felt at either discarding or perverting the terms which constitute the vocabulary of character, - 'responsibility', 'guilt', 'merit', 'duty', - came to a head, and insisted upon speaking out and being heard...<sup>18</sup>

In his *Biographical memoranda* Martineau further explains that

The change of view was very inconvenient to me. Almost everything I had written became worthless in my eyes: the familiar text-books could not longer be used in that capacity in my private classes; and every subject had to be melted down again in my own mind, and be recast in other moulds. For all this however there was ample compensation, in the sense of inward deliverance which I seemed to gain from artificial system into natural speech. It was an escape from a logical cage into the open air.<sup>19</sup>

In a word, Martineau had concluded that 'ought' takes precedence over 'is', that voluntary moral causation is ineluctable, and that therefore determinism is untenable. As he later expressed it in the course of an exposition of Coleridge's thought:

It is precisely in the *freedom of the will* that a person is distinguished from a thing, and becomes a possible subject of moral law. And so it is in the recognition of a good other than the sentient, of an authority transcending all personal preference, of a right over us and our whole cargo of 'happiness', actual and potential, that the sense of Duty and the conditions of morality begin. Hence Edwards and the necessarians, Priestley and the materialists, Paley and the Epicureans, depict a universe from which all moral qualities and beings, divine or human, are excluded: and whether reasoning down from God as absolute *Sovereign*, or up from man as simply *sentient*, miss whatever is august and holy in its life.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Martineau, *Types of ethical theory*, I, xi, xii-xiii.

<sup>19</sup> *Biographical memoranda*, 19.

<sup>20</sup> 'Personal influences on our present theology', 372-3.

Martineau's change of direction did not escape the attention of J.S. Mill. Acknowledging receipt of Martineau's course syllabus and introductory lecture, Mill wondered, 'Are not your general metaphysical opinions a shade or two more German than they used to be?'<sup>21</sup>

The conclusions to which Martineau had been led were soon to be undergirded by Maine de Biran, Royer-Collard, Jouffroy and Cousin - especially by Cousin's critique of Locke. Further support was to come from some German philosophers. Martineau relates that a fifteen-month period of leave (1848-9) was spent under the guidance of the German Aristotelian scholar Trendelenberg, under whom Martineau experienced 'a new intellectual birth.'<sup>22</sup> In particular, he found such a new understanding of self-consciousness as 'lifted the darkness from the pages of Kant and even Hegel', and came to see that, as with morality, so with cosmology:

never again could I say that phenomena, in their clusters and chains, were all, or find myself in a universe with no categories but the like and unlike, the synchronous and successive. The possible also *is*, whether it happens or not; and its categories of the right, the beautiful, the necessarily true, may have their contents defined and held ready for realisation, whatever centuries lapse ere they appear. To do this is the work, not of objective science, but of self-reflection.

By this division of labour, the whole group of natural sciences is left absolutely free to legitimate development, without the possibility of collision with Ethics.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Mill to Martineau, 21 May 1841; quoted by C.B. Upton, *Dr Martineau's philosophy*, 23.

<sup>22</sup> *Types of ethical theory*, I, xiii.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, xiv. It is interesting to note that Upton (op. cit., 161) finds it 'somewhat remarkable' that there is no clear evidence that Martineau's intellectual conversion owed anything to the Scottish intuitionists, Reid and Stewart. But on p.25 he mentions Martineau's affinity with Royer-Collard and Jouffroy, who had introduced the Scots to French students. Perhaps, therefore, Martineau was influenced by the Scottish school at one remove. It certainly seems too much to say, with James Lindsay, that Martineau 'set out from Reid and Hamilton'. In Donald Macmillan, *The life of Robert Flint*, (London, 1914), 357. C.B. Upton (op. cit., 16-17) finds it 'somewhat remarkable that there is no clear evidence' of Martineau's being influenced by his Unitarian forebear, Richard Price.

But if the German experience lifted the darkness from Kant's pages, Martineau was not blinded by the light. In his College lectures he declared that

We solve no mystery...by plunging into the *idealism*, to which, as Jacobi has conclusively shown, Kant's doctrine of the pure subjectivity of space and time inevitably leads; hence, while we admit that they are objects of *a priori* knowledge given us through the subjective action of our own perceptive faculty, we must retain them as objects of real and not imaginary knowledge, - the infinite, uncreated, eternal data which constitute the negative conditions of all being and all phenomena.<sup>24</sup>

This, as we shall see, is to veer in the direction of Berkeley as interpreted by Fraser. But it was the ethical deficiency of the Germans which most disturbed Martineau:

It is my sad persuasion that the direction taken by *all* recent German philosophy, though comprising nominally opposite schools, is quite irreconcilable not only with Christianity, but with all forms of religion which place men under a Personal God and a proper Law of Duty. Their theories have been developed just as they would have been if the principles of action and the moral sentiments had for the last half-century been absolutely *scored out* of human nature, and men had been made up entirely of the ingredients requisite for the dialectician, the naturalist, and the artist.<sup>25</sup>

It is possible that this harsh judgment, which seems unjust to Kant's exaltation of the moral, was, as J.H. Muirhead suggests, prompted by the fact that Trendelenberg had 'entirely missed the deeper significance of Kant's teaching. No wonder, that instead of following the clue that Kant had put into the hands of his successors, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, Martineau was fain to fall back on a form of intuitionism, resembling that of Jacobi, which at the time was the other alternative to the reigning empiricism...' <sup>26</sup> It is possible, however, that Muirhead is somewhat unjust to Martineau, who was seeking to find his philosophical feet in an intellectual climate among the ingredients of which was an agnosticism

<sup>24</sup> Quoted by Upton, *Dr Martineau's philosophy*, 30.

<sup>25</sup> Martineau to J.H. Thom, 25 February 1849; quoted by C.B. Upton, op. cit., 77.

<sup>26</sup> Muirhead, *Reflections by a journeyman in philosophy*, 66.

which had taken off (however one-sidedly) from *Kant's* epistemology. Moreover, were not idealists on all hands flirting with pantheism? This, at least, was Martineau's conviction. So it was that he attempted to steer a middle course between empiricism and Deism on the one hand, and idealism and pantheism on the other: 'Against Pantheism he never ceased to protest on behalf of individual liberty; and against empiricism, whether starting from the side of mind, like that of the Mills, or from the side of society and history, like that of Comte, he waged unceasing war on behalf of the permanent realities which underlie all appearances and supply the imperishable ideas of space and time, of substance and cause, the soul and God.'<sup>27</sup> We shall examine some of Martineau's particular proposals in due course, but meanwhile we must turn to Fraser in order to see how he gradually developed the position in which he finally rested.

## II

Whereas Martineau, having come quite early to his intense conviction of the ineradicability of the voluntary will as causative, proceeded to employ his discovery as a criterion by which to measure alternative theories which came his way, the impression which Fraser gives is of one who proceeded much more cautiously. His epistemological *question* is never far from his mind, and for many years he devotes himself to textual criticism. Only then does he feel able to adumbrate his *via media*, which is that between omniscience and nescience. To follow this path requires the frank recognition of the limitations of the human mind; we are summoned to the 'final venture' of faith - faith conceived as a properly *rational* response to the ultimate mystery by which we are confronted. Where Martineau's criterion shows him which theories will not do, Fraser's question prompts him to plough the eighteenth-century philosophical soil (especially the British soil), with a view to discovering what harvest it may yield.

'In 1836', writes Fraser of his student days, 'philosophy was at a lower ebb in Scotland than at any time since the advent of Francis Hutcheson from Ireland to Glasgow, rather more than a century before...'<sup>28</sup> Thomas Brown, Dugald Stewart and James Mackintosh were dead; Hamilton's star had not yet arisen - neither had those of Schopenhauer and Comte in Europe. There, 'Hegel was lately dead', though he and the currently lively Cousin and Schelling 'were all unknown in the Scottish universities.'<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Carpenter, *James Martineau*, 548.

<sup>28</sup> Fraser, *Biographia philosophica*, 46.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

In this vacuum, Fraser, puzzled by the concepts of 'cause' and 'power', turned to Brown's *Inquiry into the Relation of Cause and Effect* for guidance. Brown's *quasi*-positivistic solution provided temporary relief (as it had for Martineau), 'But by degrees the prospect clouded ...How am I justified by reason, when I believe that a series in the universe is inexorably constant [as Brown declared it could be]?'<sup>30</sup> From this perplexity a reading of Hume's *Treatise of human nature* did nothing whatever to deliver him! On the contrary, total scepticism threatened. 'In this uncertainty', he continues, 'I adopted [Descartes's] method for not remaining paralysed in action, although pure reason only admitted doubt. Like him I thought I could not do better than follow meantime the opinions of those among whom I lived; and prefer, among their discordant opinions, the most moderate, as probably the best, since extremes are commonly erroneous.'<sup>31</sup>

Further light dawned as, in the summer of 1838, Fraser 'increased [his] acquaintance with Berkeley, and was introduced to Coleridge, besides listening to echoes of Kant. Berkeley helped to make living mind instead of dead matter prominent.'<sup>32</sup> But Coleridge's *Aids to reflection* was crucial in dislodging Brown's mechanical view of causation from Fraser's mind and, influenced by John Wilson's lectures on moral philosophy, he became convinced of 'an originating cause, as essentially efficient and teleological, exemplified only in acts of intending Will.'<sup>33</sup> The similarity between Fraser's philosophical conversion and Martineau's - and of both as centring in ethical considerations - is clear. Significantly, during his theological course under Thomas Chalmers, to whom Jonathan Edwards was 'the prince of modern theologians', Fraser was repelled by the 'wholly necessitated universe of Edwards [which] seemed to resolve the wicked volitions of persons into necessitated sequences, thus making an evil act an effect for which the apparent agent could not be responsible.'<sup>34</sup>

During the winter of 1838-9 Fraser, now a graduate, was in close contact with William Hamilton - 'I owe more to Hamilton than to any other intellectual influence. He moved us all to think out questions for our-selves.'<sup>35</sup> By the end of the winter, 'the world of the senses had receded; the world of living mind appeared to reduce it to subordinate reality. Causes independent of physical nature began to take precedence over the causes that depend mechanically upon certain antecedent phenomena. A dualism [of the starry heaven above and the moral law

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

within], partly suggested by Kant, was now coming dimly into view.<sup>36</sup> This dualism prompted his reflection upon our common sense as 'a reservoir which holds for us in a latent state the *rationale* upon which human action and knowledge at last depend, and which it is the work of the philosopher to interpret.'<sup>37</sup> Fraser also found that 'Butler's reverential submission to reality was always refreshing.'<sup>38</sup> As enlightenment gradually dawned Fraser heard, but was not overcome by, Chalmers' advice that those disinclined to study German philosophy should not 'suspend for it their ordinary readings. Their very ignorance of German idealism, the very confinement of their mental philosophy to the doctrines and metaphysics of the Scottish school, are guarantees in themselves against the deleterious influence of these outlandish speculations.'<sup>39</sup> Over against Chalmers's 'inductive science of mental phenomena in man' Fraser increasingly placed 'the divine *rationale* of the universe, which Berkeley alone among British metaphysicians approached, and which German philosophers were labouring to articulate.'<sup>40</sup>

From 1843 onwards Fraser increasingly felt the force of J.S. Mill's *System of logic*: 'My old questions about the *trustworthiness* of any interpretations of the appearances with which we come into contact in sense again became urgent.'<sup>41</sup> Accordingly, he returned to Aristotle, and to Locke's epistemology, 'supplemented and corrected by Kant. My inclination was to an English manner of treatment, so far as it keeps firm hold of what is given in concrete experience, under conditions of place and time, and refuses to pursue a unity that is possible for men only in a world of abstractions. I seemed to find that in philosophy things must *at last* be "left abrupt", as Bacon puts it.'<sup>42</sup> This is a statement of the very greatest importance for the understanding of Fraser: Bacon's abruptness becomes for him the entry-point for *rationaly-grounded* faith.

The advent of Hegelianism in Britain sharpened some of Fraser's questions, and he came to express his *via media* thus:

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 137.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 138.

On the one hand there was scientific Naturalism, with its dogmatic assumption of progressive and regressive evolution as final synthesis, - all beyond this, the darkness of the Unknowable. On the other side was the new Idealism, bound by its profession to eliminate all mysteries, and at last to reach infinite science of Reality...

I found myself on a *Via Media*, repelled alike from an agnostic science wholly ignorant of God, and from a gnostic science which implied Omniscience.<sup>43</sup>

His way forward, prompted by Locke, Kant and Hegel, was through his own interpretation of Berkeley:

I expanded Berkeley's divine language of vision into a universal sense-symbolism, and our moral consciousness of our own free agency into perfect moral agency at the heart of the Whole. Implicates of pure reason, which with Kant make human reason possible, led to implicates of moral reason, which presuppose the universe of reality to be morally constituted reality, although by us incompletely interpretable. I gradually came to think of this theistic faith, not as an infinite conclusion empirically founded in finite facts, but as the necessary presupposition of all human conclusions about anything.<sup>44</sup>

*En route* to this conclusion Fraser had become convinced that Hume was the true heir of Locke, and that although Berkeley had often been treated as a sceptic who placed no reliance upon sensation, he was in fact a spiritual *realist*. This interpretation is developed in Fraser's edition of Berkeley's *Works* (1871) - an undertaking which greatly enlarged Fraser's reputation; in his *Berkeley* (1881); in various articles, and in his last book, *Berkeley and spiritual realism* (1908). His view was confirmed as he sandwiched his *Encyclopaedia Britannica* article on Locke (1890), his book *Locke* (1891), and his edition of Locke's *Essay* (1894) between his Berkeleyian writings; and was further vindicated by his study of *Thomas Reid* (1898).

We may, in summary, say that as Fraser looked back on the period of the Enlightenment, he found that *the* philosophical problem was posed by Locke's epistemology; and that if the scepticism of Hume and later agnosticism on the one hand, and the 'gnosticism' of the absolute idealists on the other were to be avoided, recourse must be had to Berkeley and

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 184, 186. This theme is frequently reiterated; see e.g. A.C. Fraser, *Berkeley*, (Edinburgh, 1881), 223-4, and *Thomas Reid* (Edinburgh, 1898), 155.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 188-9.

Reid, both suitably adjusted by Kant and Coleridge.<sup>45</sup> Only so would epistemology be humble - indeed, human. Only so would morality be preserved and due account be taken of the fact of mystery. So convinced was Fraser of this that at times he can sound almost pessimistic: 'The only conviction which the student of the history of human speculation can regard as necessary is the conviction of our hopeless ignorance of all the mysteries of existence. Truth, like the Deity, is hid in darkness. It is not that we are unable to divine the mysteries of the soul and God; the simplest phenomenon of common sense defines our wit.'<sup>46</sup> Not surprisingly, 'It is...evident that the perfect philosophy must recognise and include a body of first principles, resting on faith, by which all knowledge of things divine and human must be regulated.'<sup>47</sup> At the conclusion of his book on Locke, Fraser once again reasserted his *via media*:

One seems to hear three conflicting voices in the course of the [preceding two] centuries. The response to the philosophic question made by one of them is - that 'nothing can be known because nothing may be presupposed, except indeed the mechanical presuppositions of natural science.' An opposite philosophical utterance comes from another quarter: 'The universe may be seen through and through, and its secret is revealed in the light of the Divine Reason that is immanent in it.' These two voices are apt to overbear the third, which pleads that man may see enough to justify the faith that he is living and moving and having his being in a universe in which Nature is in harmony with, yet subordinate to, the ethical and spiritual Order with which his higher faculties connect him; and that the more his latent faith or inspiration is made to respond, by reflection and by the facts of history, the more clearly each man can see the little that is intellectually visible at

<sup>45</sup> We do not overlook the fact that Fraser judged Reid guilty of misinterpreting Berkeley's system: 'He misconceived its whole purport. He misrepresented its every tenet. He imported into it a monstrous chimaera, which made it a chaos of contradictions; and while Berkeley was in reality to be identified with Plato, with Cudworth, and with Clarke, identified him with Gassendi, Hobbes, and Condillac.' See his 'Berkeley's idealism', *The North British Review* XXXIV no.LXVIII, May 1861, 456. Fraser's point is that Reid is mistaken in holding that philosophers from Plato to Hume believe that the object of perception is some image present to the mind (463). In fact, while Berkeley does describe ideas as 'real beings' he means that we cannot 'separate, even in thought, any of our ideas from perception'. (467).

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 480.

<sup>47</sup> A.C. Fraser, 'Life and philosophy of Leibniz', *Essays in philosophy*, 34.

the human point of insight, and the more wisely and religiously he can direct his life.<sup>48</sup>

### III

Having now observed the adjustments of Martineau and Fraser to their intellectual inheritance we must compare and contrast their findings on specific themes to which they both devoted attention. We shall first reaffirm the major point of comparison between them: they both understand reality as spiritual; they regard human beings *qua* intellectual and moral agents as holding the clue to the meaning of existence; and they are both ethical theists.

As we saw, Martineau's repugnance for Priestley's necessarianism was inspired by his consciousness of moral freedom. This led him to draw a clear distinction between mechanical causation and moral agency. Characteristically, he was prepared to find what common ground he could with the position to which he was in general opposed: 'The libertarian, in refusing to surrender a free personal power, does not dispute the influence of either the immediate "motives" of the "formed character", to which exclusively the necessarian attributes the action... It is perfectly possible for a free mind to behave as it would if it were not free: and there is no small portion of human life in which it may legitimately do so' - as in habitual acts and 'Single-motivated acts, which are dictated by some uncontested want.'<sup>49</sup> Despite such concessions, Martineau stoutly maintained his distinction and, consistently with it, he denied the possibility of explaining ethical values in non-ethical categories. On this basis he dissociated himself from the hedonism of Hobbes, Bentham and Bain; the moral sense views of Shaftesbury and Hutcheson; and, although he ended close to the intellectual intuitionism of Cudworth, Clarke and Price, his favoured 'ideo-psychological' approach, heralded by Butler and the Scottish common sense philosophers and their Paris disciples, 'who have declined to betray their science to the physiologist on the one hand, and the ontologist on the other',<sup>50</sup> enabled him to emphasize the conscience, and to regard moral judgements as the articulation 'of what is given to us ready-made.'<sup>51</sup>

<sup>48</sup> A.C. Fraser, *Locke* (Edinburgh, 1891), 296.

<sup>49</sup> James Martineau, *A study of religion* (Oxford, 2nd edn., 1900), II, 243-4.

<sup>50</sup> James Martineau, *Types of ethical theory*, I, 20.

<sup>51</sup> *Idem*, *A study of religion*, II, 6.

It is crucially important that we note Martineau's resistance to subjectivism at this point. He will learn from Kant's emphasis upon the sense of obligation under which we stand, but he construes this after the manner of a spiritual realist. The moral law is not self-proposed; it is proposed to us by One who stands higher than ourselves, to whom we are 'immediately introduced'.<sup>52</sup> We need to know that the 'gleaming ideal is the everlasting Real ... the abiding presence and persuasion of the Soul of souls'.<sup>53</sup> This 'dual relation' is essential. Duty 'cannot belong to a soul *in vacuo*, but must be for ever a disconsolate and wandering illusion, till it rests with Him to whom the allegiance is due'.<sup>54</sup> Apart from this duality we have no freedom, and are back to pantheism in either its necessarian or absolutist form.

With the capital 'H' we arrive at Martineau's theism. He declares that 'Ethics must either perfect themselves in religion, or disintegrate themselves into Hedonism; and ... there is an inevitable gravitation in all anti-theological thinkers to the "greatest happiness" doctrine'.<sup>55</sup> As he elsewhere wrote, bringing causation and morality together, 'Faith in the Infinite God seems to have a twofold root; viz., in the Axioms, or first truths, of Reason, and, distinctively, in the necessary idea of *Causation*, which supplies the *dynamical* element of Theism; and in the Intuitions of *Conscience*, which constrain us to know that our moral life is a Trust, susceptible of sympathy with the Divine life or of alienation from it. This supplies the faith in a *Holy* as well as a Causal God.'<sup>56</sup> The most succinct statement of the matter occurs in Martineau's opening lecture of the 1878 session of Manchester New College, London: 'Devout faith is a belief of *real Being* on the strength of *what ought to be*.'<sup>57</sup> As S.H. Mellone rightly pointed out, for Martineau our knowledge of God is not so much an inference from the moral consciousness as a 'deeper insight into what the moral consciousness verily is.'<sup>58</sup> As Martineau's definition has it,

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., II, 27.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., I, 12.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., II, 27.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., I, 24.

<sup>56</sup> Letter of 1857 to J.J. Thom, quoted by C.B. Upton, *Dr Martineau's philosophy*, p.38.

<sup>57</sup> James Martineau, *Ideal substitutes for God* (1878), 13.

<sup>58</sup> Quoted by S.D.F. Salmond in his review of S.H. Mellone, *Leaders of religious thought in the nineteenth century* (1902) in *The Critical Review*, XIII, 1903, 69.

'The word of conscience is the voice of God.'<sup>59</sup> We should not, however, have done justice to Martineau if we did not note his important caveat:

We have said, that in the Conscience and Moral Affections we have our *only* revealers of God. Let it be understood that we mean our *only internal* revealers of Him; ... We mean to state that, without this faculty, the bare intellect, the mere scientific and reasoning power, could make no way towards the knowledge of divine realities ... But we do *not* mean to state that the Moral Sense can stand alone,

<sup>59</sup> James Martineau, *The seat of authority in religion* (London, 1890), 71. Cf. *Types of ethical theory*, II, 104-5. It was partly because Martineau thus appeared to make morality captive to theism (and hence impossible for atheists); partly because he too readily assumed that his own sensitive conscience was typical of all consciences; and partly because of his emphasis upon an hierarchy of motives to the (almost complete) exclusion of teleological considerations, that Martineau found himself at odds with Henry Sidgwick's utilitarianism. Martineau, however, fully realised that since moral evaluations entailed comparisons, the resulting judgments would vary in accordance with the societal and personal position of the judge. See *Types of ethical theory*, II, 74-7. He even granted (though Widgery questions his psychology here) that 'the computation [of pleasure and pain] is already more or less involved in the preference of this or that spring of action; for, in proportion as the springs of action are self-conscious, they contemplate their own effects, and judgment upon them is included in our judgment of the disposition.' Ibid., 275. Further, in a letter to G. Lyon Turner of 27 February 1886 Martineau wrote: 'Consequences once foreseen and contemplated become *intentions*, and are transposed into the *springs*: for, being consequences to *some one* for "better or worse", they touch the affections, which insist on being heard and having their voice in the decision of the Will.' Quoted by Carpenter, *James Martineau*, 563-4. A.G. Widgery writes: 'in discussing conflicts between impulses, Martineau, says Sidgwick, implicitly appealed to the canon of consequences. On his part, Martineau might have urged that the idea of a scale of values could also be applied to consequences, and that Sidgwick's Utilitarian principle is unsatisfactory as a basis for moral decision between alternative sets of consequences.' See Widgery's chapter in H. Sidgwick, *Outlines of the history of ethics*, [1886] (London, 1949), 304. But Martineau did urge this: 'Throughout his criticism Professor Sidgwick has lost sight of the place which I expressly reserve for his utilitarian *canon of consequences*, and has argued as if I proposed to work out a *code of morals* from intuitive data. He does not notice the fact that I only give *priority* to the *canon of obligation proper*, and contend that consequences to the general happiness can carry no obligation, *unless the altruistic affections are in their nature invested with authority over impulses that conflict with them*; so that we must go to the scale of impulses before we proceed to the reckoning of consequences.' *Types of ethical theory*, II, 300. See further H. Sidgwick, *The methods of ethics* (London, 1874); C.B. Upton, *Dr Martineau's philosophy, passim*; J.B. Schneewind, *Sidgwick's ethics and Victorian moral philosophy*, ch.VIII.

dispense with all outward instruction, and supply a man with a natural religion ready made. Nor do we mean that the everyday experiences of man, and the ordinary providences of God, are enough, without special revelation, to lead us to heavenly truth. And we are therefore prepared to advance another step, and to say, that, while regarding the human consciousness as the only inward revealer of God, we have FAITH in CHRIST as *his perfect and transcendent outward revelation*. We conceive that Jesus of Nazareth lived and died, not to *persuade* the Father, not to *appease* the Father, not to make a sanguinary *purchase* from the Father, but simply to *"show us the Father."*<sup>60</sup>

With Martineau's general conclusion as to the reality of the world *qua* spiritual, and of the viability of ethical theism, Fraser is in complete accord. However, he reaches his conclusion in his own way. Unlike Martineau, Fraser does not treat us to an extended analysis of conscience; he is less psychological in approach. He does not, for example, seek to classify motives as Martineau does, nor does he work his way in detail through alternative ethical theories. His interests are, as we have seen, governed by the epistemological question. Where Martineau stakes his all on conscience (albeit conscience as influenced and supported from elsewhere), Fraser declares that 'It is to the necessary implicates of consciousness in man, not to phenomena presented to the senses, that we should look for the true key, at least the best key within man's reach.'<sup>61</sup>

We shall do well to summarize Fraser's position as found in its maturest form in *Philosophy of theism*. He here finds that we are under the obligation of presupposing a cosmic order that is eternally trustworthy and divine. Otherwise the cosmos would not be 'even physically interpretable.'<sup>62</sup> Again, 'The trustworthiness of my original nature, and the interpretability of universal nature, *presuppose* the constant action of the morally perfect Power at the heart of the Whole.'<sup>63</sup> Not indeed that we can fully penetrate the mystery which lies at the heart of all things. There is a proper agnosticism - not least a Christian one. The latter is quite different in kind from Hamilton's Kantian modification to the effect that we do not have infinite knowledge.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>60</sup> James Martineau, *Studies of Christianity* (London, 1879), 192-3.

<sup>61</sup> A.C. Fraser, *Philosophy of theism*, 141.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

<sup>64</sup> Hence, for example, Fraser's objection to Ferrier's claim that our necessary knowledge is absolute. See his *Essays in philosophy*, 321 f.

At the heart of the cosmos stands the human being. We are supernatural in that we are self-determining causes. Furthermore, we are conscious of a supreme Power. But this Power is not sheer force: it is moral through and through; and this we conclude from the goodness which we ourselves pursue, and from the consciousness of moral obligation in which we live:

'If scientific faith is *baseless* confidence that the world will not in the end put to *intellectual* confusion those who rely on the universality of its natural order, religious faith not only gives its basis to this physical faith, but is the *absolute* assurance that the Supreme Power will not put to permanent *moral* confusion those who strive to realise the true ideal of man, assured that the universe is eternally working for good to those who thus live. God represented in the Ideal Man is, for man, the revelation of perfect goodness on the throne of the universe.'<sup>65</sup>

As between atheism (excluded by the *reductio ad absurdum* of total nescience), and pantheism (whose *reductio ad absurdum* is its implicit human omniscience), 'Theistic faith gave the reasonable conviction that is found under a knowledge that must be ultimately incomplete. *In tenebris semper* might be the formula of Atheism; *In Luce Divina* that of Pantheism; *In tenebris Lux* was the intermediate formula of Theistic Philosophy.'<sup>66</sup>

Let us pause for a moment in order to relate what Fraser is doing to his seventeenth- and eighteenth-century philosophical inheritance. James Seth concluded that whereas 'Martineau's philosophy is simply a revised version of the Natural Realism and the Natural Theology of the earlier Scottish philosophers, Fraser's is a moral idealism, a new philosophy of theism which has shaped for itself a *via media* between the deism of the eighteenth century and the pantheism of the nineteenth.'<sup>67</sup> Seth here underestimates Martineau, as we shall see; he correctly notes Fraser's middle course, but what interests us at the moment is his description of Fraser's theism as 'new'. James Lindsay bluntly disagreed with this description: Fraser's 'philosophy of theism, which Professor Seth calls "new", is an amalgam of Locke, Berkeley and Coleridge.'<sup>68</sup> It is more than that, as we have seen; but it is not new in the sense of absolutely novel - no philosophy is. Rather, what Fraser does is to extract from the

<sup>65</sup> Fraser, *Philosophy of theism*, 152-3.

<sup>66</sup> *Idem*, *Biographia philosophica*, 322. Cf. his 'Introductory Lecture of Logic and Metaphysics' in *Inauguration of the New College, Edinburgh*, Edinburgh 1851, 171-2; and his paper on 'Philosophical development', *Mind*, no.57, January 1890, 9-10.

<sup>67</sup> J. Seth, *English philosophers and schools of philosophy* (London, 1912), 310.

<sup>68</sup> J. Lindsay in *The life of Robert Flint*, 358.

philosophical heritage those insights which he finds most valuable, and to construct a position over against the materialism, agnosticism, pantheism and absolutism of his day. These were his foes, where Butler's was Deism, and Reid's, Humean scepticism. In all of this his supreme guide was Berkeley conceived as a spiritual realist, and seasoned with Reid's common sense.

The question of Fraser's use of his sources has raised eyebrows in certain quarters. Thus his pupil Pringle-Pattison felt that Fraser minimised,

the empiricism and nominalism in which [Berkeley's] theory had its starting point and which had their inexorable consequences in Hume. And when he suggests the practical agreement of Berkeley and Reid as 'immediate' Realists in common opposition to the hypothetical or mediate Realism - the representative perception - of the majority of philosophers, he can easily be shown to ignore the ultimately more important speculative difference between the two positions; for the 'ideal theory' of the representationists - the doctrine that we immediately know only our own states - is the very foundation of Berkeley's immaterialism. Naturally Fraser was not ignorant of points like these...<sup>69</sup>

Indeed he was not. But he did feel that Berkeley's thought

becomes, when we pursue it further than he did, a sublime intuition of the phenomenal realities of sense, inorganic and organic, as established media for the intellectual education of finite spirits by means of physical sciences; for intercourse between individual moral agents; and for a revelation of the Eternal Spirit, in whom the merely phenomenal things of sense, and moral agents too, have their being. It includes the fundamental faith that the universe exists for an eternal moral purpose, so that our experience in it, with the conditions of thought and belief presupposed in the experience, must be practically trustworthy and reasonable.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>69</sup> A.S. Pringle-Pattison, 'Alexander Campbell Fraser', 311.

<sup>70</sup> A.C. Fraser, *Berkeley*, 223-4.

Among the weaknesses of Berkeley was his failure to 'extract from the phenomena of perception the evidence of a substance different in kind from the self-conscious spirit which perceives them.'<sup>71</sup> At this point Reid came to the rescue. But if Reid corrects Berkeley, he must in turn be corrected by him: 'the philosophy of Common Sense, as represented by Reid, did not rise to the conciliation of the natural order of the material with the originative freedom of the spiritual world, in which operating law in outward nature is recognised as immediate divine agency, or a part of a revelation of perfectly reasonable Will in and through a universe of things and persons.'<sup>72</sup>

We have said enough to show how, by their own routes, which converged at certain points, both Martineau and Fraser were led to propound ethical theism. There are differences of emphasis - and of temperament of course. Martineau did not make so much of that proper agnosticism before ultimate mystery as did Fraser, but on many points they were at one - not least as regards their common foes.

The question how far Martineau *differed* from Fraser is much harder to answer, and to this elusive matter we now turn.

#### IV

James Seth will introduce us to the problems which confront us. He writes: "Martineau ... follows much more closely than Fraser the traditional lines of the Scottish School ... Fraser, on the other hand, has been too profoundly influenced by that "ideal theory" which was the *bete noir* of Reid to attach much importance to the independent reality of the material world.'<sup>73</sup> The questions are, 'Does Martineau follow the natural realism/dualism of the Scottish School more closely than Fraser?' 'Is it true that Fraser is adversely affected by idealism in the way Seth suggests?'

We have already reviewed evidence enough to give us pause in face of Seth's strong disjunction. To say that Martineau is much more the realist and Fraser more the idealist is to overlook the blurred edges in *both* authors; it is to take insufficiently seriously their claim to be philosophers of the *via media*. Let us proceed step by step.

<sup>71</sup> Idem, 'Life and philosophy of Leibniz', 49.

<sup>72</sup> Idem, *Thomas Reid*, 125.

<sup>73</sup> Seth, *English philosophers and schools of philosophy*, 309-10.

philosophical heritage those insights which he finds most valuable, and to construct a position over against the materialism, agnosticism, pantheism and absolutism of his day. These were his foes, where Butler's was Deism, and Reid's, Humean scepticism. In all of this his supreme guide was Berkeley conceived as a spiritual realist, and seasoned with Reid's common sense.

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<sup>69</sup> A.S. Pringle-Pattison, 'Alexander Campbell Fraser', 311.

<sup>70</sup> A.C. Fraser, *Berkeley*, 223-4.

Among the weaknesses of Berkeley was his failure to 'extract from the phenomena of perception the evidence of a substance different in kind from the self-conscious spirit which perceives them.'<sup>71</sup> At this point Reid came to the rescue. But if Reid corrects Berkeley, he must in turn be corrected by him: 'the philosophy of Common Sense, as represented by Reid, did not rise to the conciliation of the natural order of the material with the originative freedom of the spiritual world, in which operating law in outward nature is recognised as immediate divine agency, or a part of a revelation of perfectly reasonable Will in and through a universe of things and persons.'<sup>72</sup>

We have said enough to show how, by their own routes, which converged at certain points, both Martineau and Fraser were led to propound ethical theism. There are differences of emphasis - and of temperament of course. Martineau did not make so much of that proper agnosticism before ultimate mystery as did Fraser, but on many points they were at one - not least as regards their common foes.

The question how far Martineau *differed* from Fraser is much harder to answer, and to this elusive matter we now turn.

#### IV

James Seth will introduce us to the problems which confront us. He writes: "Martineau ... follows much more closely than Fraser the traditional lines of the Scottish School ... Fraser, on the other hand, has been too profoundly influenced by that "ideal theory" which was the *bete noir* of Reid to attach much importance to the independent reality of the material world.'<sup>73</sup> The questions are, 'Does Martineau follow the natural realism/dualism of the Scottish School more closely than Fraser?' 'Is it true that Fraser is adversely affected by idealism in the way Seth suggests?'

We have already reviewed evidence enough to give us pause in face of Seth's strong disjunction. To say that Martineau is much more the realist and Fraser more the idealist is to overlook the blurred edges in *both* authors; it is to take insufficiently seriously their claim to be philosophers of the *via media*. Let us proceed step by step.

<sup>71</sup> Idem, 'Life and philosophy of Leibniz', 49.

<sup>72</sup> Idem, *Thomas Reid*, 125.

<sup>73</sup> Seth, *English philosophers and schools of philosophy*, 309-10.

Does Martineau follow the Scottish School more closely than Fraser? In the first place we must note that the later phase of the common sense philosophy, to which both Martineau and Fraser has to adjust, was that represented by Hamilton. Hamilton had published his paper on 'The philosophy of the unconditioned' in the *Edinburgh Review*, 1829. He here welcomed Victor Cousin's endorsement of his own inherited natural realism but, under Kantian inspiration, he denied Cousin's conclusion that knowledge of the absolute is open to us.

Positively, Martineau wishes to retain the realism and the dualism, and deny the agnosticism. Hence his rhetorical question in his essay on 'Sir William Hamilton's philosophy': 'Because God can be contemplated only, like other objects of thought, as differenced from our subjective selves, is it needful to say, that he is merely phenomenal to us and not cognizable in his reality?'<sup>74</sup> Elsewhere he put the point in the indicative: 'The act of Perception gives us simultaneous knowledge of a subject and an object, with perfect equipoise of reason for affirming the reality of the one and of the other.'<sup>75</sup> Yet again, 'That our cognitive faculties should be constituted in accordance with *things as they are* is no more surprising than that the instinct of animals should adapt their actions to things *as they are to be*; and much less surprising than would be a constitution of them conformable to *things as they are not*.'<sup>76</sup> In a word, 'So long as knowledge is a relation, and an antithetic relation, between knower and known, it cannot dispense with equal faith in both.'<sup>77</sup>

Negatively, Martineau wishes to counter not only the subjectivism of Kantian idealism, but the pantheism which in later life he felt that ascendant absolutism could scarcely avoid. Indeed, the inspiration of his protest against pantheism was identical with that against necessitarianism. At the point of violating moral freedom, and of making God appear to be the author of sin, the opposites were one. By 1876 Martineau waxed as lyrical as he was apocalyptic:

<sup>74</sup> Martineau, *Essays, reviews and addresses*, III, 481.

<sup>75</sup> Idem, 'Morell's History of Modern Philosophy', *The Prospective Review*, 1846.

<sup>76</sup> Idem, *A study of religion*, I, 75.

<sup>77</sup> Letter of Martineau to the Rev. J.H. Allen, 29 January 1884; quoted by J.E. Carpenter, *James Martineau*, 552.

Take away all objective seat from your inward vision, turn it from a perception into a phantom, let it hang in the air and never have been; and though it may raise a sigh, and pour a plaintive music over life, it can inspire no worship and nerve no will. There is a wave of heathen Pantheism sweeping over our time which threatens to obliterate the consciousness of this truth, and to leave us only the phrases of ancient piety with the life washed out, the empty ghosts of the saint's prayer and the martyr's cry.<sup>78</sup>

In fact of all pantheising immanentisms, which would lose the individual - and God, and deprive us of the Other with whom, supremely in morality, we have to do, Martineau protested,

You do not so much as touch the threshold of religion, so long as you are detained by the phantoms of your thought: the very gate of entrance to it ... is the discovery that your gleaming ideal is the everlasting Real, no transient brush of a fancied angel wing, but the abiding presence of the Soul of souls: short of this there is *no object* given you, and you have not even reached the specified point of '*admiration*'. Within the limits of pure sincerity, no one can *worship* either a nature beneath him or an idea within him.<sup>79</sup>

At the same time, Martineau asserted that the immediacy of the divine entails immanence; but it is the immanence of the transcendent One. The pantheist, however, can make no room for the transcendence, and thus 'The opposition ... lies between *All-immanency* and *Some-transcendancy*.'<sup>80</sup> Martineau summed up his conviction on the matter thus:

The whole external universe, then (external, I mean, to self-conscious beings), we unreservedly surrender to the Indwelling Will, of which it is the organised expression

<sup>78</sup> John James Tayler, *A retrospect of the religious life in England; or, The Church, Puritanism and free enquiry*, 2nd edn., reissued with an introduction by Martineau (London 1876), 42.

<sup>79</sup> Martineau, *A study of religion*, I, 12-13.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., II, 142. See A.W. Jackson, *James Martineau*, 353 and n. for Edward Caird's charge (subsequently withdrawn) that Martineau was among those who held that 'a God immanent in the world is no God at all'. The inference is to the first and second editions of Caird's *The evolution of religion*, II, 8.

... But the very same principle which establishes a *Unity* of all external causality makes it antithetic to the internal, and establishes a *Duality* between our own and that which is other than ours: so that, were not our personal power known to us *as one*, the cosmical power would not be guaranteed to us *as the other*.<sup>81</sup>

The realist claim that the one must always be over against the other lands Martineau in difficulties and ambiguities where God is concerned. The general thrust of his writing is that space and matter exist externally with God, though in one place<sup>82</sup> he appears to deny eternity to matter. In his last major work he opens the door once again to matter as eternal.<sup>83</sup> The theologian H.R. Mackintosh found this way of making God's existence dependent upon an eternal duality unsatisfactory, yet he agreed with Martineau 'in regarding a personal self-expression or object as necessary for the Divine Spirit.' His remedy was 'to resort to the great New Testament conception of the unbeginning Word, in whom is given the resonance of life vital to either love or knowledge in perfect form, yet not separate from God as we from other selves.'<sup>84</sup>

The introduction of this theological note brings matters to a head, for as a number of writers have noted, Martineau does not seem to include in his philosophical writings all he needs in his worship. C.B. Upton suggests that there is an epistemological block at work here. Martineau's declaration, already quoted, that we know God in the way we know other objects (that is, by inference) militates against the immediacy which Martineau claims in his religious faith, and which creeps into his philosophical writings - above all when the concept of worship is in his mind.<sup>85</sup> Upton quotes two sentences in support of his view: 'in the very

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., II, 166.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., I, 381 ff.

<sup>83</sup> Idem, *The seat of authority in religion*, 32-3.

<sup>84</sup> H.R. Mackintosh, *The doctrine of the person of Christ*, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2nd edn., 1913, 521.

<sup>85</sup> See Upton, *Dr Martineau's philosophy*, 103, 219, 225. We need not, however, attribute this lapse, as Upton does, to lingering Deism. With Carpenter, op. cit., 52fn., we find that 'Dr Martineau was never a Deist'. A.S. Pringle-Pattison was another who found Deism in Martineau. See his *The idea of God in the light of recent philosophy* (2nd edn. revised, New York, 1920), 36-7; 257-8. C.C.J. Webb demurred in his *Divine personality and human life* (London, 1920), 124 and fn. See further A.W. Jackson, *James Martineau*, 401-422. From the other side, some Christian absolutists did not seem able to contain their entire Gospel within their philosophy - despite absolutism's propensity for mopping everything up. This, at least, was our verdict upon John Caird. See Alan P.F. Sell *Defending and declaring the faith* (Exeter and Colorado Springs, 1987), ch. IV.

constitution of the human soul there is provision for an immediate apprehension of God.'<sup>86</sup> And, 'All that we believe without us, we first feel within us; and it is the one sufficient proof of the grandeur and awfulness of our nature, that we have faith in God; for no merely finite thing can possibly believe the infinite.'<sup>87</sup> To Upton's evidence we may add this: 'all religion must be revealed, if by that word we mean, "*directly given by divine communication*", as opposed to mediate discovery of our own.'<sup>88</sup> Is the solution to the matter to be found in Pringle-Pattison's word, 'the transcendence which must be retained, and which is intelligible, refers to a distinction of value or of quality, not to the ontological separateness of one being from another'?<sup>89</sup> Martineau seems sometimes inclined to believe this, sometimes not - especially in his philosophical writings, where he needs to wield dualism over against pantheism. It is impossible to believe that he would ever have yielded to the blandishments of Henry Jones, who so zealously preached the absolute idealism he had learned from Edward Caird. In his discussion of Martineau's philosophy, Jones correctly diagnoses Martineau's motive, and pounds out his own remedy:

the real source of the opposition of Dr Martineau to the theory of the Absolute Idealists ... comes primarily, not from the desire to sever man from Nature and God, but from the conviction that *not to sever them* is to merge man into them and to lose him within them ... The fallacy rests on the belief that the *distinction* between the self and the world is the same thing as the *separation* of them ... But to the Idealist who sets forth from experience, that is, from a self related to a not-self, the unity in difference is given; for that *is* experience.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>86</sup> Martineau, *The seat of authority in religion*, 651.

<sup>87</sup> Idem, *Endeavours after the Christian life* (London, 10th impression, 1900), 1.

<sup>88</sup> Idem, 'Personal influences on our present theology', *Essays philosophical and Theological*, 373.

<sup>89</sup> Pringle-Pattison, *The idea of God*, 255.

<sup>90</sup> Henry Jones, *The philosophy of Martineau*, 23, 31. Cf. idem, 'Divine immanence', *The Hibbert Journal*, V. no.4, July 1907, 758. We use the term 'preaching' advisedly of H. Jones. The contrast between Fraser's agonised questions (cf. n.2 above) and his careful treading of his *via media*, and Edward Caird's manner of propagating his philosophical faith could not be greater; and Jones learned from Caird (though with Welsh oratory and a delight in controversy thrown in). Caird felt no need to wrestle with the past in the way Fraser did; he simply utilized what was convenient to his *evolutionary* method. As Jones wrote of him, 'Session after session passed and no allusion, near or remote, was made to the "Scottish School" of Common Sense...No Scottish name later than that of David Hume passed his lips...He went on his way

This, however, is further than Martineau's *philosophical method* would take him.

Although he goes too far, we can at least understand why A. Caldecott should think that Martineau is doubly misleading in calling his approach ethical theism, (a) because of the methodological importance of causation in his scheme; and (b) because an inadequately-acknowledged mystical intuitionism hovers throughout his writings. This last surfaces pre-eminently in his references to the Soul of souls, to reverence, to a religious sense distinct from other senses whereby we are aware of the transcendent.<sup>91</sup> In all of this the debt to Channing is clear.<sup>92</sup>

It would therefore seem that when Martineau is taken whole his position is not so different from that of Fraser, and hence Seth's assertion that he is closer to (natural) realism than Fraser, though understandable, is misleading. Indeed, there is almost some excuse for Henry Jones's too easily-reached proselytising conclusion - even if the attendant lyricism seems somewhat cloying in these hard-nosed times:

Burdened with our doubts, baffled by our own reasonings, stumbling all too frequently over our own simplest thoughts, climbing the Hill Difficulty, creeping from fact to fact, as on our hands and knees, those of us who have embraced divine philosophy will prize most highly of all those moments when Religion takes us by the hand and plants us in a purer air where we can see, though from afar, the Golden Gates of the City of God. And in this respect at least, the contrast of the two philosophies [that is, his own and Martineau's], nay of all the errant searchings of man after truth, melt into a greater harmony.<sup>93</sup>

stating the truth as he knew it, trusting its defence to itself.' See H. Jones and J.H. Muirhead, *The life and philosophy of Edward Caird* (Glasgow, 1921), 67,68. For his part, Fraser held that the questions of philosophy were perennial, and that the discipline, unlike the physical sciences, was not subject to progress. See A.C. Fraser, *Rational philosophy in history and science* (1858), 41-2, 47.

<sup>91</sup> Caldecott, *The philosophy of religion in England and America*, 347-9. Cf. e.g. Martineau, *Types of ethical theory*, II, 221 ff.

<sup>92</sup> See Waller in *Truth, liberty and religion*, 243-4. It is worth recalling that in adopting the stance he did, Martineau was setting his face against fellow Unitarians who remained committed to Locke's epistemology. See e.g. R.V. Holt, *The Unitarian contribution to social progress in England* (London, 2nd rev. edn.26) 1952, 343.

<sup>93</sup> Jones, *The philosophy of Martineau*, 37.

We now turn to James Seth's claim that for his part Fraser was too influenced by idealism to attach much importance to the question of the independent reality of the world. We may subdivide matters thus: Was Fraser unduly influenced by idealism? Did he in consequence sit loose to the independent reality of the world?

Our understanding is that, some of his language notwithstanding, Fraser was never finally entangled in the web of idealism in any of its forms. This emerges in numerous of his writings. Thus, for example, he can applaud Locke, who set out to 'clip the wings of Idealistic omniscience, which, by help of verbal abstractions, concealed from itself its own failure to eliminate all mystery, and to substitute perfect rational insight for faith and presumptions of probability,<sup>94</sup> whilst at the same time declaring that 'An experience that *ends* in sense and empirical generalisation must end incoherently and must contain the seeds of nescience ...'<sup>95</sup> As we have seen, however, Fraser stoutly kept idealism at bay by walking his *via media* between nescience and 'gnostic' omniscience. In fact it was precisely his resistance to monism that prompted his opposition to Ferrier's attempted demonstration that the data of common sense can be construed into clear and more intelligible forms. Indeed, Fraser went so far as to brand this rationalistic (as distinct from intuitionist) version of common sense theory 'a kind of Scottish Hegelianism'.<sup>96</sup>

None of which is to deny that Fraser has a place in his thought for the divine immanence - that concept so ardently promoted by neo-Hegelians over against the discredited Deism of the eighteenth century.<sup>97</sup> Thus in his work on Berkeley, Fraser can conclude: 'If Nature is practically trustworthy, and fit to be scientifically reasoned about, the Omnipotent Spirit immanent in it must be perfectly good and design the goodness of all. This is final faith.'<sup>98</sup> That is precisely the point: it is faith, not sight; and Fraser never ceased to think that the Hegelians overreached themselves:

<sup>94</sup> A.C. Fraser, 'Philosophical development', *Mind*, XV, 1890, 12.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>96</sup> *Idem*, 'Ferrier's theory of knowing and being', *Essays in philosophy*, 1856, 312. In his *Scottish philosophy, the old and the new*, 1856, Ferrier strongly resented this charge. See further A.C. Fraser, 'The philosophical life of Professor Ferrier', *Macmillan's Magazine*, no.99, January 1868. It would seem that Ferrier's 'German speculations' lost him the Chair of Logic and Metaphysics at Edinburgh - to Fraser. See further G.E. Davie, *The democratic intellect: Scotland and her universities in the nineteenth century* (Edinburgh, 1961), 293-303.

<sup>97</sup> See further, Alan P.F. Sell, *Theology in turmoil. The roots, course and significance of the conservative-liberal debate in modern theology* (Grand Rapids, 1986), ch.I.

<sup>98</sup> A.C. Fraser, *Berkeley and spiritual realism* (London, 1908), 84.

the Hegelian seems to claim, as attainable philosophy, an intuition of the rational articulation of the universe of things and persons in the unity of the creative thought. This, if really attained, would eliminate mystery from our physical and moral experience, and convert philosophy into absolute science. If it has fulfilled its purpose it has translated all faith into rationalised thought. But I cannot find that this all-comprehensive system really tallies with the experience which it is bound to formulate adequately, and also to explain; or that it has yet got so far as to solve even so clamant a difficulty as the existence within the universe of immoral agents and moral evil. We ask for intellectual relief for moral difficulties, and we are offered 'the organisation of thought'. We look for bread and we find a stone.<sup>99</sup>

At this point C.B. Upton found Fraser and Martineau at one.<sup>100</sup>

Fraser could never swallow the 'gnostic' evaporation of all mystery. To him faith, construed as a rationally-grounded response in face of ultimate mystery could never be redundant, given humanity's limitations and God's greatness. Moreover, the complex of issues denominated 'the problem of evil' could not be evaded by such idealistically-inspired notions as that evil is but a stage on the way to good; on the contrary, evil *ought not* to exist.<sup>101</sup> Fraser's pupil, Pringle-Pattison, was fully justified in writing, 'The definite declination of the Absolutist or 'gnostic' solution is perhaps from first to last the most outstanding characteristic of Fraser's thought.'<sup>102</sup> This despite Fraser's speculation that between 'Hegelian speculation humanised' and his own position there may possibly be no final divergence.<sup>103</sup> After all 'The issue of a true philosophy is to disclose the horizon of mysteries by which the power of philosophising is bounded.'<sup>104</sup>

Whereas Martineau the philosopher wields dualism against idealism whilst Martineau the seer is more open to absolutist blandishments, Fraser never ceases to oppose to idealism his own philosophy which ends not

<sup>99</sup> Idem, *Berkeley*, 228-9.

<sup>100</sup> C.B. Upton, *Dr Martineau's philosophy*, xxxv.

<sup>101</sup> Fraser, *Philosophy of theism*, 253.

<sup>102</sup> A.S. Pringle-Pattison, 'Alexander Campbell Fraser', 300.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 324-5.

<sup>104</sup> A.C. Fraser, 'Introductory Lecture on Logic and Metaphysics', 179.

with the solution of all mysteries (even in principle), but with Baconian abruptness. We cannot therefore say that Fraser was unduly influenced by idealism - as we have seen, he even interpreted Berkeley as a spiritual realist, leaving much of the latter's immaterialism, or psychological idealism, on one side, and invoking Reid by way of compensation.

Neither, secondly, can we endorse Seth's view that, because of the influence upon him of idealism, Fraser was little concerned by the question of the independent reality of the world. The point is made, for example, in Fraser's critique of Ferrier. Ferrier's system will permit us only to say of any existent that it must be combined with consciousness; it cannot demonstrate that *x* exists.<sup>105</sup> He declares that the twofold question, 'Why do I believe in sensible things, or permanent syntheses of phenomena contributed by the senses; and in a plurality of finite egos, as distinguished from the Absolute Ego', is neither answered nor raised by Ferrier. He thus leaves us with two propositions: 'Being cannot be meaningless', and 'Its essence must be conscious', which are but 'the step into philosophy'.<sup>106</sup>

It is true, as Pringle-Pattison pointed out, that Fraser was not concerned to defend natural realism as such;<sup>107</sup> he set out with his epistemological questions, and proceeded *via* morality to theism; but it cannot be denied that he arrived at a spiritual *realism* in which the focus was very much upon the material phenomena of the world. To the end Fraser construed Berkeley as one who, 'in the spirit of Bacon and English philosophy, kept hold of the concrete and ever-changing universe, in its experienced relation to human life and to God.'<sup>108</sup> But he ever opted for final faith rather than final synthesis.

## V

Thus ends our account of the ways in which two long-lived nineteenth century philosophers adjusted themselves to the philosophy of the two centuries which preceded them, and to the idealism which was coming into vogue from the 1860s onwards. Much more might be said concerning their arguments and their conclusions. Both have been charged with

<sup>105</sup> Idem, 'The philosophical life of Professor Ferrier', 202.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 204-5.

<sup>107</sup> A.S. Pringle-Pattison, 'Alexander Campbell Fraser', 295.

<sup>108</sup> A.C. Fraser, *Biographia philosophica*, 154.

minimizing the importance of the social dimension of life and religion. Martineau's 'conscience', and his classification of motives have been severely criticised, as has Fraser's utilization of Berkeley's thought. The question has been raised whether either can deal adequately with evil and sin without making more of the atonement. But into these matters we cannot now delve.

Rather, as we approach the centenary of Martineau's death and the opening of a new millennium, let us be respectively challenged and inspired by our two theists. Fraser writes: 'an account of the idea and conviction we have concerning God must involve a theologian in an investigation of certain alleged first principles of knowledge, or else he must assume these metaphysical elements of theology without any examination at all.<sup>109</sup> It is difficult to suppress the feeling that a number of present-day theologians are deaf to - even innocent of - this challenge. Martineau prays: 'Awaken us to feel how great a thing it is to live at the end of so many ages, heirs to the thoughts of the wise, the labours of the good, the prayers of the devout.'<sup>110</sup> One of the ways of expressing gratitude for one's inheritance is to use it well.<sup>111</sup>

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## BURKE AND PAINE: TEXTS IN CONTEXT<sup>1</sup>

Mark Philp

The Cambridge 'revolution' in the history of political thought has been to make the study of texts in their context an indispensable component in establishing their meaning. The injunction to look to context to fix meaning has been applied in many different ways, producing both detailed analyses of particular texts and the uncovering of the languages or discourses of political thought which allow us to make sense of individual works or groups of texts. But the injunction has also met critics and has been forced to take an increasingly nuanced tone. One area of difficulty concerns the complex issue of the tension between the analysis of context as a way of testing for meaning, and its less assured place in accounts of the emergence of ideas, and of innovation and transgression. There is also the problem of how we are to weigh a reading in terms of context against one which analyses the work either as the product of personal motives, idiosyncracies and enthusiasms, or in terms of events which can have a profound impact upon contemporary discourse as a whole (such as, perhaps, the Lisbon earthquake or the French Revolution). These difficulties do not nullify the injunction, but they make us more sharply aware that meeting the injunction is a necessary but not sufficient condition for fixing meaning and giving a full account of a text. To this extent, a project which was designed to track meaning has served mainly to make us more sharply aware of the elusiveness of the quarry and, perhaps, the quixotic character of our pursuit.

Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* and Paine's *Rights of Man* are obvious candidates for contextual study, and the several recent editions of their works, together with Greg Claeys' new book on Paine, provide ample evidence of both the virtues and the difficulties of applying the contextual injunction.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> My thanks to David Eastwood for his comments on an earlier version of this paper and to Jonathan Clark for drawing my attention to Raynaud's edition of the *Reflections*.

<sup>2</sup> E. Burke, *Reflections on the revolution in France* ed. J.G.A. Pocock (Hackett Publishing Co. Indianapolis/Cambridge, 1987). \$4.95.

E. Burke, *Réflexions sur la révolution de France*, Presentation Philippe Raynaud, (Hachette/Plureil, Paris, 1989). 69, 00FF.

*The writings and speeches of Edmund Burke: Volume VIII The French Revolution 1790-1794*, ed. L.G. Mitchell (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1990), £65.

Gregory Claeys, *Thomas Paine: social and political thought* (Unwin Hyman, Boston and London, 1989). £10.95.

M. Foot and I. Kramnick (eds.), *The Thomas Paine reader* (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1987). £5.95.

B. Kuklick, (ed.) *Thomas Paine: political writings*, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989). £4.95.

<sup>109</sup> Idem, 'Introductory Lecture on Logic and Metaphysics', 177.

<sup>110</sup> James Martineau, *Home prayers* (London, 1891), 6.

<sup>111</sup> But that, of course, presupposes that we know what it is. In order to resist the temptation of suggesting that too few are nowadays being adequately grounded in this regard we shall, with *quasi*-Baconian abruptness, stop!

Michael Foot and Isaac Kramnick's *The Thomas Paine reader* provides an extremely good collection of texts for the most part complete, and a reasonable, if not particularly challenging, introduction. In contrast, the volume of Paine's *Political writings* in the new Cambridge series of Texts in the History of Political Thought is disappointing, the more so given its 'stable'. While it reprints some of the major texts, it omits *Agrarian justice* and its scanty introduction hardly counts as contextualising. Yet, while the publication of Paine's works suggests that interest in him is alive and well, an indication of the kind of interest which editors and their publishers assume is the complete absence of notes from these editions.<sup>3</sup> It also says something about the way Paine is read. We assume that what he says is as plain to us as we believe it was to the artisan reader at the end of the eighteenth century and that there is nothing to explain about the way Paine's writing works - as if it is entirely artless and transparent. This assumption is frequently also in evidence in editors' introductions which are for the most part unassertive in their interpretations of the text.

There is no such reticence when it comes to the work of Paine's principal antagonist. Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* comes to us now in three different guises, each with a panoply of footnotes and an interpretation to match. Given the continuing capacity of the debate on France to generate dispute we might expect to find evidence of these conflicts in these different editions. Differences there are, but before we look at these it is worth reminding ourselves that each of these new texts of the *Reflections* has its own context which militates somewhat against direct comparisons.

Pocock's edition of the *Reflections* is a volume in the Hackett Classics series. These provide useful student editions, well-priced, attractively presented in a larger format than Penguin, and on paper which can take some scribbling in the margin. Raynaud's French edition is also a student paperback but it is one which gives astonishingly good value. In addition to the *Reflections* there are some three hundred pages of *textes choisis de Burke sur la révolution* which attempt, with considerable success, to give a relatively comprehensive undergraduate edition of Burke's writings on French affairs.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the edition is heavily annotated, with over 150

<sup>3</sup> This is not entirely unprecedented in that the notes to the Penguin *Rights of Man*, or indeed, those to the Philip Foner two volume collected works of Paine, are hardly extensive.

<sup>4</sup> The collection includes Burke's contribution to the debate on the army estimates (9.2.1790); his *Letter to a member of the National Assembly*; his letter to Vicomte de Rivarol (1.6.1791); a very substantial chunk of the *Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs* (1791); his *Letter to a noble lord* (1796); and his first two *Letters on a regicide peace* (1796-7).

pages of notes, the bulk of them on the *Reflections*. The only disappointment for most readers will be the decision not to note or translate Burke's 'tags' in the *textes choisis*. This is, nonetheless, an impressive edition, which it is to be hoped might be imitated in Britain. One source for such a collection might be the Oxford edition of *The writings and speeches of Edmund Burke* (General Editor, Paul Langford), of which Leslie Mitchell's collection of Burke's writings on France from 1790-1794 is the eighth volume (it is the third published).<sup>5</sup> However, Mitchell's volume is not intended to be the same sort of thing as Raynaud's collection. Raynaud had brought together in one book texts which will span several volumes of the Oxford edition. Burke's later French writings will appear in Volume IX, but the *Appeal* will be found in Volume IV, along with his speeches from the period. This (inevitable) dispersion of related material, and the relatively narrow compass of this volume complicates the editorial task of annotating and introducing it. In a scholarly edition produced by many hands a polemical introduction or strong interpretive line in footnoting would be equally inappropriate.<sup>6</sup>

These editions, then, are doing different things, and as such their notes and introductions are not direct competitors. Nonetheless, comparisons are not entirely odious. As far as notes are concerned, Pocock treads most lightly, giving half the number O'Brien gives in the Penguin, and restricting himself largely to translating and giving sources for Burke's classical allusions - with the occasional interpretive comment. These comments are not always helpful, they are given at random, they do not always explain odd terminology, and they can be distinctly pushy in their interpretation of the text.<sup>7</sup> Yet there is enough here to make this a usable student text. Raynaud's edition is a different kettle of fish. There is no little effort expended in explaining the intricacies of late eighteenth-century English politics for a French audience (although it is effort which would probably be equally appreciated by the average British or American undergraduate whose knowledge may not be much better), but the notes also push the interpretation and link up to subsequent debates in French

<sup>5</sup> The volume contains Burke's *Reflections*, his *Letter to a member of the National Assembly*, his *Hints for a memorial to be delivered to Monsieur de M.M.*, *Thoughts on French affairs*, *Heads for consideration on the present state of affairs*, *Observations on the conduct of the minority*, *Remarks on the policy of the allies*, and his *Preface to Bissot's Address to his Constituents*.

<sup>6</sup> In contrast see note 3 to Burke's *Lettre a un membre de l'Assemblée Nationale* in Raynaud, p.768.

<sup>7</sup> For example, at the end of Burke's passage discussing the transition from the natural to the civil state, where he writes that 'Men cannot enjoy the benefits of an uncivil and of a civil state together' (Pocock, 52; O'Brien, 150; Mitchell, 110; and Raynaud, 75-6), Pocock notes: 'This passage is Lockean enough.' It is, but only in the way that it is also Hobbesian enough.

History, with Tocqueville, Taine, Michelet and others playing a full part. This is not quite the reserved, scholarly style we are used to, but it makes for thoroughly entertaining reading, even if we are sometimes told more than we want to know. Mitchell's edition is not so 'user-friendly'. Passages in French are not translated, and the occasional line from Shakespeare is not referenced. But the notes are careful and judicious: they are not obtrusive but they help clarify obscure passages and provide a good sense of the points over which Burke's contemporaries took issue with him. Within the tradition of textual scholarship this is an admirable edition.

As with the notes, so with the introductions. Again, Raynaud's concern is broadest: in addition to giving an account of some of the main themes in the *Reflections*, he defends Burke against the charge of inconsistency with his previous writing, and looks at the role he played in founding the conservative wing of modern liberalism:

Jusqu'au bout, la polémique entre Burke et Paine apparaît comme une controverse *interne* à la tradition libérale, dont la Révolution française avait dévoilé les ambiguïtés... . Avec Burke et Paine, nous assistons donc à la cristallisation d'une divergence durable entre les deux tendances fondamentales, conservatrice et progressiste, du libéralisme moderne: c'est par là que leur controverse constitue un événement central dans l'histoire de la pensée politique anglo-saxonne.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to ranging over Arendt and Hayek, Tocqueville and Hegel, Raynaud provides both a shrewd account of Burke (which acknowledges some debt to Pocock) and an extremely useful account of his impact on French and German critics of the enlightenment.

Pocock begins his introduction<sup>9</sup> by referring to the status of the *Reflections* as a classic of English conservatism - meaning a doctrine 'based on the claim that human beings acting in politics always start from within a historically determined context, and that it is morally as well as practically important to remember that they are not absolutely free to wipe away this context and reconstruct human society as they wish.'<sup>10</sup> He recurs to the theme of Burke's impact on conservative thought later in the piece, emphasizing that while to understand Burke we need to reconstitute his language as that of an eighteenth-century Whig, founded on certain

<sup>8</sup> Raynaud, *Réflexions*, lxxxvii-viii.

<sup>9</sup> The introduction draws in part on his essay 'The political economy of Burke's analysis of the French Revolution' in his collected essays, *Virtue, commerce and history* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1985).

<sup>10</sup> 'Introduction', vii.

assumptions, making certain allusions, and carrying certain implications, we also need to generalize and abstract his language to see how it could be read and integrated into other cultures. There are, then, two distinct tasks. Pocock's execution of the first involves rooting Burke in the context of Whig thinking and the work of the Scottish environment. The *Reflections* speak of the social and political order as the fragile creation of a process of historical development. Out of feudalism arose a code of chivalry which in turn formed the basis for a society of manners within which commerce has developed and flourished. The development is cumulative, in the sense that later stages remain dependent on earlier ones. We cannot touch the feudal remains within society without throwing out the whole delicate balance. Commercial success and prosperity rest on a social and political culture constructed out of integrated hierarchies of birth, property and status and buttressed by a religious order which is equally rooted in property and equally hierarchical. God and nature are united in and expressed through, and thus confirm and legitimate, this complex order of dependence between wealth and power, religion and property, and talent and patronage. To attack the Church and its lands is to put asunder relations sanctified by time immemorial; it is to take religion out of the state; and it involves eliminating an estate, so throwing into disarray the delicate balance of forces within the polity. For Pocock, the centre-piece of the *Reflections* is not the apostrophe on Marie Antoinette but the seizing of the lands of the French Church and making them security for a national loan. This conduct was destroying the Church and aristocracy along with the security and influence of landed and commercial property by the proliferation of paper securities and debt.<sup>11</sup> The conspirators responsible for this folly are the unchained intelligentsia and the burgeoning middle orders of Europe whose intellects and capacities have broken the natural bonds of dependence upon their betters and elders who now sought to make their society conform to a set of abstract principles and ideals:

<sup>11</sup> *Reflections*, xliiii-xliv. See also *Virtue, commerce and history* p.197. Given Pocock's emphasis on credit, it is curious that he fails to discuss the absence of such concerns in Burke's letter to Depont (November 1789), or their presence in Burke's letters to Fitzwilliam (12.11.1789) and to Francis (11.12.1789) at around the same time. Perhaps equally intriguing is the discussion of these matters in Paine's letter to Burke (17.1.90) only shortly after. See, *Correspondence of Edmund Burke: Vol.6*, ed. T. Copeland (Cambridge University Press, 1967), 34-7, 39-50, 50-55.

Burke was afraid of the power of the human intelligence when divorced from all social restraints; he offered a sociological explanation of how this divorce might come about, but at its heart is always the vision of an intellectual and professional class which is not a bourgeoisie ... but equally is no longer a clergy or content to be the clients of liberal aristocratic patrons.<sup>12</sup>

Out of his Whig reflexes and his inheritance from the works of the Scottish enlightenment, Burke develops a case against that form of intelligence which seems to unmake the social order upon which it necessarily depends - to unmake the order is progressively to unmake ourselves. And it is this case which can be translated out of the specifically Whig language Burke used into terms which make it a recognizable and classic contribution to conservative thought.<sup>13</sup>

In terms of sheer intellectual verve, Pocock's 'Introduction' will be hard to equal. Students should find it an accessible and challenging piece of work. This does not mean that they should accept it without reservation. For all its virtues there are at least two areas of concern. One arises from Pocock's discussion of Burke's contribution to conservative thought (something I raise in my closing remarks). The other relates to the connection between Burke's intentions and Pocock's interpretation of his thought.<sup>14</sup> Pocock does not attempt to offer a true story of what happened in the French Revolution, nor does he seek to criticise Burke's account of it; 'we are concerned solely with the processes by which this account took shape in his mind.'<sup>15</sup> Yet, one might be forgiven for thinking that the identification of prejudice and distortion in Burke's account would not only throw light on the processes by which his account took shape, but might also have an impact upon the kind of account we could ascribe to him, and this would, in turn, affect attempts to abstract and translate Burke into our own culture. Thus, if we could establish that the *Reflections* are

<sup>12</sup> 'Introduction', xxxix.

<sup>13</sup> See xliii.

<sup>14</sup> The tension between intention and discourse which I indicate here is recognized by Pocock in his 'Introduction: The state of the art' in *Virtue, commerce and history*, e.g. 31-2.

<sup>15</sup> 'Introduction', xxxiv. For Pocock's comments on Burke's motives, see xxii-xxv. Pocock treats factors such as Burke's 'powerful, highly emotional and deeply egocentric mind' and his situation as a 'politician who had lost his way and despaired of finding it again' more as contributing to Burke's insight into the meaning of French events (especially for England, but also more globally), than as providing us with grounds for questioning his grip on reality.

nothing but a set of 'tragic paintings by which Mr Burke has outraged his own imagination ... where facts are manufactured for the sake of show, and accommodated to produce, through the weakness of sympathy, a weeping effect,'<sup>16</sup> we would be forced to reject Pocock's suggestion that he has adequately covered the question of how Burke's account took shape. We would also have to doubt the adequacy of his interpretation of Burke's meaning. Moreover, we would also be forced to recognize that finding an intellectually defensible, modern doctrine of conservatism in his work is all in the act of reading - it could not be Burke's achievement!

As Mitchell's introduction shows, a good many of Burke's contemporaries saw in the *Reflections* numerous signs of a disordered intelligence. The caricaturists depiction of him as the knight of the sorrowful countenance, Don Dismallo, conforms to a wider sense that he had lost touch with reality.<sup>17</sup> This is not a view that Mitchell wholly endorses, but there is in his Introduction adequate material to justify seeing Burke's views on France as demonstrably partial, dependent on a limited range of first hand sources, and dismissive of contrary evidence.<sup>18</sup> His stance was fixed as little as four months after the fall of the Bastille; indeed, there is evidence that he had formed his view by mid-September 1789; that is, prior to the attack on the Church and its lands.<sup>19</sup> Much more so than Pocock, Mitchell locates the animus for Burke's views on French affairs in his experiences in the Whig party, and particularly in his increasing estrangement from his fellow Whigs - something which his early reactions to events in France only exacerbated, and which became still more intense after the publication of the *Reflections*.<sup>20</sup> Burke's salvo was aimed less against the French and the British radicals, and more against the leaders of the Whig party.

<sup>16</sup> T. Paine, *Rights of Man*, ed. E. Foner (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1985), 49-50.

<sup>17</sup> See Mitchell (ed.), 16-17.

<sup>18</sup> Mitchell, 3.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>20</sup> Indeed, given this estrangement, and Burke's inability to find a home with Pitt, we might see him as vulnerable to something very like the 'enthusiasm' for which he berates his opponents. Pocock has pointed out that Hume diagnosed enthusiasm as occurring 'when the mind was left alone with its own creations and mistook these for real causes operating on it from without.' Pocock, *Virtue, commerce and history*, 203.

Burke wished to comment on the nature of the Whig party and his place within it ... The bizarre nature of many of Burke's observations on France seem less strange if taken as literary hyperbole designed to point political lessons to Englishmen ... the *Reflections* was written for Whigs rather than radicals. It was the leaders of this party "esteemed and confided in - as an aristocratic Party", that Burke most wished to warn and instruct.<sup>21</sup>

After 1782 Burke had found himself out of step with Whig thinking - and felt himself deserted on matters of high principle, as in the Hastings affair. By the end of the 1780s Burke believed that the party under Fox's leadership was being progressively dominated by wild, younger men, prepared to flirt with radicalism. 'Feeling increasingly isolated and friendless in politics, Burke found the last ditch before most other Englishmen and prepared to defend it.'<sup>22</sup>

Mitchell's analysis does not reduce the *Reflections* to a mere rant within Whig party politics, but he provides a context which suggests a reading of it as a fragile intellectual achievement, the product of complex motivations into which its author had incomplete insight and over which he was only able to exercise incomplete control. It is a context which also helps us understand the increasing extremism of Burke's analysis as his warnings (in his *Memorials*) were successively ignored. Unlike Pocock and Raynaud, Mitchell has a limited chronological brief, but within the constraints of that compass he provides an essential background against which to understand what animated Burke in the first years of the Revolution. It is too much to dismiss the *Reflections* as an 'enthusiasm', but there is in Burke's experience, situation and personality much which sheds light on the extraordinary vehemence of his revolution writings.

As Mitchell shows, Burke's warnings went largely unheeded by both the Foxites and Pitt's ministry. He seemed unable to persuade the former of the danger of French principles or the latter of the need for an early war to effect the restoration of the *ancien régime*. Yet he did much to set the terms of debate on France and while he was not the prime mover of the loyalist reaction in the 1790s, his extremism served to mark a line towards which the government and the loyalists increasingly steered as the pressures for reform intensified. In prophesying disaster from reform, and in his increasingly savage denunciations of his opponents, Burke advanced a policy of no compromise which the government and loyalists came to endorse with growing fervour. But it might also be said that he simultaneously prompted precisely the kind of intellectual fervour in favour of

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

reform which he so despised. This may have not been unwelcome, or unintentional; he may well have wished to prompt French sympathisers to make their true colours clear to their Whig friends and so deter further association. If so, he was not wholly successful. Yet he did prompt one work which above all others staked out the opposing ground of the radical cause in a way which made clear to the government and to those Whigs who defected from Fox in 1794 the extent of the danger which the *status quo* faced.

While Greg Claeys' *Thomas Paine: social and political thought* covers the whole of Paine's life and works, its centrepiece is his discussion of the *Rights of Man* and the reception it was accorded. As such, it allows us to assess how far the spectre which Burke had summoned justified his fears.<sup>23</sup>

Claeys argues that Paine espoused a consistent commercial republicanism from the 1770s until his death. There were, to be sure, refinements of his views, but the unifying objective of his writings was to promote the view that the future lies with extensive, representative, democratic republics, allied to the growth of commercial society and yet capable of generating sufficient public spirit to resist corruption and the decline into tyranny. There are comments in *Common sense* which suggest that Paine saw commerce as, in the long run, having a debilitating effect on a citizenry's capacity for moral and civic virtue, and Claeys argues that the doubts persisted, resurfacing in the second part of *Rights of Man* and in *Agrarian justice* and motivating Paine's recognition that commerce could not be left wholly to its own devices but must be grounded on social justice - the institutional mechanisms of which he sketches in these two works. Paine came to see poverty, Claeys argues, as a function of civilization (itself understood primarily in terms of the development of commerce) and he sought to ensure that the natural rights of men would be preserved through a system of rights-based distributive justice within the state. Paine was not an egalitarian: he advocated an equality of rights, not equal divisions of property; but he also argued that the processes of acquisition, transfer and wage labour within commercial societies obscured and often violated the normatively prior claims to access to the benefits of the patrimony left us in common by God. For all his praise of the pacific influence of commerce and his view that society was in nearly all cases capable of meeting its members' needs without the interference of government, he believed that government had a role to play in meeting the demands of natural law entitlements. Indeed, as Claeys shows, Paine supplemented his theist premises with two secular principles - the principle of progress and the view that society was itself a necessary

<sup>23</sup> See also Claeys' article 'The French revolution debate and British political thought', *History of Political Thought* XI, 1, pp.59-80.

condition for private property, both of which go towards establishing a secular basis for natural rights claims.

There is much in this story which is persuasive; at the very least it has the virtue of making it difficult hereafter for editors to act as if no interpretation of Paine's work is necessary. Moreover, it seems custom made to go at least some way to responding to Pocock's observation that 'Paine remains difficult to fit into any kind of category.'<sup>24</sup> However, the interpretation Claeys offers is achieved at a certain cost, about which we might have reservations.

A good deal of Claeys' book focusses on the way Paine's work was received, in the 1790s in particular - so much so that the treatment of some of Paine's work, such as his *Decline and fall of the English system of finance* (which is not irrelevant to questions of commerce and the economy), is given relatively short shrift. The justification for this emphasis on reception is that 'a contextual assessment of "meaning" demands an analysis of the reception of ideas' - where "meaning" means "composite social meaning".<sup>25</sup> There is no doubt that the reception of the *Rights of Man*, and the story of the debate on France and the subsequent reformist and loyalist movements of the 1790s, make interesting reading - and they are surely relevant to an understanding of Paine's practical impact. But it is not quite right to say that they are crucial to our grasp of the nature of Paine's social and political thought. The disjunction between Paine's meaning and how Paine was read underlies the tension in the book between the analysis and contextualising of Paine's thought within traditions of republicanism, political economy and natural jurisprudence, and the account given of the reception of his ideas. The tension arises because Claeys visibly struggles at times to make the case for saying that Paine's ideas were ever the subject of debate (as opposed to 'Painite principles' - the imagined 'other' of the loyalists).<sup>26</sup> The connection between popular politics and the language and traditions of political thought is not straight-forward. Indeed, it is arguable that in the 1790s there is a virtual breakdown in these connections - a breakdown which allowed a dramatic shift in the nature of popular political discourse and marginalized, if only temporarily, the dominant discourses of political and social thought. There is much in Claeys' useful and carefully researched

<sup>24</sup> *Virtue, commerce and history*, 276.

<sup>25</sup> Claeys, 110.

<sup>26</sup> See, for example, Claeys' comment in his *History of Political Thought* paper (p.60) that 'the bulk of the hitherto largely unexamined pamphlet war waged over revolutionary issues ... did not concentrate on ground defined by either Burke or Paine, but instead attacked Paine for proposing a principle he did not hold in language which was in many respects alien to Burke's *Reflections*.'

book to support this view, but by trying to tell the two different stories in conjunction he is forced to shift the centre of gravity of the story of popular radicalism more towards Paine than can be justified.

This tension between the account of Paine's thought and that of its reception is exacerbated by Claeys' insistence on the consistency of Paine's thinking, if only because the interaction between his thought and its practical context is necessarily underplayed. The more we see Paine's ideas as responses to practical and polemical exigencies, the less plausible is the case for a thorough-going consistency. It is important not to push this case too far, there is a connectedness of concern in Paine's different writings. Nonetheless, there are also quite dramatic differences. Not least, for example, the shift from a doctrine of politics as a solution to man's fall from moral perfection to one of increasing perfectibility, universalism and the withdrawal of government interference<sup>27</sup>; or the development of a consistent rights based view of the bounds of political authority. One reason to emphasize rather than diminish these differences is that in doing so we can begin to see Paine as forging many of the elements of his political theory in the process of writing and debating. Nothing Paine wrote before the *Rights of Man* equals its polemical and theoretical inventiveness - so much so that it seems obvious that part of that achievement arises from his attempt to grapple with Burke. Similarly, although Claeys makes an interesting case for seeing *Agrarian justice* against a background of English and Scottish traditions of thought, there is also something to be said for looking at it in terms of the very specific context, discussed by Paine in his introduction, of the failure to dispense with a form of property qualification for the franchise and what he saw as the consequent Babeuf conspiracy. In both cases, moving from discursive context as a way of fixing meaning to practical context as a way of recognising the forces that push Paine to move beyond his past convictions and to innovate, pays dividends in terms of our appreciation both of Paine's thought and of the dynamics of ideological confrontation in the 1790s.

There is a parallel here between these discussions of Burke and Paine. In both cases, I have argued, there is much to be said for giving more attention to the detailed processes of their thinking and writing than is given them when they are analyzed against the background of our constructions of the languages and traditions of late eighteenth-century political and social theory. This is not a reductivist, nor a Naimerite scepticism towards ideology. On the contrary, it is to insist that the relationship between languages of political thought and their contexts are

<sup>27</sup> Compare the opening comments of *Common sense* with those of the *Rights of Man: part two*.

sufficiently complex to justify us asking questions about authors' motives and the sources of intellectual innovations which sometimes cut across the attempt to identify conventions, discourses or languages against which texts can be read.<sup>28</sup> There are two additional incentives to such an approach to the writers of the 1790s in particular.

The first concerns the impact of the ideological disjunction between Burke and Paine upon the intellectual and political life of the decade. I have suggested that there are innovations in the *Rights of Man* which are the fruit of Paine's attempt to grapple with Burke. Indeed, in attacking Burke, Paine comes to demand, and to exemplify, everything Burke despises - the equalisation of rank, the levelling of property towards the middling orders, the establishment of a constitution and government free from the taint of experience and inherited wisdom, a faith in reason and universalism, and the buoyant optimism of the new intelligentsia of hack writers and *philosophes*. Yet, curiously, their relations had earlier been cordial enough.<sup>29</sup> Which suggests that the rupture between them which betrayed their differences also made those differences choate. In the process they introduced into the political spectrum of the 1790s two starkly contrasting political positions, accompanied by equally contrasting conceptions of the appropriate audience for political writing and the appropriate means of communicating with this audience. They thereby gave a new set of reference points for orthodoxy and heterodoxy in political ideology and brought into play new audiences for political persuasion and new techniques for achieving it. It is this conjunction of ideological polarization and popular mobilization which set a course for confrontation and repression throughout the decade - a course which led to dramatic changes in people's sense of the politically possible, the politically desirable and the politically necessary. The polarization in political ideology and aspiration introduced by Burke and Paine was so acute that for many people, for a time, the established languages and traditions of political thought were put in abeyance. To grasp Burke and Paine's innovations and to recognize the shifting connections between popular politics and the languages of political thought during the decade we cannot rest with the attempt to fix meaning by context.

<sup>28</sup> Pocock's 'Introduction: The state of the art' to *Virtue, commerce and history* is another virtuoso performance, which recognizes many of the difficulties involved in the reading of texts (certainly more than are recognized here); but it is not clear to me that this clarity of methodological vision is in play in his work on Burke.

<sup>29</sup> Indeed, by agreeing not to discuss French affairs they remained on friendly terms well into the summer of 1790. See *Correspondence: Vol. VI*, 75-6.

The second incentive concerns the question of the identification of patterns of thought which can be abstracted from these writers (Burke in particular) and recognized and endorsed by readers who do not share their context. If Burke is to be a figure in modern conservative thought it must be because we find something in him which we can appreciate within our context. It is here that Pocock drastically overstates his case. He finds in Burke, at a suitable level of abstraction, a deep principle of conservatism - his resistance to intellectual enthusiasm for reform - and a prophetic theory of totalitarianism. Nazi Germany, the Red Guards and the Khmer Rouge are found foretold in Burke,<sup>30</sup> and the victims of Auschwitz and Kampuchea are seen as paying the price for their persecutors failure to grasp Burke's message that 'we cannot possibly destroy and replace the whole fabric of culture without destroying the only reasons our own intelligences and our capacity to replace it, since we shall be destroying the only reasons for acting, and even living, which we can possibly have.'<sup>31</sup> But to find Burke prophetic in this way is to take him at such a level of abstraction that the credit for insight (if that is what it is) must lie with the interpreter rather than the author of the text. We need Burke (and Paine for that matter) contextualized not just within traditions and languages of political thought, but also within an understanding of their strengths and weaknesses, their prejudices and enthusiasms, because only within this context can we come to grasp how far the clarity of political vision we wish to ascribe to them is really theirs by right. But we also need this detail because it is at this level that politics is thought and fought. Pocock's principle is true but trivial, what matters is how it is interpreted and applied, for there is nothing in it that could not be endorsed by those who ordered the troops to fire in Tiananmen Square, or those who succumb to the temptations of nationalism or religious fundamentalism. What matters is getting it right about what is politically possible and what is politically desirable in a world in which citizens and politicians must choose and act. There is probably something to be learnt from both Burke and Paine on these issues, but we will only learn from them in so far as we are prepared to recognize the partiality of their views and resist the temptation to canonize them for sharing our prejudices.

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<sup>30</sup> Pocock, *Reflections*, xxxvii.

<sup>31</sup> Pocock, *Reflections*, xliv.

## DAVID WILLIAMS, JOHN JEBB AND LITURGICAL REFORM

*James Dybikowski and Martin Fitzpatrick*

Both David Williams and John Jebb in the course of their careers abandoned the comforts of orthodoxy and in consequence were obliged to fashion new futures for themselves. The letter which follows is of especial interest because it provides evidence of the attitudes of the two men at different stages in their transition; it is also the only extant letter between them.

In July of 1771, David Williams had published *The philosopher in three conversations*, a work of political reflection. In the third of these conversations he had turned his attention to the role of public worship. He had argued for universal toleration, for the abolition of the articles of the church and the creation of an ecumenical liturgy.<sup>1</sup> He believed that the liturgy of the established church had failed to keep pace with improvements in the state of knowledge. The creeds and articles were outdated and should play no part in liturgical worship. This would leave a liturgy consisting of 'the plainest principles of pious and moral obligation'.<sup>2</sup> Stripped of theological complexities, worship would be of the 'Supreme being' conducted in the manner of the Established Church, which, he suggested, 'is most agreeable to the social and benevolent temper, so essential to the character of a man and a Christian; nay, what to me is more important yet, the only manner, in my opinion, by which there can be any social devotion'.<sup>3</sup>

The arguments which Williams put forward were very much in tune with advanced opinion both in the Anglican and Dissenting churches, and he showed himself familiar with movements for the reform of the liturgy and of subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles. He wrote that 'great numbers of the clergy are very uneasy under the present laws and with the present service of the church. As men of learning, abilities and piety, they can never employ themselves better than in sketching out these improvements in the hierarchy and service which they think most reasonable and expedient.'<sup>4</sup> He was, moreover, aware that some clergy were doing rather more than sketching proposals for improvement, but were organizing to procure reform, and that they were assisted in the process by Dissenters. At this stage Williams was an interested bystander, for he commented, 'I see by the papers that not only the dissenters keep up the bustle with you but they are aided by some of your sons'.<sup>5</sup> This was a

<sup>1</sup> *The philosopher in three conversations* (London, 1771), Third conversation, 109.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 121-123.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

reference to an informal meeting of discontented Anglicans which took place in April 1771 and which resolved to call a public meeting at the Feathers Tavern on 17 July to form an association to procure the abolition of clerical subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles and of lay subscription to the articles in the universities.<sup>6</sup> Williams was undoubtedly sympathetic towards this movement, and, according to A.H. Lincoln, he was one of those who met at the Feathers Tavern, the inn which gave its name to the association.<sup>7</sup> This letter from Jebb would appear to refute such an involvement, for Jebb clearly does not expect to meet Williams at the Feathers Tavern, but promises to call on him after the meeting of the associators. None the less, it discloses the closeness of the ideas of Williams and the associators at that time. Williams would undoubtedly have been pleased by Jebb's flattering account of the reception which *The philosopher* had met in Cambridge from Edmund Law, Bishop of Carlisle, and others, more especially as he had recently quarrelled with his publisher, Thomas Beckett, over complaints from prospective purchasers of the work that they had found Beckett's shop obstructive.<sup>8</sup>

The letter indicates that Williams had an alternative design for reform based on the introduction of a new liturgy. In *The philosopher*, he showed himself aware of the efforts of some of the Dissenters to introduce liturgies into their worship<sup>9</sup> which would lead, in his view, 'to a general, voluntary and desirable uniformity',<sup>10</sup> a condition he regards as the true underlying object of Rational Dissent,<sup>11</sup> and which ultimately would make Dissent redundant.<sup>12</sup> The best known of the contemporary liturgical experiments was conducted at the Octagon Chapel in Liverpool,<sup>13</sup> and, according to tradition, Williams, who was minister at Mint Street, Exeter, between 1761 and 1769, had persuaded his congregation there to adopt the Liverpool Liturgy.<sup>14</sup> If so, he was not entirely satisfied with the result. Jebb's letter indicates that Williams did not

<sup>6</sup> J. Disney, ed., *The theological, medical, political and miscellaneous works of John Jebb ... with memoirs of the author*. In three volumes (London, 1787), I, 32-33.

<sup>7</sup> A.H. Lincoln, *Some political and social ideas of English Dissent, 1763-1800* (Cambridge, 1938), 204.

<sup>8</sup> Victoria and Albert Museum Library, Forster Collection 48/F/11/f.2.

<sup>9</sup> *The philosopher*, 128.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 106. Williams was confident that in heaven, 'Athanasians, Arians and Socinians will all join in one form of worship.'

<sup>13</sup> *A form of prayer, and a new collection of psalms for the use of a congregation of Protestant Dissenters in Liverpool* (Printed for the Society, 1763).

<sup>14</sup> See e.g., 'Anecdotes of the Rev. David Williams', *European Magazine*, II (1782), 135.

believe it to be an ideal model. Indeed, he later wrote that while the Liverpool Liturgy had been composed on 'very rational and liberal principles', it was open to criticism because its services were too long and incomplete and its prayers were written in the style of moral discourses.<sup>15</sup> Williams decided to compose his own liturgy. He tells us in his autobiographical writings that, following the publication of *The philosopher*, he was induced by Mr Sergeant Adair 'to draw up the *Liturgy on the Principles of the Christian Religion* and some time afterwards to insert papers in the *Public Advertiser*, called *Essays on Public Worship. Patriotism and Projects of Reformation*. Those essays were reprinted in a pamphlet ...'<sup>16</sup> The proposal from Williams to which Jebb refers related to a scheme for the introduction of such a liturgy in London, yet Williams' liturgy did not see the light of day until 1774 and in the interim the gap between his ideas and aspirations and those of the Anglican reformers had widened considerably.

When Williams published the first two of his *Essays on public worship* in October and November of 1772, his position was essentially that stated in *The philosopher*. The third essay was late for the printer and was never published in the newspaper. When all three essays were published as a pamphlet a notable change of tone and outlook could be detected between the newspaper essays and the third essay. It is not until the third essay that Williams for the first time publicly announces that a rational liturgy ought to be such that 'all *honest, pious* men, Calvinists, Arians, Socinians, Jews, Turks and Infidels, might and *ought* to worship together in spirit and truth.'<sup>17</sup> He is no longer restricting himself, as he had in *The philosopher*, to a project which would draw together Christians and, more particularly members of the established church and Protestant Dissenters. In the preface to his *Liturgy* Williams comments anonymously on his own *Essays on public worship*: 'It lies on the author of those essays to prove it to be *practicable*. When he produced a Liturgy on the principles there advanced; in which Christians of all denominations, Jews, Turks, and Infidels may join, I will allow it to be a great improvement on what I now offer to the public.'<sup>18</sup> It comes as no surprise to learn that Williams himself was composing such a liturgy, his *Liturgy on the universal principles of religion and morality*.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>15</sup> *Liturgy on the principles of the Christian religion* (London, 1774), pref.x.

<sup>16</sup> D. Williams, *Incidents in my own life which have been thought of some importance*, ed. P. France (University of Sussex Library, 1980), 15-16.

<sup>17</sup> *Essays on public worship, patriotism, and projects of reformation* (London, 1773), 21.

<sup>18</sup> *Liturgy on the principles of the Christian religion*, pref. xii.

<sup>19</sup> This liturgy was published in London in 1776.

The difference between Williams' position in *The philosopher* and the *Essays on public worship* is not one of underlying principle, but of the conclusions he is prepared to defend on the basis of that principle. In the light of the more radical conclusions of the *Essays*, he takes issue with both Anglican and Dissenting reformers, and indeed as he proceeds through the essays, his tone becomes increasingly belligerent towards those who would appear to be in close agreement with him, a feature which was to become a prominent characteristic of his later political writings and doubtless contributed to their comparative neglect. His initial target was the reform movement within the established church, particularly the works which inspired it, namely John Jones' *Free and candid disquisitions* and Francis Blackburne's *The confessional*.<sup>20</sup> Inasmuch as the reformers had generally professed to find their principles expressed in these works, their starting point was a conception of religious and philosophical liberty insufficiently broad and the steps they had recommended, were 'always extremely cautious'.<sup>21</sup> Where in *The philosopher* Williams had urged reform of the established church, he now was concluding that 'a reformation of the church is hardly practicable.'<sup>22</sup> In making such a judgement, he had the benefit of knowing that the Feathers Tavern Petition had been defeated in the House of Commons on 6 February 1772 and, although, as the letter shows, the association was still active and in good heart, more dispassionate observers could see that a further petition to parliament was unlikely to succeed. More immediately, the debate in February on the petition had led to an application to parliament from the Protestant Dissenters for relief from the requirement that their ministers and schoolmasters should be required to subscribe to the doctrinal articles of the Thirty-nine Articles. This, too, failed, and Williams again took the opportunity to criticise the proposed reform. He suggested that the *status quo* was superior to a modest reform justified by narrow principles.

Williams was less than fair at least to the Anglican reformers in regarding both their principles and ambitions as limited. In *The confessional* Francis Blackburne had argued that subscription was contrary to natural and revealed religion and the first paragraph of the Feathers Tavern petition was uncompromising in its statement of the right

<sup>20</sup> John Jones, *Free and candid disquisitions relating to the Church of England and the means of advancing religion therein addressed to the governing powers in church and state; and more immediately directed to the two houses of convocation* (London, 1749); Francis Blackburne, *The confessional; or a free and full inquiry into the right, utility, edification and success of establishing systematical confessions of faith and doctrine in Protestant churches* (London, 1766, 2nd edn., 1767; 3rd edn., 1770).

<sup>21</sup> *Essays on public worship*, 42.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

of the free exercise of private judgement in religious matters.<sup>23</sup> Williams was only more radical in his application of such a principle. His correspondent, John Jebb, was himself one of the most radical of religious and political reformers in the late eighteenth century. An indefatigable propagandist of enlightened views, he was a leading agitator in print for the Feathers Tavern Petition. In good eighteenth-century fashion, his occasional pieces on the subject, published in the *Whitehall Evening Post*, were revised and brought together in a pamphlet published in January 1772, and were subsequently incorporated in the three volume compilation of his work edited by John Disney.<sup>24</sup> The David Williams who wrote *The philosopher* would have been closely attuned to the views expressed by Jebb in these works. Their common outlook on the proper relation between church and state, on the basic simplicity and nondoctrinal character of what was fundamental to Christianity, on the need to reform the liturgy by making it conform with current knowledge while preserving wherever possible the admirable style of the *Book of Common Prayer* so that it would serve as an effective counterweight against moral dissipation, would have made Jebb appear to Williams as an attractive ally. On the other hand, Jebb could be expected to have found himself at odds with the David Williams who penned the *Essays on public worship* and the preface to the *Liturgy on the principles of the Christian religion*. Although Jebb was prepared to concede that Williams' proposal for a reformed liturgy might have a more powerful effect than the *Candid disquisitions*, he was an admirer of that work. Moreover, he believed *The confessional* to be an incomparable book, and was very much in agreement with Theophilus Lindsey's revised liturgy. Of the latter, Williams declared, 'I had much rather join in the old [liturgy], with all its error, having the idea of sincerity and consistency in the composers, than in that of Dr Clarke, rendered heavy and dull by verbal changes, and my own mind infested with the idea of something too prudent in the reformer.'<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> The text of the petition was printed in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, February, 1772, 61-63. According to Thomas Belsham, Blackburne drafted the petition, although his close friend, coadjutor and defender of *The Confessional* in print, Rev. Ben Dawson, also appears to have played an important role in drawing it up. Cf. T. Belsham, *Memoirs of the late Rev. Theophilus Lindsey* (London, 1812), 48, & Dr Williams's Library, MS 14, 157 (219), S. Kenrick to Rev. J. Woodrow, 5 Oct. 1798.

<sup>24</sup> *Letters on the subject of subscription to the liturgy and Thirty-nine articles of the Church of England*. First printed in the *Whitehall Evening Post* under the signature of Paulinus, reprinted MDCCLXXII with notes and editions. Humbly dedicated to the members of the honourable House of Commons and the two universities. By the author. See Disney, *Works...of Jebb*, I, 35, 137-222.

<sup>25</sup> *Liturgy on the principles of the Christian religion*, pref. xiii-xiv.

It is interesting to speculate on what might have happened had Jebb agreed to join Williams at the time he wrote this letter, for it is within months of his declining Williams' proposal that Williams revised his ideas in such a way as to place himself beyond the pale of the Anglican and Dissenting reform movements. We do, however, have some inkling of the circumstances which made Jebb reluctant to leave Cambridge. He was torn by conflicting loyalties: he wrote in the winter of 1771-1772, 'I own I find the sensations of conjugal and paternal love, opposed to the sense of duty, and therefore, feel also for myself.'<sup>26</sup> The sense of duty referred to was not simply the duty to leave the church if the movement for reform failed. Jebb also felt that he had a duty to stay in Cambridge in order to campaign for university reform through the introduction of a public examination system. When he eventually left Cambridge following the failure of the university reform movement in 1776, he made a career not in the reformed church of Theophilus Lindsey but in medicine. Yet he remained a supporter of Lindsey's project and is not known to have attended Williams' Deist chapel at Margaret Street. Since he never wavered in his belief, expressed in the letter, in the power of a few courageous and determined individuals to effect change, we can only conclude that in spite of many similarities in outlook with Williams, similarities which included an emphasis on the importance of the emotional dimension of religion, he remained convinced of the desirability of reformed religion building upon the Anglican example and remaining within the Christian tradition. For him this was not merely a matter of expediency as might appear from his letter. He remained an adherent of the Latitudinarian tradition which rested on a belief in the ultimate harmony of reason and revelation, while Williams was a natural religionist.

John Jebb to Revd. David Williams, 26 October 1772.\*

Revd. Sir,

I received your letter with great pleasure although the circumstances of my situation prevent me from acceding to the proposal contained in it. I think myself much honoured and obliged by the confidence you are pleased to repose in

<sup>26</sup> Disney, *The works...of Jebb*, I, 52-53.

\* National Library of Wales, Ms. 15269C, fol.5. Among Williams' papers sold at auction were one or more other letters from John Jebb (1736-1786). See David Williams, 'A further note on the manuscripts and printed works of David Williams (1738-1816)', *National Library of Wales Journal*, V (1957-1958), 412-414.

me, and do most sincerely lament, that I cannot unite with you in a design, which I so heartily and intirely approve. How far my connexion with the Association for the abolition of subscriptions might prevent me from engaging in such a Plan, were my other objections removed, I cannot possitively (?) say, as I have sufficiently reflected upon the subject. The objection did not strike me till I had perused your letter. I do not at present see any force in it, but I certainly should not think myself at liberty to take any step, which might disserve a cause which I am with heart and hand engag'd. The truth however at present is, that other circumstances will not permit me to change the place of my residence without the greatest Inconvenience. I can therefore only look on, and rejoice in the zeal and activity of those friends to Religious Liberty who pursue a track of conduct different from my own.

I am happy in this opportunity of returning you my thanks for the pleasure I received in perusing the Philosopher part the 3d. I have read many books upon the subject of Divine Worship, but never found any so much to my taste, and it is with truth I assure you that the performance is much esteemed by the liberal minded of this place, among others, very highly by the Bishop of Carlisle.

I propose being at London at our next meeting at the Feathers, which is fixed for the 2d. of December. I then will certainly wait upon you in Frith Street. I am thoroughly sensible that a reformed liturgy held out to the observation of mankind in the capital city will do more than ten thousand times ten thousand Candid Disquisitions on the subject, and the active part which the adversary would take upon the first appearance of such a liturgy, would circulate perhaps the use of ye liturgy itself through many parts of the kingdom. These things I do not mention out of compliment. It has long been my persuasion that a real Reformation in the Liturgy must be effected by the spirited efforts of a few Individuals, and that the absurdities in ours can never appear in a proper point of view to the laity of this kingdom, till they are called upon to bear a part in a service wherein such absurdities are not known. With respect to the Liverpool Liturgy although I think it a very ingenious and rational composition, and most highly respect the authors of it, yet I am satisfied it would not serve the present purpose, and your sentiments seem to accord with mine. The

prejudices of mankind require that the form, which should be adopted as the model for a National Liturgy, should bear a greater resemblance to what is already established.

I was from Home when Mr Gibbs<sup>1</sup> did me the favour to call upon me, I therefore know not of which College he is a member. Your recommendation would be sufficient motive for me to desire his acquaintance.

I should be happy, worthy Sir, in your further correspondence, and remain with great truth your obligd Servant.

Cambridge 26 Oct. 1772

John Jebb.

Addressed:

'To The Revd. D. Williams  
Frith Street,  
Soho,  
London'

University of British Columbia  
University College of Wales, Aberystwyth.

<sup>1</sup> Vicary 'Vinegar' Gibbs (1751-1820) was the son of a surgeon from Exeter. His family attended the chapel on Mint Street where Williams served as minister (1761-1769), and baptised a younger sister (Baptismal Register at the Meeting House on Mint Street, Devon County Record Office, R.G. 4/336). Gibbs' father served as a witness to a declaration clearing Williams in 1769 of sending anonymous letters (National Library of Wales Ms. 10338E, f.89). At the time of this letter, Vicary Gibbs was a student at King's College, Cambridge. Much later he was to assist Erskine in the treason trials of Thomas Hardy and Home Tooke, and later still he became an M.P., Solicitor General and Chief Justice of Common Pleas. His path crossed Williams' in 1808 when he opposed the attempts of the Literary Fund to obtain a Royal Charter which the Fund ultimately secured, although not until 1818 after Williams' death. Gibbs reportedly remarked that 'there is much danger of its becoming a debating society, and taking something of a democratic tincture'. The latter referred to the proposal that the charter would vest the power to modify the constitution of the Fund in the membership rather than in a board of trustees (B.L., Archive of the Royal Literary Fund, Charles Butler to Literary Fund, 2 July, 1808). Williams, for his part, criticized the legal profession in his final work, *Preparatory studies for political reformers* (p.77) and noted of Vicary Gibbs, 'The present attorney-general, Sir Vicary Gibbs, as a private gentleman is an honour to humanity, as a lawyer he needs not my praise.'

Seamus Deane, *The French Revolution and Enlightenment in England 1789-1832*, (Cambridge, Mass., and London, Harvard University Press, 1988), pp.212, £19.95, ISBN 0 674 322401.

When political theory was pronounced dead, none exhibited deeper signs of morbidity than the social and political philosophy of the eighteenth century. The great thinkers such as Hume and Berkeley were being appropriated for modern pedagogical purposes by contemporary philosophers, whilst the less systematic minds were shrouded in Namierite palls of supposed 'vapidity'. Over the past fifteen or twenty years an effective renaissance, even a resurrection has taken place. The (if I may) John the Baptist of this movement is of course John Pocock, and its apostles include Isaac Kramnick, Harry Dickinson, the editors of the Glasgow Adam Smith, and the King's College group associated with John Dunn, Istvan Hont and the now translated Michael Ignatief. The revitalisation has been accompanied by a doctrinal shift away from an interest in epistemology and moral theory as such (Selby-Bigge, David Raphael, D.H. Monroe), towards theories of social and economic change and the way in which opinion and belief is formed or deformed by them. In the process, and despite the insistent methodological current of historical contextualisation, the eighteenth century has increasingly become the historiographical battle-ground of today - Mandeville inventing capitalism, Smith variously endorsing or staking out serious reservations about it, and Drs Clark and Brewer in conflict over the nature of the state, in a way that pulls few punches concerning its relevance to present controversies.

Particularly in view of the last development it is ironic that the new historiography does not - with some notable exceptions - seem to have penetrated far into the French Revolutionary period. Even where interpretive differences carry a recognizable political imprimatur, it is of a distinctly old-fashioned whig *versus* labour-history stamp. When we move beyond the late 1790s the discontinuity becomes even worse. Writers are only beginning - Claeys, Fontana and Clark spring to mind - to shape their treatment of the Napoleonic and postwar periods in the light of one or another versions of the eighteenth-century intellectual historiography.

Unfortunately Seamus Deane's work is not amongst these. One of the consequences of works so long in the making is that they suffer, not only from the tides of intellectual history, but also, as this work appears to, from the writer's own development and shifts of intellectual interests.

If this is to start on a critical note it is only one prompted by what seemed to be the necessary kind of contextualising introductory remarks, for parts of this book are very good indeed. In particular the opening

discussion of Burke, the stress on his idea of a European Christian order, and the location of him in an early eighteenth-century Irish Anglican context is absolutely right, and something which could profitably have been extended. Again and again the author returns to Burke to emphasise how his thought not merely influenced but structured the ensuing discussion.

The next three chapters are also excellent. They describe how the need to define and repudiate the revolution increasingly led to characterizations of the French - and by opposition the English - national and philosophical character. This traces themes of a more or less sophisticated intellectual conspiracy theory, and that of the link between the supposed revolutionary susceptibility of the French and their sexual licentiousness (and Britons' resulting - and very sudden - acquisition of a reputation for sexual propriety). These are woven around the opinions, and in some cases, personal careers of selected individuals of the period, some emigrés - Barruel, du Pan, de Staël, Southey, Wordsworth, Mackintosh and Coleridge.

The chapter on Mackintosh is particularly good: more than the Lake poets, Mackintosh's individual career and opinions modelled the disruptive impact of the French Revolution on the course of British radical Whig: 'He registered in compact form much of what was generally believed in intellectual circles ... the French Revolution created an impasse to his thought.' (p.52) Understanding at last, as he put it to Lord Holland, 'that instead of making a vain attempt to preserve the Revolution and the Jacobins by endangering liberty we must labour to preserve Liberty by sacrificing the Revolution and the Jacobins', is not, as so often, the end, but the beginning of the story. For it poses the problem of how to reformulate the relationship between the presumed goal, liberty, and the ideals that had inspired the Revolution. Alternatively it must call into question the widely presumed fact of a relationship between the ideals of the *philosophes* and the historical course of the Revolution. The nature of the Revolution and a true understanding of its causes thus became crucial issues for those seeking to formulate (or, particularly, reformulate) a political position in the post-revolutionary period.

The retreat from a straightforward conspiracy theory, to a position which still attributed a less than criminal causative agency to the ideas of the *philosophes*, could be further extended, as it was by Mackintosh, to the point where the philosophes were exculpated because of their *failure* to influence the progress of the Revolution. Ironically this still left the Revolution to be explained, and the search for wider and 'more general' causes led in the same direction as what was now the Burkean Tory high ground: that there were basic differences between the French and British characters, the one volatile, enthusiastic and unstable, the other conservative, attached to local particularities, and steadfast. Sexual

licence was seen variously as a cause and consequence of this shallowly affective susceptibility in the French, but variously alongside or underlying this was also an attempted explanation in terms of the practical effect of competing moral psychologies in expressing or re-enforcing a basic character difference. Mackintosh threatened to escape this philosophical jingoism, to save his consistency, his championship of liberty, and his denunciation of both late-Revolutionary France and increasingly utilitarian Britain, by establishing a polarity between two traditions of morality and social thought, the one based on sentiment, the other on egoism. But the question of the practical operation of these moral systems brought him inexorably back to natural character: the family was the indispensable practical source of sentiment and feeling, and it was the sexual licence of the French that had disrupted the family, destroying this cradle of the sentiments and immediate loyalties, and releasing the abstracted and destructive ego. Mackintosh had indeed 'absorbed Burke more deeply and was closer to him than he realised.'

If Mackintosh sets an agenda that points us well beyond the familiar story of the radicals' apostasy, it is Coleridge who, in philosophical terms explores it, largely through his perception of Rousseau, for him the representative revolutionary thinker. Ironically whereas an earlier generation, focussed on *Emile*, the *Confessions* and *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, saw Rousseau's wayward sentimentalism posing the threat, Coleridge, possibly the first British thinker to devote sustained attention (as opposed to invective) to Rousseau's political writings, saw it in his rationalism. This, in Coleridge's view, particularly concealed the potentially dangerous identity that must in practice take place between the General Will and the will of the majority.

If Coleridge is a true heir to Burke in rejecting the direct application of abstract theory, he goes beyond him in also recognising the opposite dangers of an uncritical conventionalism. Burke and Rousseau, from different ends, as it were, fail to hold in critical tension the polarities of the ideal and the actual and so prevent a slide into either unstable abstraction or abject submission to the *status quo*. Coleridge seeks to overcome this through the application of his reading of Kant, but Kant's theory is too dichotomized, and also fails to hold together the rational and the actual self (Coleridge one might say, needed Hegel; and the frequently suggested dialectics suggest that the inclusion of Blake might have given a more appropriately multivalent account of the intellectual counters). Burke's 'power out of ourselves' and Rousseau's Legislator are each recognitions of the fact that individual (and abstract) wills (however rational) need some external agency to fashion them into a practical community. That agency however need be external only to the *rational* will, and not to the individual or community as a whole, it need not be a coercive 'other'. So it could be found in a rationally consecrated national cultural or intellectual tradition, devices long since resorted to in Anglican apologetics.

Coleridge's notorious answer to the problem, an answer much closer to Burke's than Rousseau's, is of course his National Clerisy, a cross between the Anglican Church and the *Académie Française*.

This is by far the best part of the book. It has a satisfying unity and coherence of theme and treatment, has many intelligent and perceptive things to say, and says them well, often finding the particularly happy phrase - Coleridge's clerisy as a Burkean 'virtual aristocracy' is one such. However, the next two chapters - 'Godwin, Helvétius and Holbach: crime and punishment', and 'Shelley, La Mettrie, and Cabanis: Remorse and Sympathy' - shift the focus from 'the revolution' to 'the enlightenment', and, though maintaining interest, do not work so well as intellectual history.

There are a number of reasons for this. The writing is more laboured, seems to belong to a different period, and sometimes a different genre. There are extended passages (in Shelley for example) of pure literary criticism. The thesis, asserting the direct and detailed influence of various *philosophes* on Godwin and Shelley often fails because the ideas are not characterised rigorously enough to convince the reader that the named source must have been influential. What is identified is an extended literature concerned to develop post-Lockean philosophical psychology to deal with the internal dimensions of crime - guilt and remorse; a corollary of the need, on the part of the radical who repudiates the Revolution, to extirpate the internal, as well as the external *ancien régime*. This is interesting in itself, but the novelty of the analysis deployed is overplayed, often, it seems, because Dean accepts his subject's estimate of their originality, and the identity of traditions to which they were heir.

This is clearest in the oft-stressed opposition between 'sentiment' and 'egoism': a pervasive polarity introduced early in the book which surfaces again in an otherwise good discussion of that much, and unjustly neglected figure, Hazlitt. Although it is true that early in the eighteenth-century the egoism of Hobbes and Mandeville were seen as both shocking and disruptive of ordinary morality, one needs to be cautious of extending this opposition too far. High Church divines with their insistence on the need for Hell-Fire to ensure morality, were, motivationally at least, closer to Hobbes than they might have cared to admit. It's true that Shaftesbury and Hutcheson, the former at least aligning Hobbes *with* Locke as the opposition, sought to base morality in the 'natural sense' of mankind. But from the mid century two other solutions to the threat of egoism became increasingly accepted. One was to domesticate Mandeville, and via Adam Smith, sanction egoism in the field of economic life which was henceforth bracketed off from morality. There is therefore a story to be told about the reception of revolutionary *economics*. The other was much more subtle, adopted in slightly different ways by Hume, Smith and Rousseau, to show how sensationalism, and egoism itself might generate

moral sentiments of the required kind. Sympathy and the resulting sentiments played an extensive role in British moral psychology. It is important to keep hold of the fact that the rise of 'sentiment and benevolence' as elements of romantic aesthetic and moral and political theory, drew on resources widely available within the broadly Lockean philosophical psychology to which it is so often opposed. Godwin, who acknowledged an increasing debt to Hume, is an emblematic, as well as influential figure here. Starting from sensationalist principles, the role of abstracting reason is described as enabling us to abstract from our merely sentient selves so that we can actually *feel* another's wrong or pain, thus transcending the distinction between egoistic and altruistic motives. With apologies to St Thomas, reason does not abolish sentiment, it completes it. Whilst Shelley claims we must bring art to the aid of reason, as the means of raising most humans' responses to the moral level, this is a development within his initial and avowedly Godwinian position: the story is one that can be told in terms of developments within a British tradition that at first opposed, but increasingly sought to integrate, sensationalism and sentiment, egoism and sympathy. Whilst it may seem churlish to criticize an author for not dealing with domestic influences in a book devoted to French, the lack of balance does sometimes lead to strained and improbable assertions of foreign influence.

'The French Revolution' then, fares better than 'Enlightenment' in this treatment, but even the latter is continually provoking on the subject of developments in moral philosophy. If the links with the 'French Enlightenment' are not always secured, the issues are always relevant to British perceptions of the Revolution, and of the moral theory supposed to underlie it.

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**T.M. Devine editor, *Improvement and Enlightenment: Proceedings of the Scottish Historical Studies Seminar, University of Strathclyde, 1987-88*** (John Donald Publishers, Edinburgh, 1989), ix + 146pp., £20.00.

**T.M. Devine editor, *Conflict and Stability in Scottish Society, 1700-1850: Proceedings of the Scottish Historical Studies Seminar, University of Strathclyde, 1988-89*** (John Donald Publishers, Edinburgh, 1990), ix + 138pp., £20.00.

Although the Scottish Enlightenment of the eighteenth century has emerged as an international and interdisciplinary subject, the same has not always been true of Scottish social history of the same period. For many years the latter subject was practically ignored, even (or rather especially) within the dedicated Scottish History departments that arose at several Scottish universities. The attention it did receive came mainly from economic historians whose interests were more closely focussed on labour relations, demographics, agricultural improvement and the rise of commerce and industry than on the broader range of values, institutions and activities that has come to be associated with social history in England and France. As social history elsewhere moved closer to cultural history (symbolised most dramatically by the turn to cultural anthropology for inspiration and guidance), Scottish social history generally maintained its traditional ties with economic history and usually ventured no farther afield than historical geography. This orientation sometimes gave the discipline the dull cast of local history at its most parochial: a sizeable body of dry doctoral theses, articles and books that generated little interest outside Scotland, not because eighteenth-century Scotland was inherently any less important or interesting than other places, but because so much of the work being produced on it was narrowly empirical and far removed from the cutting edge of scholarship in the discipline (let alone in other disciplines).

The first major breakthrough came with the publication of T.C. Smout's *A History of the Scottish People 1560-1830* (1969), which taught a generation of historians that there really was a fascinating culture lurking beneath all those economic charts and tables. Since then progress has been sporadic, but recent years have brought forth a number of hopeful developments at the Scottish universities, two of which stand out among the others: the revitalization, under the leadership of Professor Smout, of the Scottish History Department at St Andrew's University, whose Association of Scottish Historical Studies has already produced several interesting conferences and volumes, and the emergence of the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow as the leading centre for the study of Scottish social history in this period.

The volumes under consideration are products and symbols of the latter development. If they do not represent a complete liberation from the limitations previously discussed, they do signify a meaningful step in that direction. Each book consists of six or seven papers presented at Professor Tom Devine's historical studies seminar, which was established, Professor Devine tells us in the Preface to the first volume, 'to provide a focus for advanced scholarship in the developing field of Scottish social history' (p.v). Since the seminar is devoted to a specific topic each year, these volumes have more coherence than comparable collections often do. An attempt has been made to incorporate the perspectives of other disciplines, here represented by a literary historian, a historian of architecture and a sociologist (the remaining ten papers are by historians). And several of the papers, notably R.A. Houston's examination of Scottish education and literacy in relation to contemporary practices throughout Europe, adopt an explicitly international and comparative stance.

*Improvement and Enlightenment* begins with a provocative essay by T.C. Smout on 'nationalism, identity and improvement'. Smout argues that eighteenth-century Scottish feelings of national identity can best be understood in terms of two concepts: 'concentric loyalty', which enabled Scots to identify simultaneously with Scotland and a larger British entity, and the ideology of 'improvement'. Smout's vision is one of a thoroughly progressive and enlightened Scottish patriotism, anti-English only 'under abnormal and temporary provocation', and deeply committed to economic growth: 'the victors were those who accepted commercial society as inevitable and welcome', meaning Hume, Adam Smith of the *Wealth of Nations* and 'the great army of rural improvers' (p.15). In the long run this view may be correct, but how useful is it for understanding the complexities of late eighteenth-century Scottish values? Though the notion of concentric loyalties is valuable, the anti-English component in Scottish nationalism cannot be taken so lightly. Smout speaks accurately of James Boswell's 'bundle of jumbled identities' - and Andrew Noble demonstrates this quality at greater length in the splendid essay that follows - but Boswell was rarely typical of anything, least of all attitudes towards the English. As for the ideology of improvement, it had no monopoly over Scottish nationalist feelings, and the persistent challenge of those who resisted it on moral and civic humanist grounds cannot be dismissed without much greater documentation than Smout is able to offer here.

Besides these essays, and the previously mentioned one by Houston, *Improvement and Enlightenment* contains Rosalind Mitchison's brief re-evaluation of Alexander Webster's demographic survey of 1755, which suggests that demographic patterns in mid-eighteenth-century Scotland were more similar to English ones than has generally been thought, and

T.M. Devine's thorough analysis of the transfer of land in the Highlands during the nineteenth century. Finally, there is a brilliant essay by Thomas A. Markus on Scottish Enlightenment architecture as a means of classification. Looking first at buildings designed to separate and control those who posed the greatest threat to society - hospitals for the sick, asylums for the insane and prisons for the criminal - Markus shows how the Enlightenment's passion for order expressed itself spatially. Robert Adam's Bridewell prison in Edinburgh (1791), modelled on Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon concept, was perhaps the fullest embodiment of this principle. Using the example of the Hunterian Museum in Glasgow, Markus also demonstrates how this same concern for spatial ordering was used in buildings that classify ideas and objects rather than people.

*Conflict and Stability* is a more tightly structured volume, since all the essays in it deal either with protest or dissent or with the forces that worked against it. The editor's Preface claims a thesis for the book: 'that both overt and covert protest was more common, enduring and diverse than is usually supposed. Social dissent was vigorous and widespread in Scotland, and encompassed the spheres of politics, economy and religion. At the same time, however,... the established structure of power and authority was also very resilient.' The stimulating opening paper by Christopher A. Whatley addresses the first part of this thesis by arguing that the previously assumed passivity of Lowland Scots in the eighteenth century rests on a failure to appreciate the special forms of dissent among them; resentment towards the Union of 1707, for example, was often expressed through anti-customs and anti-excite riots as well as smuggling, which local authorities could never control. Food riots were less common than on the Continent, but Whatley rather ingeniously puts that fact in the service of his argument by suggesting that the fear of grain riots following the particularly violent ones that occurred in 1720 led to paternalistic controls which reduced the amount and level of hostilities following bad harvests later in the century. Rural unrest is harder to detect, largely because, as the essays by Campbell and Devine show in different ways, the landed interest and established institutions in Lowland Scotland maintained tight control throughout this period. Yet Whatley points out that rural discontent can be expressed in ways other than open protest, 'from foot-dragging, through pilfering, to sabotage and arson' (p.21). It will be interesting to see if further research lends support to this suggestion.

Other essays deal with particular aspects of Scottish dissent, including Stana Nenadic's on middle class protest and Tony Clarke's on early Chartism. In a fine essay on the rise and fall of the Scottish Association of the Friends of the People during the 1790s, John Brims explores the roots of that body and shows how its ill-advised adoption of a confrontationalist policy at the British Convention in November 1793 'ensured the

destruction of the Scottish parliamentary reform movement' (p.47). Later in the volume Callum G. Brown addresses the important issue of religion, which is too frequently neglected or discounted by Scottish social historians. Pointing out that religion was the main vehicle through which social dissent was channelled in early modern Scotland, Brown goes on to argue that the well-known issue of church patronage was part of a larger pattern of popular dissent that included opposition to 'pewing' (i.e. renting fixed pews in church), concern about church accommodation and resentment towards reforms such as abolishing the practice of 'reading the line' (i.e. reading the lines of psalms before singing them, for the benefit of the lower classes). 'The overall complaint of Presbyterian protesters was that the elites were usurping the people's place in the kirk', Brown writes, 'eroding a whole catalogue of traditional popular rights, privileges and symbols' (p.99). Though Brown is somewhat shaky on the primary issue of patronage, he breaks new ground by discovering a richer economic, social and religious context for understanding Scottish religious dissent in general.

One hopes that the Strathclyde seminar will continue to produce stimulating volumes such as these, which bear witness to the growth of a more international and interdisciplinary spirit in Scottish social history. One general suggestion: if the seminar is to consist of just six or seven papers each year, would it not make sense to publish the proceedings of two seminars at a time? Then, instead of two slight volumes for £40, we would have one substantial book that could probably sell for a more reasonable price.

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C.E.S. Franks (ed.), *Dissent and the state*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, vii, 288pp., £9.95p.

This collection of essays results from a conference held at Queens University, Ontario, in 1988 and sponsored by the Canadian Office of the Inspector General of the Security Service and the Security Intelligence Review Committee. The latter is the policy watchdog established by the Canadian government when it reorganized the Security Intelligence Service following an inquiry into its activities prompted by a series of embarrassing disclosures of illegal activities including spying on the New Democratic Party and the Parti Quebecois. Part of the embarrassment was that the Solicitor General of Canada to whom the Royal Canadian Mounted Police reported had little idea about the activities of, and no effective control over, a security service for which he was the minister responsible and which was violating the civil and political liberties of those whose civil and political rights he was charged to protect.

The central theme of the book is the proper relation between political dissent and the security service and its geographical focus is on Canada. The collection's editor writes that the essays are not intended to decide when a security service can properly make political dissent the object of its attentions, though in fact this is the objective of several of the more interesting essays including one on the concept of subversion by Elizabeth Grace and Colin Leys which draw analogies between it and the concept of sedition used in the eighteenth century. The intent rather is to "explore the under-lying experiences and issues that ought to be taken into account in coming to an answer" (p.6). In particular, the editor sees the purpose of the collection as showing how the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate dissent has been drawn by various regimes and the consequences of their so doing.

While many of the essays focus on the Canadian experience - the three final essays trace the historical response of the Canadian Security Service to the political left, the political right and Quebecois nationalism, there are also essays on the FBI, clearly relevant because of the considerable dependence the Canadian Security Intelligence Service has on it and the CIA; dissent in Eastern Europe, an essay overtaken by events; dissent in Latin America, whose experience is largely irrelevant to the issues faced by the Parliamentary democracies of the West; and the Italian communist party.

There is also a group of more theoretical essays, largely centred on Canadian and US experience, which deal respectively with dissent and national security in general, the limits of civil disobedience and the concept of subversion.

A number of the essays are of interest in their own right, but the collection as a collection would have benefited from a sharper focus. After all, it is an unusual day when those charged with the oversight of a security service go to the academic community to seek advice; it behoves the academic community in such circumstances to give them precisely what they asked for.

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**John Gascoigne**, *Cambridge in the age of the Enlightenment: science, religion and politics from the Restoration to the French Revolution* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989), xii + 358pp., £35.

When comparisons are drawn between the Enlightenment in England and France, it is common practice to contrast the *opposition* between science and established religion affirmed by the *philosophes* with the 'holy alliance' enshrined within Anglican natural theology. In his meticulous account of the politics of the Cambridge curriculum, John Gascoigne has little to say about France, but a very great deal about the forging of the alliance between Anglican apologetics and Newtonian natural philosophy. Through the controversial work of Margaret Jacob, we have become accustomed to the view that prominent among popularizers of Newton in the decades following *Principia* (1687) were 'latitudinarian' divines who could defend the revolutionary settlement by drawing parallels between the action of Providence in nature and in history. The theological voluntarism that lay behind Newton's description of the universe could be used to affirm the primacy of a divine mandate over the divine right of kings, whilst the law-bound Newtonian system eventually served as a metaphor for a stabilizing constitution. One of the great strengths of Gascoigne's analysis is that he offers longer-term perspectives on this fusion of science with politics. Ranging from the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660 to the aftermath of the French Revolution, he records the changing perceptions of Cambridge divines with each change of dynasty, the apotheosis of an alliance between Newtonian science and whig politics by the mid-eighteenth century, and its vulnerability as a trend towards toryism, culminating in the reactionary ethos of the 1790s, led to a reaffirmation of revealed theology and a concomitant critique of natural religion.

The first of the three periods through which the author structures his account is that between 1660 and 1688 when the prevailing doctrine within the University was one of passive obedience, even to a monarch capable of imposing his will to increase a high church presence. Here Gascoigne brings out well the continuity between the practices of Charles and the later machinations of James, which did eventually incite a revolt and from no less a personage than Newton himself. There was a 'latitudinarian' presence in Cambridge during this period, but the religious toleration sought by the likes of Henry More was suspect and often under attack. "They push hard at the Latitude men as they call them", More complained in July 1665: "some in their pulpitts call them sons of Belial, others make the Devill a latitudinarian, which things are as pleasing to me as the raillery of a jack-pudding at one end of a dancing rope." A younger generation of latitudinarians, which included Simon Patrick, John Tillotson, Edward Stillingfleet and Thomas Tenison, left Cambridge for London to make their mark as preachers. The patronage they enjoyed

from prominent lawyers suggests to the author that conciliatory views on church authority would appeal to a profession which had long contested the power of the church courts. Though Newton was burrowing away in private, this was a period in which the profile of natural philosophy was actually higher in Oxford.

Gascoigne's second period, which saw the consolidation of whig Cambridge, stretches from 1689 to 1768. His argument is that the emergence of Newton's popularizers in the University owed more to changes in the political and religious views of office holders than to the presence of Newton himself, who was now looking to public office in London. That Newton did not bring about Newtonianism is supported by the consideration that it was in Oxford, through the efforts of David Gregory and his former student at Edinburgh, John Keill, that Newton's formidable science was made accessible. Newton's own university was, however, to steal the show as colleges such as Trinity and Clare sheltered nuclei of Newtonian disciples - most famously Richard Bentley and his self-appointed circle at Trinity. In commendable and painstaking detail, Gascoigne identifies the axes of power, the personal contacts and the political networks through which the association between Newtonians and a whig ideology was fostered. For readers less enamoured of ecclesiastical politics the wealth of detail may at times seem excessive; but one values the care with which he discusses such crucial figures as the University's high steward, then (from 1748) Chancellor, the duke of Newcastle, who did so much to consolidate that shift of allegiance from high church principles to the recognition of the Hanoverians as rightful monarchs, earlier facilitated by the coterie of Daniel Finch, 2nd earl of Nottingham. In Gascoigne's reading, Newtonian physico-theology could not be other than political in complexion because, as exemplified by Samuel Clarke, it made moral virtue the goal of a Christian practice that no longer needed a privileged priesthood as custodians of the finer points of doctrine. His conclusion is that by 1750 Cambridge had "learned to accommodate a very wide spectrum of religious opinion provided that at least the external forms of Christianity were preserved."

Such complacency was, however, unable to withstand the political pressures that developed during his third period, 1769-1800, when the holy alliance between science and religion was increasingly questioned. Comparing the 1790s with the '80s and '70s, Gascoigne observes the theological retrenchment within the University as the established Church faced a plethora of threats, including the assertive demands of Dissenters. The Senate's ready acceptance of a loyal address in 1792, following the proclamation against seditious publications, is seen as epitomising a 'gulf' between the Cambridge of the 1790s and '70s. Not that the passage from mid-century whiggery to the 'new toryism' of the '90s was necessarily a rough one: dons would commonly look to that political creed which

offered the best defence of an established order. There was, however, an already greater polarization of university opinion in the 1770s than in the '60s and '50s as tempers were raised by (failed) attempts to remove the obligation of clergy to subscribe to the 39 articles. By tory critics such moves were often ascribed, as they were by William Cole, to the "natural consequences of the roaring after liberty, toleration, latitudinarianism of your Burnets, Hoadleys, Locks, Clarkes and other of that sort for the last century". By the end of the eighteenth century even the Newtonianism within the curriculum was largely reduced to a mathematical core, the once favoured physico-theology either eclipsed or displaced by arguments drawn from natural history.

It will already be clear that at the heart of Gascoigne's book is a correlation which he expresses most succinctly in this form: "it was no coincidence that the chief advocates of Newton's work within Cambridge were also among the most vocal apologists for the post-revolutionary order." Does he then differ from Margaret Jacob and others who have argued a similar case? Jacob, after all, has been heavily criticized for implying that there was a coherent latitudinarian party within the Anglican Church that represented a new orthodoxy as it gained political power. Critics have observed that far from signalling a new *orthodoxy* informed by scientific principles, the figures most closely associated with the propagation of Newton's system were a suspect minority tainted with Arianism and other marks of heterodoxy. For all that the latitudinarian divines may have looked to science to convict the atheist, the prevalent view within the Church remained that Parliamentary legislation would be the more effective recourse. Gascoigne is sensitive to the difficulties raised by the word 'latitudinarian', but encounters the characteristics of that mentality (tolerance, commitment to natural theology, insistence that the meaning of Scripture is transparent to reason...) among so many of the Cambridge dons he has studied that he can criticize J.C.D. Clarke's view that the Georgian ecclesiastical norm was "profoundly conservative, theologically orthodox and devotionally viable". Gascoigne's emphasis is on the continuing dynamics between high church and latitudinarian attitudes and this enables him to part company with Jacob at a critical point. "One should be cautious", he writes, "of regarding Newtonian natural philosophy as so totally identified with the Church as a whole as to drive the Church's critics to adopt alternative natural philosophies". He has in mind Jacob's suggestion that John Toland adopted the thought of Giordano Bruno in order to "devise a philosophy of nature that he could effectively posit against the Church's Newtonianism".

Gascoigne's overall picture is therefore richer and more subtle. But it is still the thesis of a 'lumper'. Whilst a commitment to natural theology is not the sole defining characteristic of his latitudinarians, it remains the bond that unites them. Hence the dialectic between them and their high

church critics features as an antithesis throughout the book. One therefore becomes rather anxious about the excluded middle: what of those divines who valued a limited role for natural theology in the defence of their faith, but who would have strenuously resisted any notion of its sufficiency? One of the classics of eighteenth-century apologetics, Joseph Butler's *Analogy of Religion*, would illustrate such a position, but the response to that book in Cambridge does not feature in Gascoigne's text. He is, of course, aware that his correlation between Newtonianism and latitudinarianism can be pushed too far. There are always those who lie outside the grid. From his own account it is clear that one could be a latitudinarian and critic of Locke (Stillingfleet); one could be a whig and opposed to latitudinarian theology (Daniel Waterland); a tory and advocate of Newtonian science (John Freind); and, later in the eighteenth century, a high churchman and defender of Newton's religiosity (Samuel Horsley). By making a *penchant* for natural theology the hallmark of a latitudinarian, Gascoigne at one point almost verges on inconsistency when he speculates that a preference for the medical sciences among seventeenth-century Cambridge high churchmen may reflect their belief that the biological sciences were a "more obvious source of support for the argument from design than the physical sciences". If he is right, then among some high churchmen, as among some evangelicals later in the eighteenth century, natural theology did have a place. One simply had to ensure that it was not of a character to graduate into anything resembling those unseemly '-isms': Arianism, Socinianism and deism.

The Newtonian apologists often receive a bad press both from historians and philosophers of religion. One thinks of Michael J. Buckley's recent contention (not dissimilar to that of John Dillenberger thirty years ago) that the physico-theology of Clarke, Derham and other Boyle lecturers precipitated modern atheism by inviting its own refutation. Reading Gascoigne one is exposed to a sufficient number of high church tirades in which the latitudinarians are conflated with the Laodiceans that one sometimes senses that they are not receiving a fair hearing. It then comes as something of a surprise when the author concludes that the marriage between Newtonianism and the latitudinarians was fruitful. It is worth asking about the extent to which one should allow the jibes of critics to colour our assessment of those criticized. Even the much maligned Samuel Clarke saw himself as *attacking* three species of deism, and looking sympathetically at only one category (those in antiquity who, without revelation, had presaged the moral teaching of Christ) which was currently without exemplars. Gascoigne's treatment of Tillotson may suffer in this respect for he takes on trust Swift's aphorism that "Tillotson is the person whom all English free thinkers own as their head". A recent study by Roger Emerson suggests that it is an injustice to Tillotson to stress only those facets of his theology which deists would pillage for their purposes. A balanced reading of his sermons would have to

recognize a more conservative devotional aspect and an insistence (against the Socinians) on the need for an educated clergy. [See also the study by Gerard Reedy, reviewed in this journal, no.8 (1989), 145-148.]

Such anxieties are not intended to deflate what is a fine book. I particularly valued the illuminating contrasts with Oxford, the sensitive differentiation between the political characters of different colleges, judicious remarks about the institutional inertia and examination systems responsible for the poor provision of instruction in theology and the equally critical assessment of the low ebb of *experimental* science in late eighteenth-century Cambridge. The best known exemplar of British natural theology, William Paley, also receives critical attention as one who defended the religious establishment but with weapons curiously liable to backfire. A concluding epilogue provides an informed review of the diversification of natural theology in the nineteenth century as the historical sciences took their toll.

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**Frank O’Gorman**, *Voters, patrons and parties: The unreformed electoral system of Hanoverian England 1734-1832*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), xiv + 445pp. £40.00.

Those historians convinced of the oligarchical nature of politics in Hanoverian England have usually ignored the role of the unreformed electorate. When they have examined elections, they have generally looked at the prime examples of electoral malpractice in order to prove the predominance of patronage. This tactic has led them to conclude that few of the electorate could vote as they wished; economic vulnerability and social deference compelled them to follow the instructions of their superiors. While never denying the undoubted electoral influence of the landed elite, Frank O’Gorman has now effectively destroyed the traditional notion that the voters rarely mattered in deciding Hanoverian elections. By asking some basic questions about the size, distribution and conduct of the electorate and about the factors which influenced the behaviour of the voters, he has challenged many well-established views of the unreformed electorate. After many years of diligent research, and with evidence from well over a hundred manuscript collections and dozens of poll-books, and with the benefit of sophisticated computer-aided analysis, he has produced an enormously important study of the voters of Hanoverian England. Clearly written and vigorously argued, this major work of scholarship proves conclusively that the unreformed electorate must be taken seriously. While the elite could undoubtedly exercise considerable influence over the electorate, O’Gorman demonstrates that this could be achieved only after patrons had spent a great deal of time, money and energy on cultivating and persuading the voters to vote as they wished. The powerful oligarchs could not guarantee electoral success because voters had minds of their own and they often resented crude, bullying tactics. The electoral control of patrons was always incomplete, tentative and temporary. Patrons were successful only if they engaged in complex and long-term dialogue with the voters and demonstrated a genuine concern for the interests of the local community. Voters were clearly motivated by their own needs and desires. While they rarely voted along class lines, they were often influenced by religion and increasingly influenced by national and even party issues. Their ability to express resentment and dissatisfaction ensured that the ruling oligarchy paid some attention to their views and interests. Political stability, O’Gorman concludes, was not the product of widespread patronage and servile deference, but was the consequence of a balance between the forces of oligarchy and a highly participatory electoral system.

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**Mark Philp**, *Paine, Past Masters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), ix + 130pp., £3.95.

The phenomenal growth in Paine studies continues unabated. In 1989, a new book-length study by Gregory Claeys and two journal articles (one by Gary Kates, the other by the present reviewer) have now been joined by Mark Philp’s briskly written, highly informative *Paine*. With these additions to the previously reviewed studies which appeared in 1988 (see *Enlightenment and Dissent*, No.8), there seems to be no end to this welcomed, late-twentieth century interest in Thomas Paine’s contribution to our understanding of his radically changing world.

Philp’s small volume is a skilful addition to Oxford University Press’s important Past Masters Series, now well over a decade in the making. By tradition, these works, crafted by the finest experts in their respective fields, are all short and designed for the edification of the layman. One consistent characteristic of every one of them is that they are written in a lively, pithy and highly readable style. Moreover, the excellent quality of the series has meant that even the specialist may learn from the authors of these works.

Philp’s contribution is well within the traditional standards of the series. He has brought Paine and his work into a new light, while at the same time explaining the breadth and inconsistency of his work. The book neatly divides evenly into four parts, all chronological: chapter one on Paine’s life; chapter two basically on *Common sense* (1776) and the *Crisis* series; chapter three on *Rights of Man*; and chapter four on *The age of reason*.

Philp demonstrates how Paine’s thought progressed from his early American years when he was among the first to advocate America’s separation from Britain to his post-French Revolutionary works. As a burgeoning author just arrived on the shores of the New World, Paine used powerful rhetorical devices to convince his wide audience of his views. He apparently understood the role of reason as a normative factor in man’s thinking, says Philp, but he had not yet sufficiently matured intellectually to understand the connection between reason, justice and natural rights. Only during the French Revolutionary years did he fully “transform his until then rather loosely formulated position into a fully-fledged natural rights justification of representative government and the ultimate sovereignty of the people” (p.55).

It is Philp’s view that Paine was deeply influenced by the Commonwealth/Country tradition when he came to America and reflected this in his earliest writings, including *Common sense*. Only in the *American crisis* series did he begin to withdraw from this tradition, seeing for

perhaps the first time the important role that commerce could play in the future development of a new nation like the United States. By the French Revolution, Paine had moved significantly away from this older tradition and had clearly begun to cultivate his own philosophical position, one which was stamped with his own peculiar pragmatic and rhetorical style.

His *Rights of Man* was his watershed work, therefore, a work where Paine's full originality showed through as he developed his theory of natural rights, popular sovereignty, and social responsibility into an ethical theory that attacked the very foundation of Edmund Burke's reliance on historical prescription. Philp's review of *Rights of Man* is an innovation in itself. He does not accept, as have so many previous scholars, the view that Paine fumbled for a response to Burke's attack on the French Revolution. Philp shows that Paine's argument was much more sophisticated and complex in that monarchy is nothing but spectacle and fraud blinding the people to their true interest, and Burke's pamphlet is nothing more than a contribution to this continuing fraud.

Moreover, Philp's discussion, brief though it is, of Paine's *Decline and fall of the English system of finance* is the fullest discussion of this often ignored work since A.O. Aldridge's essay published over 45 years ago. Philp rightly places this work in the larger context of Paine's overall political thought and shows how Paine made use of an economic subject (the potential failure of the Bank of England) to attack the repressive Pitt regime in the mid-1790s.

Finally, in a chapter entitled "The Kingdom of Heaven", Philp demonstrates the central importance of Paine's religious sensibilities and takes a mighty step in moving the memory of Thomas Paine away from the atheism with which the world has associated him since the scurrilous biographies of George Chalmers and James Cheetham.

This little volume is not without its problems, however, though they are few. Part of the difficulty is that because the Past Masters studies are such diminutive works, it is impossible for authors to produce very much detail. As a result, many of Philp's assertions about Paine stay just that: assertions.

It is seriously questionable, for example, whether the Commonwealth and Country tradition really had very much influence on him. Philp says it does but really never demonstrates how this tradition operated. John Pocock, who is cited by Philp in the bibliography, wrote as recently as 1985 that Paine "remains difficult to fit into any kind of category" (see Pocock's *Virtue, commerce and history* [Cambridge, 1985, p.276], which Philp does not cite). This seems to be the wisest course in dealing with an iconoclast the likes of Thomas Paine. It is clear he hated England

but his language does not reflect the Country or Commonwealthman tradition; his published writings never once echoed the sense of equilibrium between Kings, Lords and Commons that is necessary for republican government; and his public-spiritedness seems to have developed from his own innate sensibilities of right and wrong, and not from the Machiavellian-Harringtonian tradition of classical republicanism. In short, Paine was his own man.

Another problem is Philp's considerable references to Paine's audiences which he describes as being just about everyone who could afford the numerous pamphlets that he published from 1776 onward. But just who is this audience? Philp tells us at one time that it was "an audience for political ideas among men and women whose reading had been limited to the Bible, the Book of Common Prayer and *Pilgrim's Progress*" (p.ix), at another time it was "the middling and artisan ranks of colonial society" (p.43), and yet another that it was "men and women with little education" (p.66). We might suspect that it is all of these people at one time or another. But the question is whether there were any others? Did his audience consist of the upper classes who might have read his works and choked on them? Might it have included the wealthy manufacturers and industrialists, some of whom hired his pen for causes which, while benefiting America, might have enhanced their wealth and standing? These are the kinds of questions which a longer study would have had to answer. Philp's book consequently does not address them, though some attention to the issue of audience (he did after all raise it) would have strengthened his overall argument.

Finally, Philp includes a rather curious comparison of Paine's vision of a just society which he painted in *Agrarian justice* with John Rawls' notion of distributive justice which he published in his 1972 volume, *A theory of justice*. This cross-century comparison will be of limited interest to political theorists but of little value to historians and students. For the historian, it is quite difficult to remove an historical figure from the context in which he lived and compare his views with any rigour to someone who followed more than 200 years later. It is tantamount to the kind of scholarship which seeks proto-Marxist thinking in seventeenth-century Leveller writings or in eighteenth-century radicalism. The comparison fails as an operative intellectual stance, and in the end, it just doesn't matter very much.

Overall, Philp's work stands as an important contribution to the ever-growing field of Paine studies, and a welcomed one at that, for the layman initiate as well as for the seasoned scholar.

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W M Spellman, *John Locke and the problem of depravity* (Oxford: Clarendon, Press, 1988), 244pp., £27.50 (\$45.00).

Contrary to the oft-reiterated thesis that Locke threw overboard the heavy baggage of morbid Christian anthropology, thereby impelling the good ship Education upon its enlightened way, Dr Spellman demonstrates that although Locke did insist upon the character-forming influence of the individual's environment, the undertow of original sin was ever present to his mind. Our author is thus in recent good company, and the pirates in this story are those eighteenth-century thinkers and their successors, who have selectively plundered Locke's writings and have not taken them whole. The fact is that 'Throughout the corpus of [Locke's] published and manuscript writings there exists a definite strain of pessimism about human nature in general and about his immediate contemporaries in particular.'

The oscillations in Christian thought between man as handiwork of God and man as apostate are the subject of the first chapter. The Adamic theory of the Fall as the cause of original sin is shown to be Pauline rather than Pentateuchal, and the progress of this idea down to the Reformation is indicated. While appreciating Dr Spellman's need to be selective, we should nevertheless have welcomed some 'rounding-out' paragraphs on, for example, Gottschalk (here confined within a note) and Bradwardine. It is characteristic of Dr Spellman's eirenic approach that he articulates the measure of *agreement* between Augustine and Pelagius, both of whom advocated moral rigour; and that he reminds us that 'Man's utter helplessness in the face of sin was even acknowledged by that obdurate nemesis of the Puritans, William Laud.' Laud and the Puritans were further at one in opposing antinomianism.

In introducing Locke, Dr Spellman find scant evidence of his alleged Puritan upbringing, or of the influence upon him of John Owen's ideas concerning toleration. On the contrary, during his Oxford days Locke was deeply disturbed by religious enthusiasm - to him Quakers were 'mad folks'; and he was dismayed by the low intellectual capacities and the selfish proclivities of the generality of mortals. This distrust, together with his abhorrence of sectarian strife and his love of order in society, explains the welcome he accorded to Charles II at the Restoration of 1660. But - and here we recapitulate a running theme of his book - 'Locke did not believe that man's proclivity for evil...could be overcome by individual merit alone; his "slavery to sin" was in effect irreversible without the redeeming work of Christ.' Locke set his face against both extreme Puritan pessimism and undue rationalistic optimism concerning human moral ability.

'The Broad Church Perspective' is delineated and discussed in the third chapter - a chapter notable for the sensitive analysis of Whichcote's influence upon Locke. Whichcote's thought appealed to Locke not only because of their shared rejection of the doctrine of predestination and advocacy of a minimal creed (in opposition to sectarian squabbles over 'non-essentials'), but also because the Platonist took sin with full seriousness. This measure of common ground was not shaken by Locke's eventual rejection of Whichcote's defence of innate moral knowledge.

The crux of Dr Spellman's thesis is to be found in chapter IV: 'Creating the Moral Agent'. He shows that those who have viewed Locke's attack upon innate ideas as ushering in a new age of education and environmentalism can stand as comfortably as they do only because they overlook both the continuing impact upon him of the reality of man's sinful state, and the writings of those, generally regarded as more orthodox than Locke, who also emphasised the determinative power of good habits.

So to Locke's friendship with Limborch and other Dutch scholars - Arminian contacts which harmed Locke in Calvinistic eyes. Locke found himself at the mercy of the Calvinist John Taylor's polemics, and when the Deist John Toland drew from Locke, Locke became guilty by association in the opinion of conservative divines. By now Locke was devoting increasing attention to the study of the Bible, which he construed as affirming both the 'Pelagian' notion that sin is a matter of wrong choice, and the un-Pelagian view of sin's universality.

The quest of common ground surfaces once more in the sixth chapter, in which Dr Spellman interestingly discusses John Morris, and shows how the original and final positions of Locke and Stillingfleet were direct opposites. That is to say, whereas Locke had started on the side of order and Stillingfleet on that of freedom, in later life Locke became the advocate of [limited] religious toleration, while Stillingfleet opposed it. Common ground remained, however, in that both continued to maintain the doctrine of depravity.

In the penultimate chapter Dr Spellman shows that although Shaftesbury could not accept Locke's denial of innate moral ideas, he nevertheless inclined to Lockean realism and pessimism concerning natural man. Unlike Locke, however, Shaftesbury left natural man on his own, Locke's acknowledgement of the availability of saving grace notwithstanding.

In his conclusion, Dr Spellman opines that Locke would not have welcomed the attentions of those eighteenth-century writers who turned him into an educationalist-environmentalist: Locke's view of man was closer to that of William Perkins than to that of William Godwin. Not

indeed that he stood for sin as inherited from Adam; but he was convinced that Adam's sin had removed the possibility that unaided natural man could live up to his highest ideals. Education could not, by itself, remedy matters.

A useful bibliography and an index enhance this book.

Dr Spellman's writing is generally clear and occasionally quaint. (His textual studies have given him a fondness for the verb 'to espy'.) He has closely studied his sources, and marshals his evidence with care. His notes are informative, though it seems a little slapdash to give Sydney Cave as the source of a widely-available position of Irenaeus. And how ironic that that famously meticulous scholar, Geoffrey F Nuttall, should have his name misspelled in the bibliography! But these are small points. The cumulative effect of the following remarks is somewhat more serious:

First, as we have seen, Locke was not at the outset an advocate of toleration. Dr Spellman informs us that by 1678 he had been a convert to the doctrine for many years. On what grounds? Was it simply, as our author states, that Locke reflected more upon 'the problem of natural law and man's knowledge of its contents'? Surely we must reckon with the history of the privations of Dissent under the Clarendon Code and, as an aspect of this, with the growing recognition on the part of many that a regime which hounds such non-subversive, educated, conscientious men as Richard Baxter, Philip Henry and Oliver Heywood eventually discredits itself. More important still was the Dissenting conviction that when Caesar usurps the place of God, the Christian's obedience is owed to God. Dr Spellman does not sound this note.

Secondly, was Milton a Puritan or not? He is said to have been so on p.49, while on p.92 'Milton's Puritanism' is qualified with the words, 'if in truth the appellation is at all appropriate.' The reason given for the later mode of expression is that Milton's Puritanism 'extended little beyond an intense disdain for Church of England discipline, civil interference in matters of opinion and religious practice, and perceived monarchical tyranny.' He was a biblicist, and he was serious about sin. Now these are all significant matters, and they are not to be brushed aside on the ground that Milton could not assent to some of the formulae of scholastic Calvinism. A closer analysis of the ethos of Puritanism would have assisted at this point.

Thirdly, Dr Spellman blandly states that 'The nub of Reformation theology, we know, centred on its understanding of man's depraved nature.' But did it? There is a strong line in Reformation theology which insists that we do not truly see ourselves until we have seen the holy majesty of God. In a further onesided statement we are informed that

'Each respective Reformed Church found itself putting together its own inviolable code of orthodoxy, an exclusive confessional dogma.' The term 'inviolable' is unfortunate, given the prefaces which were sometimes written by those who composed confessional statements, in which they declared their openness to correction if it could be shown that they had misinterpreted Scripture. Again, the suggestion that within the Reformed family the several confessions were used as weapons of exclusion cannot be supported. On the contrary, there is a high degree of accord between the Reformed confessions, and this is attributable in large measure precisely to the fact that there was cordial contact between the churches, that they shared their ideas, and that their scholars visited one another from Hungary to Scotland.

Fourthly, we are correctly told that the Calvinist John Edwards agreed with the Puritan Increase Mather and with the Latitudinarian John Locke that the depraved were to be exhorted to 'strive to enter in at the strait gate.' But the point is not made that the Bible itself is the source of the antinomy, 'You shall and you cannot...' Similarly, Dr Spellman explains that Whitby held that 'The gift of free choice magnified...the seriousness of all offences in a manner that he believed was impossible under the *Calvinist* reading of Romans (which appeared to make God the author of man's hardness of heart)' (our italics). But it is *Paul* who says that God hardens the heart: this is no Calvinist 'reading', the apostle's statement is unequivocal. How it is to be construed is, of course, another matter.

Taken together these remarks suggest that at times Dr Spellman does not quite 'get under the skin' of some of those about whom he writes. They do not, however, controvert his main thesis.

We may conclude by noting two stimulating remarks - one from Dr Spellman, one from Locke:

(a) 'To rely on others for our religious precepts was, for Whichcote, to follow in the steps of the Roman Catholics.' This is the salutary face of Enlightenment individualism - that face which forbids us to take our faith at second hand. This part of the Enlightenment heritage is not to be overlooked by those who (with reason enough) lament the erosion of ecclesiology to which that same individualism could lead.

(b) 'The great disputes that have been and are still in the several churches have been for the most part about their own inventions and not about things ordained by God Himself, or necessary to salvation.' Precisely because of the questions begged here the ecumenical machine trundles on.

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