

The  
PRICE - PRIESTLEY

Newsletter

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THE PRICE-PRIESTLEY NEWSLETTER

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## Editorial

There are many indications that interest in the lives, *thought and work of Richard Price (1723-91) and Joseph Priestley (1733-1804)* has been growing in recent years and we believe that the time has come to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas for scholars working in this field. As is well known Price and Priestley achieved distinction and some notoriety in a wide range of concerns - they lived at a time when highly gifted men could reach and work at the frontiers of several different disciplines. Priestley is perhaps now best remembered for his contributions to science, particularly to the development of chemistry and electricity, but in his own day he attracted attention on many subjects: theology, ecclesiastical history, metaphysics and epistemology, moral and political philosophy, history and biography, rhetoric and literary criticism, education and linguistics, and controversy with almost everyone who was prepared to take issue with him. Price too had wide-ranging interests: moral philosophy and probability theory, theology, political pamphleteering, demography, insurance and finance. Their work in these fields is worthy of study not only for its intrinsic merits and the contributions they made to the development of various disciplines, but also because it represents the intellectual thrust of what may be conveniently called the late Enlightenment in Britain. Both Price and Priestley were members of the 'Honest Whigs' a club which also included: Benjamin Franklin, James Burgh, author of Political Disquisitions, John Canton, Philip Furneaux, Andrew Kippis, editor of Biographia Britannica, Theophilus Lindsey, Abraham Rees, and William Rose of the Monthly Review. This group is interesting because its members combined a passion for the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge, including the empirical sciences, with the advocacy of radical criticism, particularly in theology, the promotion of liberal values, especially concerning freedom of speech and enquiry, and a defence of Whig attitudes and institutions. It is, we believe, worth studying the work and influence of the members of this group not just to determine what impact they had upon the development of British and American ideas and institutions, but also to ask what relevance their strengths and virtues and the doctrines they preached still have for those concerned to find solutions to the problems we now face. We hope that this project will appeal to those with an interest in eighteenth century studies including those whose especial concern is the history of science.

Contributions will be welcome on all aspects of Price's and Priestley's works, and we shall also be glad to receive work devoted to the lives and thought of their close associates. Articles, short notices and reviews will be published, but it is also hoped to include copies of hitherto unpublished manuscripts, requests for information, queries concerning the location of manuscripts and correspondence, and notices of work in progress.

We should like to invite all who receive this newsletter to bring its existence and its purpose to the attention of those who may have an interest in becoming either a subscriber or a contributor or both.

M.F.  
D.O.T.

### Notes to Contributors and Subscribers

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

SUBSCRIBERS who have not paid their subscriptions in advance will receive an invoice with the first issue. The subscription for readers in Great Britain is £1.00 (including postage and packing) per annum. For overseas readers it is £1.00 plus postage and packing. All subscriptions and queries concerning them should be sent to Martin Fitzpatrick, The Department of History, The University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, Dyfed, SY23 3DY, Great Britain.

JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, AND THE CAUSE OFUNIVERSAL TOLERATION

'There still remains in the eyes of almost every Protestant, from the highest to the lowest, from the best informed to the most ignorant, from the infidel to the zealot, and from the fanatic to the man of cool reason, a rooted prejudice against the name of 'Catholic', which no time I fear, or the efforts of philosophy, will ever erase. No sooner is the infant mind susceptible of the slightest impression, than it is the business of the nurse to paint a hideous form, and that she calls 'Popery'. (1)

Thus wrote Joseph Berington in 'The State and Behaviour of the English Catholics from the Reformation to the Year 1780', and, in the year of the Gordon Riots, with good reason. Only ten years later the Protestant Dissenters of England and Wales applied to Parliament for the total repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts, and in doing so included the Catholics in their application. In the following year, when the English Catholics were applying to the legislature for further relief from the penal laws concerning their religion, the Deputies for the Dissenters resolved to address the Catholics to wish them all success in their endeavours: they declared that although they had been disappointed in the previous year, they would 'truly rejoice' in Catholic success in their present application. (2) The reply from the Catholics welcomed their support, but suggested that they had expected opposition rather than encouragement from that quarter. (3) Why indeed, was such support forthcoming? What had caused the Dissenters to change their attitude to their Catholic brethren? This paper does not intend to answer that question in its entirety, rather it aims to examine the attitudes of Old Dissent to Catholicism, and to discuss the role of Joseph Priestley in helping to change them. (4)

When, in 1765, John Locke's Letters Concerning Toleration were republished by Thomas Hollis, Richard Baron suggested in the preface, 'That though the nation is greatly obliged to Mr. Locke for defending the cause of religious liberty in the strongest and clearest manner, yet the older writers are not to be forgotten, as they laid the foundation'. (5) The older writers had indeed been largely forgotten and, despite the plea of Baron, Locke's writings dominated eighteenth century discussions of toleration. One of the leading campaigners for Catholic relief, the Benedictine monk Joseph Wilks, wrote in 1791 that 'since Locke published his letters on toleration the dispute has been less whether the Catholic tenets be true or false, than whether they were reconcileable with the principles of good government'. (6) The central issue in the debate on Catholic toleration as Wilks noted concerned the relationship of the Catholics to the State. (7) Yet, despite

the

the Act of Toleration which signalized the end of the Confessional State and Locke's works which provided the basis for the separation of religion and politics, and the progress of secularization since then, the question, 'What constitutes good citizenship?' remained many sided: the features of Catholicism which led John Wesley to conclude that 'Protestants ought never to trust Roman Catholics' (8) were precisely those which concerned Pitt the Younger when he was approached by the English Catholic Committee in May 1788. Wesley believed that the Catholics could not provide convincing answers to three crucial question. They were: 'Has the public decision of the Council of Constance, That no faith is to be kept with Heretics, ever been publicly disclaimed by ye Church of Rome?'; 'Has not every Priest the power of Absolution and forgiveness of sins?'. 'Has not the Bishop of Rome a Power of dispensing with Oaths and Vows?'; (9) Joseph Berington, to whom these questions were addressed, failed to persuade Wesley that these questions could be answered in the negative, although along with many like minded English Catholics he continued to believe that such anti-Catholic prejudices could be dispelled, derived as they were from misinformation 'as to matter of fact'. (10) Eight years after Berington's abortive correspondence with Wesley, the English Catholic Committee discovered that similar prejudices were on Pitt's mind when they sought further relief for the Catholics from his Ministry. Before he would consider granting relief, he asked the Committee to furnish him with unimpeachable Catholic authorities to prove that he and his fellow Protestants were indeed 'misinformed'. (11) Unless they could do so, there would remain the fear that Catholicism was incompatible with allegiance to the State. It was a fear that the Dissenters in particular shared. 'The Dissenters', wrote the leading Catholic layman of the day, Lord Petre, 'have stronger prejudices concerning the political tendency of our Religion than the Church of England'. (12) He offered no explanation, but did note that the Dissenters 'seem to attend more' to those matters concerning the moral and political tendency of his faith. This in itself helps to explain the greater strength of their prejudices, for, in the consideration of such matters in the eighteenth century, reason, authority, and experience appeared to be on the side of anti-Catholicism. John Locke himself provided a thoroughly respectable pedigree for those prejudices; in a thinly veiled reference to Catholic allegiance to Rome, he argued that a Mahometan's professions of loyalty to the Christian Magistrate were irreconcilable with his 'blind obedience to the Mufti of Constantinople'. (13) More recently, Sir William Blackstone, in his influential Commentaries on the laws of England, had declared that, 'The tenets of the Papist are, undoubtedly, calculated for the introduction of all slavery both civil and religious'. (14) It followed that the Catholics should have no share in the benefits of the enlightened Constitution established by the Glorious Revolution of 1688.

The theoretical objections of the Lockes and the Blackstones to the tenets of Catholicism were powerfully reinforced by an

interpretation



Its hand our foes with terror view'd  
And swiftly fled when none pursu'd. (18)

Clearly Providence was on the side of Englishmen; it had preserved them in their liberty and their leather shoes. (19) Furthermore, the belief of the Dissenters in Providential design, coupled with their emphasis on the Bible as the sole source of truth, and their literalism in interpreting it, led to the expectation that sooner or later the Pope would be toppled from his throne. In their millenaral prognostications, the Dissenters saw the Pope as 'Anti-Christ, the man of sin, and son of perdition'. (20) It was not only the Calvinists who held that Catholicism was anti-Christian and vicious, such a view was shared by Dissenters of all shades of opinion; the Fall of Anti-Christ and the Second Coming were part of the most liberal Christian schemae. Thus one finds Richard Price proclaiming in his Thanksgiving Sermon of 1759,

'The scriptures I think, give us abundant reason to expect a time when Popish darkness and oppression shall be succeeded by universal peace and liberty. When,....the Kingdoms of this world become the Kingdom of the Lord and his Christ'. (21)

In sum, the Dissenters believed that they had every justification for thinking that Catholicism was a superstitious, subversive, vicious, intolerant religion, and they looked forward to the day when it would be swept away with Christ's Second Coming. (22)

For Richard Price anti-Catholicism was part of a generally liberal theology and political philosophy, but for most Dissenters, even their most learned brethren, it was rarely the result of a calm consideration of the moral and political tendency of Catholicism. Support for the Glorious Revolution easily degenerated into a hatred of all things foreign, a concern for historic liberties into a wilful distortion of history, disapproval of Catholic tenets into a deep suspicion of all Catholics, and opposition to the Papacy into a ranting millenarianism. A reason which painted such a black picture of Catholicism unwittingly became the tool of unreason and of an ugly persecuting anti-Catholicism which arose primarily out of an intolerant alchemy of xenophobia, social fears and even personal paranoia. This is clearly illustrated by the fact that some of the worst anti-Catholic propaganda in the first two decades of George III's reign emanated from a group of rational Christians, almost all Dissenters, who were in one way or another connected with Thomas Hollis of Lincoln's Inn, Boswell's 'Strenuous Whig'. (23) Although loosely knit (as Caroline Robbins has pointed out, it is impossible to disentangle a personal circle from a vast body of acquaintances), it included Caleb Fleming, pastor of the meeting house at Pinners Hall, Archdeacon Blackburne of Richmond, Yorkshire, his son-in-law Theophilus Lindsey, and John Disney, Richard Baron, Syllas Neville, William Harris, Thomas Brand, and Mrs. Catherine Macaulay. (24) They were the eighteenth century heirs of the seventeenth century radical libertarian tradition, of which anti-Catholicism was an integral part. (25)

The propagandizing efforts of Thomas Hollis and his connection had certain well defined characteristics. First

of all, they were concerned not with lay Catholics, for whom they were prepared to allow liberty of conscience, and even of public worship if only the public safety could be insured against the 'treasonable, exterminating principles of their religion' (26) (for them a condition impossible to meet), but rather were focused on the clergy: the Priests and especially the Jesuits. Many of the old fears of the latter as the epitome of all that was pernicious in Catholicism were resurrected and new fears of an invasion of Jesuit refugees from continental suppression of their order were aroused. (27) To counter the menace the 'Hollisites' recommended the enforcement of the penal laws against the Catholic clergy. In this they appeared to have had some success: in the first two decades of George III's reign one Grays Inn firm of attorneys alone defended more than twenty priests; at least one was convicted to perpetual imprisonment, though eventually banished; many others fled abroad or into the countryside where they could gain some inconspicuous protection from Catholic gentry. (28) This persecution, largely petty, forms the background to the fears of the Catholic Vicars Apostolic and their advisers in the lower clergy that Catholic Relief would only serve to stir up more virulent anti-Catholicism. (29)

The second characteristic of Hollisite anti-Catholicism was its propagation of the belief that Catholicism was rapidly increasing. Alarmism was spread through letters to the newspapers. For example, one of Hollis's friends signing himself 'Northumbriensis', possibly Theophilus Lindsey, wrote in 1765 that 'the number of Papists had increased one third since the year 1740 in Northumberland, Durham, Yorkshire, and Lancashire; another newspaper communicant writing in the same year claimed that there was 'not less than 200,000 Papists in and about London'. (30) To put such claims in perspective, John Bossy has recently estimated that there were about 80,000 Catholics throughout England and Wales circa 1770, and that the community had increased by some 20,000 since the beginning of the century. (31) His figure of 80,000 owes much to the persevering intolerance of the 'Hollisites', for as a result of the fears which they generated of Catholic increase, the House of Lords instructed the Bishops to make returns of all the Papists in their dioceses. The actual figure produced in 1767 was 69,376. (32) This Catholic counting operation did little to assuage the fears of Hollis and his friends. Arch-deacon Blackburne, who had published his influential 'Confessional' in 1766 in order to awaken indifference to 'the redoubled efforts of Popery to enlarge her borders, without being at the pains as heretofore to cover her match', (33) wrote to Rev. John Wiche in September 1767,

"I do not believe the Inquiry about the Papists will have the least good effect. It was proposed by Ld. Radnor totally against the Ecclesiastical grain, and I am informed that the lists about London are very superficially taken and that management has been used to sink and suppress discoveries." (34)

Blackburne felt, along with fellow members of the connection, that Popery could not be countered effectively until the Church Establishment abandoned its friendly attitude towards the Papists, made a conscious effort to rid itself of the remnants of Papistry

in its organization and articles of belief, and combined with Dissenters to present a united Protestant front against it. The Church Establishment, Blackburne believed, was faced with a choice: either of reforming itself along the lines suggested, or of 'shifting nearer and nearer to Popery'. (35) Already it was 'growing daily' into a 'resemblance' of the Papal; (36) the 'absurd pretensions' of the Laudian era (37) were being revived and the progress of Popery connived at in order to counterbalance the Protestant Dissenting interest which was in danger of being broken by the 'Iron Arm of Church Authority'. (38)

This deep rooted suspicion of the existing church establishment forms the third characteristic of the Hollis connection. Herein met their old Whig and anti-Catholic prejudices: 'Popery and arbitrary power' were their perpetual watchwords. (39) The revival of High Churchism in George III's reign caused them utmost concern. They viewed with alarm Archbishop Secker's Episcopal designs in the colonies, and his approval of the 'establishment of Popery' in Canada. Hollis himself organized propaganda on a transatlantic scale against these designs. (40) Yet by the year of his death, 1774, the movement to reform the Church's Articles had failed as had that to prevent the 'establishment of Popery' in Canada. From the point of view of influencing the legislature all the exertions of the 'strenuous Whig' and his friends failed and failed miserably. It is true that the Quebec Act had a troublesome passage through the Commons but the highest opposition vote against it was a mere forty nine. (41) The Catholic Relief Act of 1778, on the other hand, passed easily through both Houses. In the latter case, their exertions proved counter-productive for the Act relieved the Catholics of persecution under the 'Act for the further preventing the growth of Popery' of William III. It was this Act which been used to revive prosecutions against Catholic clergy. From the point of view, however, of keeping anti-Catholicism alive and threatening in the community at large and of revivifying its connection with radicalism and the Dissenting interest, the 'Hollisite' propaganda succeeded. It was a Dissenting M.P., Alderman Frederick Bull, who denounced the Quebec Act in the Commons as representing a victory for Papistry and French Absolutism, and who later seconded Lord George Gordon's motion for the repeal of the Catholic Relief Act. (42) The Earl of Shelburne, with whom the Alderman was connected, and a patron of the rational Dissenters, himself opposed the Act as openly establishing 'popery and arbitrary power over half America'. (43) Such views were supported by the Common Council of the City of London and popular demonstrators outside the Commons. Six years later, the conjunction of Dissenting and radical opinion with the lunatic fringe demands of Lord George Gordon and the Protestant Association made it difficult for the Magistrature to act. Shelburne through his equivocal behaviour and ill judgement incurred the suspicion of collusion with the rioters; on the day following the presentation of the Protestant Petition he had demanded the repeal of the Quebec Act. (44) But the most serious charge to be brought against the Dissenters concerning their responsibility for the Gordon Riots is that even the wild rumours connected with the Protestant Association of twenty thousand Jesuits in hiding on the Surrey side of the Thames planning treason

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and plotting to blow up the Embankment and drown London (45) gained some credence from their similarity with the suspicions of Catholic intrigue and increase propagated by the 'Hollisites' since the accession of George III. Dissenters as well as Methodists cannot be exonerated from blame for preparing the fuse for the riotous explosion of fanaticism in 1780. At that time there was, therefore, overwhelming evidence for Berington's view that 'from the fanatic to the man of cool reason' there remained a rooted prejudice against the name of Catholic'. (46)

Immediately following the riots there appeared a pamphlet entitled, 'A Free Address to Those who have petitioned for the repeal of the late act of Parliament in favour of the Roman Catholics by a Lover of Peace and Truth'. The author, Joseph Priestley, shared many of the anti-Catholic prejudices of his fellow Dissenters. Like them, he believed that Popery demonstrated the folly of civil establishments of religion. The creation of the Popish Hierarchy, 'that great mystery of iniquity' and 'abomination', had led to the corruption of the pristine Christianity of the early church. (47) It had, with its 'idolatrous service' (48) of the Mass, introduced into Christianity the pomp and splendour of the heathen religions. When Roger Boscovich complained to the Earl of Shelburne about Priestley's use of his theory of matter, Priestley compounded the offence by anti-Catholic remarks in his reply in which he called the Church of Rome 'properly anti-christian' and a system of abomination little better than heathenism'. (49) Although Priestley some years later praised the 'laudable moderation of many of the members of the church of Rome', he remained convinced that the Papacy was 'Anti-Christ, the mystical Babylon, described in the book of Revelation, which was to prevail over the saints, to be drunk with the blood of the martyrs, and which is doomed to destruction'. (50) Yet, despite the many common links he retained with the anti-Catholic prejudices of the Dissenters, he refused to accept the familiar arguments for effective penal laws against the Catholics. In his 'Free Address' he reprobated his fellow Dissenters for their clamouring for the use of 'acts of Parliament' or 'outward force' against them. His espousal of the cause of Catholic toleration would not, however, have caused surprise for his position on this issue had been made clear in his 'Essay on the First Principles of Government', first published in 1768.

In the first edition of the 'Essay' Priestley devoted a chapter to the discussion 'Of Religious Liberty and Toleration', in which he examined the question in general and then in particular relation to the Catholics. Such an examination, he argued, could only be conducted upon the basis of 'fact and experience', 'as all arguments a priori in matters of policy are apt to be fallacious' (51), and fact and experience demonstrated that the magistrate should interfere not at all or as little as possible in religion:

"Those societies have ever enjoyed the most happiness, and have been *ceteris paribus* in the most flourishing state, where the civil magistrates have meddled least with religion, and where they have most closely confined their attention to what immediately affects the civil interest of their fellow citizens". (52)

Civil and religious concerns were so different that the only justification for civil interference in religion would be to quiet religious strife. (53) History showed both that tolerant societies flourished (England since the Act of Toleration, Holland and Pennsylvania) and that intolerance was injurious (as it had been to Flanders, and France since the Revocation of the edict of Nantes), and that tolerance even between Christian and Non-Christian caused no inconvenience. He concluded,

"Pity it is then, that more and fairer experiments are not made, when judging from what is past, the consequences of *unbounded liberty in matters of religion* promise to be so very favourable to the best interests of mankind". (54)

Priestley was not denying that there was a connection between civil and religious affairs, but he thought that civil interference in religion was rarely required 'in the present advanced state of human society' (55) Taking a comprehensive view of religion including 'enthusiasm, superstition and every species of false religion as well as the true', (56) he argued that a full and equal toleration for all would be most beneficial to the state for 'all modes of religion... enforce the most essential parts, at least, of that conduct, which the good order of society requires. (57) In such a situation the various modes of religion would vie with each other to show themselves worthy of the magistrate's protection. There would thus be an alliance between religion and civil policy, in which each religion enforced 'the same conduct by different motives'. 'Any other alliance between church and state' was 'Only the alliance of different sorts of worldly minded men for their temporal emolument'. (58) To the charge that he had overlooked the excesses which had been committed in the name of religion, Priestley replied that the magistrate could deal with these without his troubling himself about religious opinions; men should be tried for their deeds and not their opinions. (59) Believing that the state would find 'solid advantage in every relaxation of its claims over men's consciences', he looked forward to the day when 'religious opinions, and religious actions, be as free as the air we breathe, or the light of the common sun'. (60) But, having argued for the 'unbounded liberty in matters of religion', the crucial question was whether Priestley, like Locke before him, would qualify his argument so as to exclude Catholics from his ideal state of religious liberty. Priestley went to the heart of the matter by discussing the prevalent notion that 'the persecution of papists is, in fact, nothing more than a dictate of self preservation'. (61)

First he dealt with the Hollisite notion that there had been an alarming increase in the number of papists. Priestley was highly sceptical and thought that on two counts the papists would never become numerous enough to pose any sort of threat: papistry was such an absurd system of faith and practice that it could only recommend itself to 'the lowest and most illiterate of our common people, who can never have any degree of influence in the state'; and its hold over the gentry would wane under the 'influence of fashion' and the effect of a 'liberal education'. (62) But supposing the papist priests were having the success 'which it is pretended they have', Priestley rejoindered that such success could be accounted for by the 'rigour of our penal laws respecting the papists'. (63) It would be far better to relax rather than tighten these laws on account of papist increase, for, he argued, that 'if they be enemies, an open

enemy

enemy is less dangerous than a secret one', and that their threat could be met effectively by a little more zeal on the part of the parish clergy. (64) There was, it appears, no way in which Priestley would countenance the argument for the persecution of the papists solely because of an increase in their numbers.

Priestley next considered the argument that the papists could never be loyal citizens. He discounted fears of a plot to place a popish pretender on the throne; these had been chimerical 'ever since the last rebellion'. (65) The Pope 'himself has refused to acknowledge the heir of the Stuart family to be King of England'. Besides, a relaxation of persecution would lead 'men of good sense among the popish gentry' to become 'zealously attached to our excellent form of free government'. (66)

Finally, as he had argued earlier in general terms, Priestley pointed to the advantage to England of toleration for the papists. He feared the prospect of France becoming more tolerant than England in which case she would gain as England had gained after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. 'Novelty', he thought, 'and a milder climate, will, no doubt, attract multitudes'. (67) And so, 'fact and experience', wisdom and sound policy argued for the abatement of religious persecution and the introduction of complete toleration for all, including the papists.

The reaction of rational Christians to Priestley's advocacy of universal toleration was not at all favourable. The Monthly Reviewer avoided the outright rejection of his arguments, but only at the cost of achieving the following patchwork of condemnation and equivocation:

*'...Dr. Priestley, pleads for a full toleration of the papists; and this we cannot avoid regarding as the most exceptionable part of his treatise. He has by no means considered the subject with the accuracy and the extent which its great importance demands. The question, whether the papists have a right to a full toleration, is not to be discussed in the compass of eight small pages. It is a difficult and intricate question. It is a question that takes in a large number of circumstances; and we shall find that different opinions have been formed concerning it, by the steadiest and most enlightened friends of liberty. The nature of popery should, particularly, be inquired into; not merely as a system of absurd doctrines and worship, but as a practical and intolerant superstition; as a cruel conspiracy against all the essential privileges of mankind; as a scheme which cannot rise to a high degree of power, except upon the ruins of everything that can render life desirable and valuable. We do not intend, by these observations, absolutely to determine the point against our author; but only to shew, that he ought not to have treated it in so superficial manner.'* (68)

The reviewer was Dr. Andrew Kippis, one of the milder spirits amongst the rational Dissenters and an influential leader of Dissent in the next two decades. (69) That he could write thus, incidentally ignoring Priestley's general arguments for toleration and focussing only on the eight page discussion of popery, underlines the formidable nature of anti-Catholic feeling amongst liberal Christians. In the same year as the publication of the 'Essay', there appeared Archdeacon Blackburne's 'Considerations on the present state of the controversy between the Protestants and the Papists of Great Britain and Ireland,

particularly

particularly on the question how far the latter are entitled to a toleration upon Protestant principles'. Favourably reviewed by William Rose, another Monthly Reviewer noted for his tolerant disposition, (70) it was circulated widely amongst Dissenters with the support of Thomas Hollis, and it provided an emotional counter-balance to the unadorned argumentation of Priestley. Dr. Lardner, an aged Dissenting Divine, who had been of great consequence in his time, and whose work on the Logos had converted Priestley to Socinianism, (71) was particularly impressed by the appendix to Blackburne's pamphlet concerning Popish Devotions to the Heart of Jesus which he thought bore some resemblance to 'the Moravian respect to the side-hole of Jesus'. (72) Though Lardner regarded Priestley as a 'fine writer', his sympathy lay with Blackburne, and this is the more revealing as he read the two works at roughly the same time.

Priestley's reaction to such hostility to his 'Essay' fulfilled both the demands of candour and zeal for truth: he decided to examine the question of toleration for Catholics in greater depth and to solicit the opinions of those with whom he disagreed. Amongst Hollis's connection he was most friendly with Archdeacon Blackburne and Theophilus Lindsey. He first met the Archdeacon when he sent his eldest son in 1765 to Warrington Academy where Priestley had been a tutor in the languages and Belles Lettres since 1761. (73) Through the Archdeacon he met Theophilus Lindsey who was destined to become a life-long friend. (74) Both Blackburne and Lindsey contributed to the Theological Repository, a liberal theological journal which Priestley founded in 1769. (75) By that time Lindsey had become one of the inner circle of Priestley's friends who were allowed to peruse his manuscripts before publication and who were expected to offer criticism. (76) But on the issue of Catholic toleration Priestley found himself in disagreement with his friends. Thomas Hollis sent him a copy of the Archdeacon's book on the present state of Popery for which, in reply, he duly thanked him. He could not, however, refrain from remarking,

"I frankly own I do not see any danger we are in from the Papists; and I cannot think we are authorised to molest them, merely because they are disaffected to us. So long as we have no reason to apprehend that they actually hurt us, why should we introduce unnecessary evil into the state?"

He concluded by noting that they were animated by the 'same general principles' and suggested that it was incumbent upon lovers of liberty to apply their principles uniformly and consistently. (77) Hollis was not pleased with Priestley's civil but sifting letter' and determined not to reply to it. (78) At this time Priestley had already exchanged several letters with Blackburne on the subject of his book, and he continued to discuss the issue of Catholic toleration with him in the next few years to no apparent effect. Indeed, his efforts to obtain constructive criticism of his views on toleration as expressed in his 'Essay.' seem to have borne meagre fruit. He was even prepared to insert into the second edition of the 'Essay..', published in 1771, observations drawn up by Blackburne and Lindsey on the toleration of Popery but they proved to be unforthcoming. (79) He did, it is true, receive the benefit of informal criticism of the 'Essay..' from Lindsey and in consequence

modified one passage, probably concerning the character of the lower clergy. (80) But, on the subject of toleration, no concessions were made to his critics. On the contrary, although Priestley retained the essence of his chapter on religious liberty and toleration, in the second edition he made his views on toleration in general and with regard to Catholics in particular more explicit by the addition of some new observations and by the rejuxtaposition of material from the first edition. In this way he underlined his belief that the concerns of civil government and religion were entirely separate, possibly to meet the charge that in his views on toleration he spoke only as a man and not as a Christian. Civil government, he argued, concerned 'this life', religion 'the life to come'; (81) the civil magistrate had no right of interference in religion unless it would serve a good purpose. 'There is,' he added, 'no difference to be made in this case, between the right, and the wisdom of interference'. (82) He believed that even when the magistrate was most tempted to interfere in order to preserve the religious and moral principles he cherished, he would do well to do nothing. Revealing the full extent of his optimistic belief in free inquiry, he declared,

"If the opinions and principles in question be evidently subversive of all religion and civil society, they must be evidently false and easy to refute; so that there can be no danger of their spreading; and the patrons of them may safely be suffered to maintain them in the most open manner they chuse". (83)

Even the second edition of the 'Essay..' did not contain a complete statement of Priestley's ideas concerning toleration, for, as the title suggested, it was concerned only with 'first principles'. For a more extensive discussion of civil and religious liberty he referred his readers to his Lectures on History and Civil Policy. (84) A syllabus of these lectures had already been published, but the lectures themselves did not see print until 1788. The ideas expressed in them, characterised by a remarkable degree of objectivity in his attitude to the Papacy and Catholicism, were, however, incorporated into his address to his fellow Protestants following the Gordon Riots which he himself witnessed. In the address, he drew together all the arguments against persecution from his 'Essay..' and his lectures. To advert briefly to those not touched on in his 'Essay..', he refuted the charge that Popery is favourable to arbitrary power, that Papists were 'evil treacherous and faithless', and that the Papacy was infallible in both temporal and spiritual concerns. English Catholics 'know the value of civil liberty as much as you do', he suggested, so that it was Protestant hostility rather than natural Catholic inclination that turned them into enemies. (85) And he reminded his Protestant readers that the charge of 'disaffection to government' has been that of all established churches, Catholic and Protestant, against Dissenters. (86) In his peroration, he urged Protestants to adhere strictly to golden rule of the gospel 'to do to all others as we would that they should do to us' and to apply the christian maxims 'Love our enemies, and overcome evil with good'. He concluded with the following exhortation,

'Let us study the things that make for peace, live in love and peace with all with whom we have had any intercourse, and the *God of love and peace will be with us*'. (87)

Priestley received his reply from a fellow rational Dissenter, Roger Flexman, in a sermon preached on 1 January 1781 at St. Thomas's Southwark, Abraham Rees's church. His address contained the following remarks:

'By some fascination we seem inclined to believe that Popery is become a mild and good natured thing. Some of us even apologise for it, and plead for its toleration, though every native of ENGLAND who is listed in this DETESTABLE SOCIETY and mission, is a REBEL to his country's laws, and a TRAITOR to the good king that governs us'. (88) Clearly, there was still some way to go before even liberal Christians 'tout ensemble' would come to accept some degree of toleration for the Catholics, although there is a defensiveness detectable in Flexman's ranking that suggests that the ranks of the anti-Catholics were breaking. Priestley, ever willing to see black as white, had long since been convinced that the cause of anti-Catholicism could not survive free inquiry. As early as 1769 he voiced the opinion that his views were becoming increasingly acceptable to his fellow rational Dissenters in a tract entitled 'A Free Address to Protestant Dissenters as such by a Dissenter'. (89) Although the purpose of the tract was to make Dissenters 'think and act in a manner worthy of their profession' (90) it may be significant that he was persuaded to write it by Andrew Kippis and Richard Price, for Priestley did refer in it to his views on toleration. (91) Kippis himself, had sufficiently clarified his ideas on toleration by 1773 to assert that, 'Religion, in every form of it which is consistent with the safety of the state, has an unlimited title to indulgence'. (92) He remained, however, somewhat sceptical of the ability of the Catholics to give reasonable security to the government for their good behaviour. Richard Price, on the other hand, unlike Kippis had not taken exception to Priestley's views on toleration. In his 'Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty' of 1776 he defined religious liberty as,

'the power of exercising without molestation, that mode of religion which we think best, or of making the decisions of our own consciences, respecting religious truth, the rule of our conduct, and not any the decisions of others.' (93)

Priestley had expressed a similar view rather more pithily, 'every man for himself should be the sole umpire of his judgment and practice', (94) in the very address which Price had encouraged him to write. Price's observations on religious liberty, however, formed only a minor part of his influential pamphlet. Later in his sermon, 'A Discourse on the Love of Our Country', of November 4, 1789, he criticised the tenth and eleventh articles of the French Declaration of Rights as providing insufficient guarantees of freedom of worship and liberty of conscience, but again he spoke only in general terms. (95) And so of these two thinkers who were popularly regarded as leaders of the campaign for the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts and who for some satirists formed a composite character, (96) it was Priestley whose views on Catholic toleration were more fully expounded, and, it can be argued, were more radical. In a draft Lord's protest drawn up by Price in 1772 in anticipation of the defeat in the Lords of the petition for relief from the necessity for Dissenting ministers and school-

masters to subscribe to most of the 39 Articles, he proposed that toleration ought to be extended to every mode of faith and worship that is not inconsistent with the safety of the state and that 'such toleration in our opinion ought not to be confined within even the limits of the Christian religion'. (97) More tolerant than Locke, Price would not, however, have extended toleration as far as Priestley who went close to arguing that freedom of religion was, if one had to choose, more important than the security of the state. There is also a hint in one of Theophilus Lindsey's letters than Price's approach towards the Catholics was less generous than that of Priestley. On December 1st 1778 Lindsey had informed Price that 'he had heard from several quarters' that if the Dissenters renewed their application for relief for their ministers and schoolmasters for subscription 'it would most likely succeed'. (98) Price had heard the same but had found some of the Dissenting clergy averse to the application because they feared it would only be used as a handle to give more concessions to the Papists. Lindsey answered that no Christian ought to be against freedom of worship for the Papists and that there was therefore no reason why the Dissenters should not seek further relief and security for themselves. According to Lindsey, Price had agreed. But when he met Price and Kippis at the next meeting of the Club of Honest Whigs, he found their enthusiasm for seeking relief had cooled 'on account of the increasing ferment of the time, and the suspicion that if any favour was shown to the Dissenters, it would be of no kindness to them, but only to pave the way for doing more for the Papists'. (99) I would not wish to infer from this that the views of Price on toleration were not influential in liberalising Dissenting attitudes, only that, in the area of the development of toleration towards the Catholics, Priestley was the more important figure; he may even have had a liberalising effect on Price. (100) It is, indeed, difficult to be precise about the extent of Priestley's liberalising influence on Dissent, but as he was not, despite his prodigious and varied labours, in any sense a recluse, it is important to take into account his personal influence as well as that of his published works.

Who sat at the feet of the brilliant young tutor in languages and belles lettres at Warrington Academy? Alas, no one of any substantial importance in the history of toleration, which is not to say that he did not make some converts to the cause of universal toleration. At any rate, it appears that he was almost alone amongst the teachers there in favouring toleration for the Catholics, and he would not have hidden his views from them on the subject. (101) He did not believe that one should forego the frank expression of opinion for the sake of easy relationships nor did he think that mutual admiration necessarily depended on mutual agreement in all things. To his friends and correspondents he expressed himself without reserve or inhibition and he expected them to treat him likewise. And it is to his wide circle of friends and correspondents rather than to his pupils that one must turn in order to trace his personal influence. As early as 1766 Priestley was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society, with the support of men of the distinction of Franklin, Price, Canton and Watson. (102) Later, he became a member of two other societies, the Club of Honest Whigs and the Lunar Society, which in their different ways made important

contributions

contributions to the English Enlightenment. Of these societies, the Club of Honest Whigs was most closely associated with Dissent and provides a fine example of 'the holy alliance between science and religion' (103) characteristic of that Enlightenment. Verner Crane has estimated that 'at least fifteen dissenting clergymen and schoolmasters' were members and Lindsey may be added to that number. (104) Of these, Price, Lindsey, Priestley, Kippis and Abraham Rees (105) were particularly important in Dissenting circles both in the 1770s and 1780s; another of the club's members, Dr. Joseph Jeffries was a relative of Edward Jeffries, chairman of the Committee of the Protestant Dissenting Deputies for the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts established late in 1786. Priestley himself was a regular attendee at the club. In 1773 he became librarian to the Earl of Shelburne, a post which he held until 1780, and during that time he spent his winters in London. Although little is known of the actual discussions of the Honest Whigs, Mr. Crane has noted that Franklin's intimacy with Canton, Price, and Priestley confirmed 'his commitment to a wide toleration of divergent opinions'. (106) Here then was a club at which Priestley could obtain a sympathetic hearing for his views on toleration.

In 1774 Priestley gained an opportunity to express in person his ideas to a wider audience when he became a member of the General Body of Ministers of the Three Denominations in and about the Cities of London and Westminster. (107) A warm and convivial personality, he may have gained more converts among influential Dissenters by the personal contact afforded him by this membership than by his published works. But it was an uphill struggle, for his Unitarian theology, his materialistic philosophy, his thorough going hostility to church establishments and his espousal of the toleration of Anti-Christ made him a most unpopular figure amongst Dissenters. At the outset of the campaign for the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts he proved an embarrassing ally. Two years earlier he had preached a 5 November sermon on 'The Importance and extent of free inquiry' to which in the published version he appended some 'Reflections on the present state of free inquiry in this country' in which he declared that the Rational Dissenters by 'the present silent propagation of truth' were, 'laying gunpowder, grain by grain under the old building of error and superstition (the church establishment), which a single spark may hereafter inflame, so as to produce an instantaneous explosion, in consequence of which the work of ages, may be overturned in a moment, and so effectually as the same foundation can never be built upon again'. (108)

In the light of such remarks, it was difficult for the Dissenters to maintain that in their campaign for the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts they intended no hostility towards the established church. (109) The admonitory open letter which Priestley wrote to William Pitt following his opposition to repeal in the 1787 debate further embarrassed the Dissenters. (110) Not surprisingly, following their defeat in that year the Repeal Committee decided to postpone reapplication until the 1788-1789 Parliamentary session. They, no doubt, hoped that opposition of the sort engendered by Priestley would cool. In this their aspirations were fulfilled. Meanwhile, the 1787 campaign demonstrated

that

that Priestley's willingness to provoke as well as to contravert could prove a liability to the cause which he hoped to promote. It was therefore important that the cause of complete toleration was espoused by milder and less controversial spirits. I am thinking particularly of Theophilus Lindsey.

In the 1760s, as we have seen, Lindsey was associated with the anti-Catholicism of the Hollis connection. It was a subject which he discussed with Priestley although initially without much being resolved: in December 1769 Priestley wrote to him,

'You smile at my nostrum, as you call my sentiments concerning the poor papists, and I smile at your panic concerning them. I hope we shall continue to think for ourselves, to smile at and bear with one another. We see things in very different lights...'. (111)

Lindsey, indeed, continued to warn Priestley of the danger that he was in from his Catholic connections. (112) The process of his conversion to notions on toleration similar to those of Priestley is not, so far as I know, closely documented. But it is probable that 1773 was the crucial year. In that year, despairing of the possibility of reform from within, he left the Church of England. By so doing and by setting up at Essex Street in London the first avowedly Unitarian chapel in England, he in effect placed himself beyond the law, tolerated like the Catholics by indulgence. (113) It was also at this time that he became a really intimate and highly valued friend of Priestley, who spent his Sundays with him when he was living in London. This at least we know, by 1778 he was a keen supporter of the Catholic Relief Act, and was prepared for further concessions so that the Catholics could enjoy freedom of worship. This they gained by the Relief Act of 1791. Lindsey, like Priestley, watched the progress of the bill keenly, and was enthusiastic in its support: he hoped it would pave the way for 'equal universal toleration in religious matters'. (114)

Lindsey's influence in Dissent, especially rational Dissent, closely matched that of Priestley. Although not a controversialist, his published works being almost exclusively theological, he did on occasion preach political sermons and his correspondence makes it abundantly clear that he followed politics closely, particularly in so far as it bore on the subject of toleration. Less of a polymath than Priestley or Price, he concentrated his influence on building up the cause of rational Dissent in Britain. (115) His circle can be regarded as the successor to the Hollis connection, which came to an end with the death of Hollis in 1774 and the retirement of Caleb Fleming in 1778 followed by the closure of Pinners Hall. (116) And it is therefore of especial importance that it was markedly free of the anti-Catholicism which he had once shared with Hollis and his friends. Unlike Pinners Hall, Lindsey's chapel was very successful; with its rational version of the Anglican service, it had a wider religious appeal than either the orthodox or heterodox Meeting Houses. Three peers, the Duke of Grafton, Lord Shelburne, and Lord Spencer attended the opening service in April 1774; other supporters included Sir George Savile, (117) who proposed the Catholic Relief Bill, John Lee, Solicitor General in the short lived Second Rockingham Administration and also a friend to the Catholics, (118) John

Martin M. P., Thomas Whitmore M.P., John Dunning M.P., Samuel Heywood, one of the leading campaigners and propagandists for the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts, Thomas Brand Hollis, Michael Dodson, and Serjeant James Adair. (119) This list is by no means exhaustive, but it does give an idea of the potential extent of Lindsey's influence. His circle, of course, was not mutually exclusive; it included Honest Whigs, and one of them, John Lee was, Lindsey apart, Priestley's closest friend. Its importance lies in the fact that it provided the means through which Lindsey could propagate the cause of toleration in general, and a benign attitude towards the Catholics in particular, at a time when the name of Priestley was obnoxious to the majority of Dissenters including many rational Dissenters.

One would have expected Priestley's letter to Pitt to have sharpened that Dissenting hostility towards him. Maybe it did for a time - we know that some Dissenters thought his publication injudicious to say the least (120) - but a year later Lindsey detected a changed attitude towards him. On May 6th he wrote to William Tayleur,

'It has given me great pleasure while he (Priestley) has been in town to observe religious prejudice against him abated, in the attendance upon his preaching and in the request which has been made for his company, by persons who a few years ago would have thought themselves defiled by coming near him. I have particularly noted this among the dissenters. But I rather think it is not so with the high church.' (121)

At this time the Dissenters had not yet adopted Priestley's idea of toleration; but it is a straw in the wind. His sense that toleration was spreading throughout the civilized world and that England was for the moment being left behind in the march of progress, detectable in the 'Essay on the First Principles of Government', because very marked in the 1780s: in 1785 he wrote, 'error and superstition are falling everywhere abroad'. (122) The propaganda of the Dissenters for the repeal of the Corporation and Test Act reveals that in 1787 they were beginning to feel the same way: Samuel Heywood, friend of Priestley and author of the most important Dissenting tract in favour of the repeal, 'The Right of Protestant Dissenters to a Compleat Toleration Asserted', compared the tolerant attitude of the New England Dissenters favourably with the intolerance of the Anglican Clergy; (123) Richard Price circulated with a recommendatory introduction 'The Act of the Assembly of Virginia', which established religious freedom; (124) while the anonymous author of 'An Appeal to the Candour and Magnanimity and Justice of those in Power' drew attention to the extension of toleration in France and to the religious reforms in the Habsburg Empire. (125)

In the two years that intervened before the Dissenters next petitioned for repeal, the feeling that the cause of enlightenment was sweeping Europe became widespread, and although they still petitioned for repeal only in so far as the two acts affected themselves, it was Charles James Fox who caught the mood of the time. In a splendid speech in support of repeal, he enunciated the case

for

for universal toleration and appealed to enlightened patriotism: 'No human government,' he declared, 'had a right to enquire into private opinions, to presume it knew them, or to act on that presumption'. If the Dissenters, Protestant or Catholic, proved to be subversive, then they should be tried by the laws relative to subversion, that is 'men ought to be judged by their actions and not by their thoughts'. 'Should a people, who boasted of their freedom,' he asked, 'reject those liberal principles of toleration which other nations had adopted'. (126) Priestley himself could not have put the case more clearly. And in 1789 this sort of argumentation appeared to win the Dissenters friends, for the repeal motion was lost by only twenty votes. (127)

Spurred on by their near success and by the example of great events taking place across the channel, the Dissenters organized themselves on a county and regional basis to petition for repeal. The effect of their activity was to increase the pressure on the metropolitan repeal committee to apply next time for total repeal. The first evidence of the radicalism of Dissent in the regions came in April 1789, before the second motion for repeal, when the repeal committee received letters of support from Dissenters in Chelmsford and Leeds, which also urged it to apply for the repeal of all penal laws relative to religion. (128) This the committee declared to be beyond its competence, (129) but it did become increasingly aware of the overwhelming desire on the part of the majority of Dissenters in the country for the total repeal of the two acts. In January 1790 Henry Beaufoy, who had proposed the two previous repeal motions, gracefully offered to step down and his offer was accepted. It was reported, probably correctly, for Beaufoy was a cautious man, that he was unhappy at the decision to extend the repeal application to embrace the Catholics. (130) Charles James Fox was chosen in his stead and he was not going to be fettered by a petty distinction between Protestant and Catholic Dissenters.

Thus what was inconceivable to Joseph Berington in 1780 came to pass in 1790; Protestant Dissenters embraced Catholics over the fundamental issue of the right of the State to differentiate between its citizens on the basis of their religion. Of all the Dissenters Joseph Priestley could derive most satisfaction from and take most credit for this development. But how significant was it? The repeal motion was, after all, overwhelmingly defeated by 105 to 296 votes, and the alliance of Catholic and Protestant Dissenters, never formalised, was brief; it failed to survive the turbulent years of the French Revolution.

For the Catholics, the change of heart on the part of the Protestant Dissenters brought positive gains. The Catholic Relief Act of 1791, much more far reaching than the limited relief of 1778, passed without difficulty and without demonstration, and in spite of disunity amongst the Catholic Community about the proposed new oath of allegiance. (131) The Catholics, it is true, had done much to assuage anti-Catholic feeling since the Gordon Riots. Joseph Berington's 'The State and Behaviour of English Catholics in 1780' had confirmed many of Priestley's arguments about them: that they were numerically insignificant; (132) that their Catholicism was not inconsistent with virtue, allegiance to the State, opposition to tyranny, and a belief in freedom of

thought. His anti-clerical and assertive tone has much in common with that of Priestley. Already correspondents in 1780, in the mid 1780s they became friends. In 1787 Priestley supported Berington's argument that the exclusion of the Catholics by the Dissenters from their campaign for the repeal of the Corporation and the Test Acts was inconsistent with their general principles. Berington's ideas were taken up by the English Catholic Committee appointed in 1787. In the following year they began to campaign for relief from the penal laws affecting them. Their propaganda in favour of the notion that Catholicism and good citizenship were not incompatible made it doubly difficult for the Protestant Dissenters to discriminate against them, particularly when the committee in petitioning for relief referred to themselves as the 'Protesting Catholic Dissenters', (133) But it can, nevertheless, be suggested that Catholic propaganda would not have been so effective if the pro-Catholic ideas had not been sown already amongst the Dissenters by Priestley and if the Dissenters themselves had not already begun to campaign for the repeal of their own disabilities under the Corporation and Test Acts.

On the Dissenting side, their unanimity over the issue of universal toleration proved fairly short lived. Their crushing defeat in 1790 and the impossibility of renewing the campaign in the highly charged atmosphere of the 1790s was partly responsible. But also Old Dissent gradually broke up: it became less tolerant of heterodoxy in its own ranks; more denominationally minded; and infused with the anti-Catholicism of the evangelical revival. When the Dissenters eventually reapplied for the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts, only the Unitarians were simultaneously and unanimously in favour of Catholic Emancipation. (134) Thus one of the more notable achievements of Old Dissent was short lived. One aspect, however, remained permanent: the severance of the link between rational Dissent, persecutive anti-Catholicism and radical Whiggism.

Finally, if the Dissenters succeeded in drawing the teeth of anti-Catholicism it was not without hurt to themselves. During the course of their repeal campaign, especially during 1789 and 1790, their association with the Catholics did them much harm. It revived the link between anti-Catholic and anti-Dissent feeling. Dissenters were accused of being Catholics in another garb, or alternatively of being, in their grasping attack on the emoluments of Church and State, 'like Trojan Horses, with the Papists in their bellies'. (135) By 1790 it was quite clear that the Dissenters had taken over the Catholics' role as the major threat to the constitution. Even Berington's liberal Catholics realised that it would be politic to maintain some distance between themselves and the Dissenters and indeed, to argue that they were more loyal than their Protestant brethren. (136) Of the latter, a special place in the public gallery of obloquy was reserved for the rational Dissenters. They were the treacherous and corrupting counterpart of the Jesuits, and, so the public was reminded, were descendants of those whose faith was made up of 'perjury, rapine, bloodshed, cruelty and destruction'. It is little wonder then that when Joseph Berington was invited by Joseph Priestley in July 1791 to attend the dinner to commemorate the fall of the Bastille

he replied, 'No, we Catholics stand better with the government than you Dissenters, and we will not make common cause with you'. (137) In the riots which that dinner triggered off, the Dissenters and their Anti-Pope, Joseph Priestley, suffered most of all, Priestley himself suffering tragic losses. Indeed the riots owed their virulence in no small measure to his espousal of the cause of Catholic toleration, so that it was no bizarre coincidence that the rioters in clamouring for 'Church and King' also raised the cry against Priestley and the Birmingham Dissenters of 'No Popery'. (138)

1. J. Berington, The State and behaviour of the English Catholics from the Reformation to the year 1780 with a view of their present number wealth and character &c. (London, 1780), 4.
2. Dr. Williams's Library (henceforth D.W.L.), MS. 93.H.7. The meeting of the delegates 'of the different counties' of England and Wales was held on 24 February 1791 and their sentiments were communicated to the Dissenters in the country. On 2 March 1791 the Committee of the Midland District entirely and 'cheerfully' concurred in the resolution of the Delegates in favour of the Catholics. William Russell, their chairman and close friend of Joseph Priestley, sent a copy of their resolutions to Joseph Berington, who in turn communicated them to John Throckmorton so that they could be brought to the notice of the Catholic Committee. Throckmorton MS., Coughton Court, J. Berington to J. Throckmorton, 12 March 1791.  
I am grateful to Mr. John Creasey, Librarian, Dr. Williams's Library, for permission to quote from the manuscripts in the Library's collection, and to Miss M. Thompson, Custodian, Coughton Court, for her help in making the Throckmorton Papers available to me.
3. The Autograph Letters of Theophilus Lindsey, 1785-1800, John Rylands Library, T. Lindsey to W. Tayleur, 1 March, 1791.
4. This paper was first given at the annual conference of the British Society for Eighteenth Century Studies, January 1977. Since then it has undergone modification in detail but the general argument remains the same. Vide B.S.E.C.S. Newsletter, 12, June 1977, 19-21.
5. J. Locke, Letters concerning toleration, ed. T. Hollis (1765) Preface.
6. Throckmorton MS., J. Wilks to Sir J. Throckmorton, 7 October 1791.
7. By contrast, the debate on toleration for Dissenters centred on their relationship with the Church and State.
8. Throckmorton MS., J. Wesley to J. Berington, 11 February 1780.
9. Throckmorton MS., J. Wesley to J. Berington, 11 and 24 February 1780.
10. C. Butler, Historical memoirs respecting the English Irish and Scottish Catholics from the Reformation to the present time, 2nd. edn. (John Murray, London 1819), 11, 114, The Protestation.
11. *Ibid.*, 11, 106-108. Despite their confidence, the Committee was aware of the need to choose their authorities carefully. Joseph Wilks argued for care in the selection of 'proper universities for the consultation or probably discordant opinions will be returned'. In his view, 'Rome gives up nothing which it can hold in its grasp, and...ultramontane notions still prevail almost universally out of the dominions of France' (J. Wilks to Sir J. Throckmorton, 9 November 1788, Throckmorton MS.). The Committee chose the universities of Sorbonne, Louvain, Douay, Alcalá, Valladolid, and Salamanca, and elicited uniformly favourable responses, denying the Papal powers of deposition, absolution, and dispensation. C. Butler, *op.cit.*, I, App. 402-45.

12. Throckmorton MS., Ld. Petre to Sir J. Throckmorton, 1 August 1790.
13. J. Locke, A Letter concerning toleration, ed. J. W. Gough (Oxford 1956), 158.
14. W. Blackstone, Commentaries on the laws of England, IV, 52. Cit. J. Priestley, Remarks on some paragraphs in the fourth of Dr. Blackstone's commentaries on the laws of England (London, 1769), 23.
15. The Case of the Protestant Dissenters with reference to the Corporation and Test Acts, Gentleman's Magazine, March 1787, 238-240.
16. P. Doddridge, Some Remarkable passages in the life of the Hon. Colonel James Gardiner,... (Edinburgh, 1808), 204  
Born in Linlithgowshire in 1688, James Gardiner was the second son of Captain Patrick Gardiner, a soldier and a gentleman, who served in the armies of King William and Queen Anne. James followed his father into the army, and as a young soldier lived a 'Godless' life. At the battle of Ramillies a musket ball passed through his head, but 'miraculously' did not kill him. Nursed to health by the nuns of a convent near Huy, he nevertheless refused to embrace the Catholic faith, having 'too much the spirit of a gentleman' to give up his loose allegiance to Protestantism, and 'too much good sense to swallow those monstrous absurdities of Popery which immediately presented themselves to him'. His conversion to the cause of true 'religion and virtue' did not occur until 1719, when he had a vision of Christ on the Cross. Ibid., 22, 37-39, 50-52.
17. R. Robinson, The History and mystery of Good Friday (London, 1777); 5 and 42.
18. Cit. E. Bushrod, The History of Unitarianism in Birmingham from the middle of the 18th. century to 1893 (University of Birmingham M.A. Thesis, 1954), 67. This was included in Priestley's Hymn Book for Birmingham New Meeting, which came into use in June 1790. The annotations were provided so that the references could not be missed.
19. G. Rudé, 'The Gordon riots', republished in his Paris and London in the 18th. century (Fontana, London, 1970), 290.
20. Two Calvinistic Methodist chapels, 1743-1811, ed. E. Welch, App. I, Articles of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion, Art. XIII, 91.
21. The Monthly repository and review of theology and general literature, IX, 614-618. Also A. Kippis, A Vindication of the Protestant Dissenting Ministers with regard to their late application to Parliament, 2nd. edn. (London, 1773), 78.
22. One consequence or indication of the tendency of the Dissenters and of the Protestants in general to view Roman Catholicism as 'all of a piece' was their lack of discrimination between the terms 'Roman Catholic' and 'Papist'. The religious doctrines which they scorned were, they believed, inextricably linked with the civil and political doctrines which rendered 'papisty' obnoxious and treasonable. Even those, like Priestley, who did not concur in this general view, did not, so far as I have been able to ascertain, make a distinction between 'Roman Catholicism', a religious doctrine, and 'Papisty', a political and spiritual allegiance to the Pope. A good example of the looseness which existed in Protestants' use of these terms may be

found in Francis Blackburne's continuation of his father's life, in which he says in relation to the softening of his father's anti-Catholicism,

'His mind was open to admit the perfect toleration of the professors of it (Popery), on their solemn, sincere, and unreserved declaration of allegiance to the civil government, and disclaiming all obedience to the pope or church of Rome, except in matters purely spiritual. In short his aversion was to popery, not to papists'. F. Blackburne, The Works, (Cambridge, 1805), I, LXIV.)

Protestants quite naturally resisted the Roman Catholic claim to be the Catholic faith. Vide P. Doddridge, op.cit., 22.

23. Vide C. Robbins, 'The Strenuous Whig, Thomas Hollis of Lincoln's Inn', William and Mary quarterly, VII, Third Series, 1950, 406-464.
24. Ibid., 426-427; C. Robbins, The Eighteenth century common-weathman (Atheneum, New York, 1968), 265.
25. I am indebted not only to the work of Caroline Robbins for my understanding of the Hollis connection but also to that of G. M. Ditchfield in his 'Some Aspects of unitarianism and radicalism 1760-1810', Cambridge Phd., 1968.
26. F. Blackburne, Considerations on the present state of the controversy between the Protestants and Papists of Great Britain and Ireland, particularly on the question how far the latter are entitled to a toleration upon protestant principles, 1768, The Works, IV, 248.
27. Vide D.W.L. MS. 87.1, Disney Papers, To the Printer of the London Chronicle, February 1771. Thomas Hollis was particularly anti-Jesuit, and made a vast collection of anti-Jesuit books which he sent to Zurich. C. Robbins, art. cit., 424.
28. C. Butler, Historical memoirs, 11, 64-65; The Case of the English Catholic Dissenters, 1789; W.E.H. Lecky, A History of England in the eighteenth century (Longmans, London, 1918-20), IV, 304-05. The Priest was John Baptist Malony who was tried and convicted at Croydon on a charge of administering the sacrament to a sick person. He appears to have been imprisoned for four years before being banished. It is worth noting that Joseph Priestley would have been made aware of the law on this issue (that the saying of the Mass by a foreigner was a felony and by a native treason) if he was not already aware of it, through the case of J. H. de Magalhaens (Magellan). A distinguished Portuguese resident in England and an F.R.S., he was one of Priestley's chief links with the Continent. One of the last to be arrested on the accusation of saying Mass, his case was heard before Lord Mansfield but was dismissed on a technicality. F. W. Gibbs, Joseph Priestley, adventurer in science and champion of truth (Nelson, London and Edinburgh, 1965), 101.
29. E. Duffy, 'Ecclestial democracy detected: I (1779-1787)', Recusant history, X, (1970), 193.

30. J. T. Rutt, ed., The Theological and miscellaneous works of Joseph Priestley (London, 1817-31), XXII, 64-5. Hollis marked 'T.L.' besides 'Northumbriensis' in his collection of newspaper letters.
31. J. Bossy, The English Catholic community (Darton, Longman & Todd, London, 1975), 184-5, 189.
32. Ibid., 184; also Lecky, op.cit., 308, fn.2.
33. F. Blackburne, The Confessional, 3rd. edn. (London, 1770) Preface to 1st. edn., LXV.
34. D.W.L. MS. 12.45, F. Blackburne to J. Wiche, 4 Sept. 1767.
35. Ibid., also Same to Same, 19 September and 5 December 1766.
36. F. Blackburne, The Confessional, Preface to 1st Edn., XCVIII.
37. D.W.L. MS. 12.45, F. Blackburne to J. Wiche, 19 September 1766.
38. Ibid., 23 January 1767.
39. Rutt, Works, I, pt.I, 98.
40. C. Robbins, art. cit., 434; R. B. Barlow, Citizenship and conscience. A study in the theory and practice of religious toleration in England during the eighteenth century (Philadelphia, 1962), 137-38.
41. P. D. G. Thomas, Lord North (Allen Lane, London, 1976), 79.
42. D. Jarret, The Begetters of revolution, England's involvement with France 1759-1789 (Longman, London, 1973), 135; J. Norris, Shelburne and reform (Macmillan, London, 1963), 133.
43. J. Norris, op.cit., 91.
44. G. Rudé, op.cit., 277 and 313. Continuing Catholic uncertainty concerning the attitude of Shelburne towards the Catholic Relief Act of 1778 was demonstrated two years later, in 1782, when the Committee of the English Catholics felt it necessary to seek reassurances from him that he did not intend to revive anti-Catholic legislation. B.M. Add. MS. 7961, Minutes of the Catholic Committee, ff.12-16. No reply was recorded in their minutes. In fact, when Lord George Gordon headed a delegation to Shelburne, then Home Secretary, to demand the repeal of the 1778 Act, he was snubbed by him. J. Norris, op.cit., 134.
45. J. H. Hexter, 'The Protestant revival and the Catholic question in England, 1778-1829', Journal of Modern History VIII, 1936, 298. See also Barlow, op.cit., 206.
46. J. Berington, loc. cit.
47. J. Priestley, An Essay on the first principles of government, 2nd. edn. (London, 1771), 194.
48. J. Priestley, Remarks on some paragraphs..., (London, 1769), 26.
49. The Autobiography of Joseph Priestley, ed. J. Lindsay (Adams and Dart, Bath 1970), 24.
50. An History of the sufferings of Mr. Lewis de Marolles and Mr. Isaac le Fevre upon the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Repub. by J. Priestley (Birmingham, 1788), XIV-XV. For a full discussion of Priestley's millenarianism, and of the millenarian tradition in Dissent, see C. Garret, Respectable folly (John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, 1975), ch. 6.
51. J. Priestley, Essay on..government, 1st. edn. (London, 1768), 105.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid., 106.
54. Ibid., 106-108.
55. Ibid., 109.
56. Ibid., 110.
57. Ibid.

58. Ibid. 111
59. Ibid., 111-112
60. Ibid., 112.
61. Ibid., 180.
62. Ibid., 119-120.
63. Ibid., 120.
64. Ibid., 122-123
65. Ibid., 123-124
66. Ibid., 124
67. Ibid., 125.
68. The Monthly review, XXXIX, 473-474.
69. B. C. Nangle, The Monthly reviewers first series 1749-1789, (Oxford 1934) 23, 179. Kippis joined the staff of The Monthly Review in July 1767, and left only when he began work on the Biographia britannica, B. M. Add. MS. 35615, f.69, A. Kippis to 2nd. Earl of Hardwicke, 22 October 1778. Later, he was closely associated with the Committee appointed by the Protestant Dissenting Deputies to procure the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts, and helped to prepare the printed 'Case' for repeal. Guildhall MS. 3084, ff. 3 and 15.
70. The Monthly review, XXXIX, 225-229 and 258-264; B. C. Nangle, op.cit., 37 and 64.
71. Rutt, Works, I pt. I, 69; 'By reading with care Dr. Lardner's letter on the Logos, I became what is called a Socinian'.
72. Ibid., 99-100, Dr. N. Lardner to Rev. J. Wiche, 2 June 1768.
73. The Monthly repository, IX, 265; The Autobiography of Joseph Priestley, 97.
74. T. Belsham, Memoirs of the late Reverend Theophilus Lindsey, M.A., 2nd. edn. corrected (London, 1820), 25.
75. D. W. L. MS. 12.56, 62, A list of contributors to the Theological Repository with Pseudonyms in Lindsey's hand.
76. D. W. L. MS. 12.12, J. Priestley to T. Lindsey, 18 December 1769; Same to Same, 6 December 1770.
77. Rutt, Works, I pt.I, 94-100, J. Priestley to T. Hollis, 1 November 1768.
78. C. Robbins, art. cit., 447 fn.130; C. Robbins, op.cit., 349 fn. 41; G. M. Ditchfield, op.cit., 56; C. Robbins suggests that Priestley's letter referred to an anti-Papal pamphlet of Thomas Mortimer.
79. D. W. L. MS. 12.12, J. Priestley to T. Lindsey, 18 January 1770.
80. Ibid., Same to Same, 6 December 1770; cf. J. Priestley, Essay on...government, 1st. edn., 1769, 100-101, & ibid., 2nd edn., 1771, 206-7.
81. J. Priestley, An Essay on...government, 2nd. edn. 1771, 111.
82. Ibid., 120.
83. Ibid., 123.
84. Ibid., XVI.
85. J. Priestley, A Free address to those who have petitioned for the repeal of the late act of Parliament in favour of the Roman Catholics (London, 1780), 12-13.
86. Ibid., 9.
87. Ibid., 21.

88. Rutt, Works, I pt. I, 108, and XXII, 500. Roger Flexman (1708-1795) had since 1747 been minister to the Presbyterian congregation at Jamaica Row, Rotherhithe. The congregation ceased its existence in 1783 on his resignation. Abraham Rees's congregation was also Presbyterian. Rees preached the sermon at the funeral of Flexman; A. Gordon, D. N. B. art. 'R. Flexman'.
89. Rutt, Works, XXII, 272.
90. Ibid., 249.
91. Ibid., I pt. I, 74.
92. A. Kippis, A Vindication, 2nd edn. (London, 1773) 61-4.
93. R. Price, Observations on the nature of civil liberty, 2nd edn. (London, 1776), 3.
94. Rutt, Works, XXII, 271.
95. R. Price, A Discourse on the love of country, 2nd edn. (London, 1789), 9-10. The Declaration that would have accorded with Price's wishes would have been:  
 "That every man has a right to profess and practise, without molestation or the loss of any civil privilege, that mode of religious faith and worship which he thinks most acceptable to his maker; and also to discuss freely by speaking, writing and publishing all speculative points, provided he does not by any overt act or direct invasion of the rights of others, break the peace, or attempt to injure any one in his person, property, or good name."
96. Richard Price 1723-1791, A Catalogue of the U.C.W. Aberystwyth Exhibition to Commemorate the United States Bicentennial, 1976, items 22 and 84.
97. Transactions of the unitarian historical society, XVI, no.2, October 1976, D. O. Thomas, 'Proposed Protest concerning Dissenters: Richard Price and the Earl of Chatham', 49-62.
98. The Autograph Letters of Theophilus Lindsey, loc. cit., 1774-1785, T. Lindsey to W. Tayleur, 3 December 1778.
99. Ibid. Same to Same, 19 December 1778.
100. Cf. J. Priestley, Essay on..government, 1st. edn., 108, 'Are not both Christianity and mohammedanism, in fact, established (the former at least tolerated) in Turkey; and what inconveniences, worth mentioning, has ever arisen from it?' and D. O. Thomas, op.cit., 57, cl. I, 'It is well known that the Turks tolerate Christians in the Greek empire; and, therefore, it would be certainly right in Christians to tolerate Turks'. For a full discussion of Price's ideas on toleration, see D. O. Thomas, The Honest mind, the thought and work of Richard Price, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1977), esp. ch. IX.
101. D. W. L. M.S.12, , J. Priestley to T. Lindsey, 18 January 1770. For a list of students who studied at the Warrington Academy, see The Monthly Repository, IX, 201-205, 263-268, 385-390, 525-530, 594-599. Francis Blackburne did not share his father's hostility towards the Catholics, and was pleased to note the mitigation of his father's views late in life. It is probable that the attitudes of both father and son on this issue were influenced by Priestley, but the Archdeacon's change of heart, 'in his eightieth year', came too late to influence the cause of universal toleration. The Works, theological and miscellaneous...of Francis Blackburne, M.A. late rector of Richmond and Arch-deacon of Cleveland; with some account of the life and

- writings of the author by himself. completed by his son, Francis Blackburne Ll.B. (Cambridge, 1805) I, LXIV. C. Robbins, op.cit., 349, argues that the Archdeacon's conversion was 'undoubtedly due to Priestley's influence!'
102. Verner Crane, 'The Club of honest whigs; friends of science and liberty' William and Mary quarterly, XXIII, no. 4, October 1966, 226.
  103. B. Willey, The Eighteenth century background, cit. Crane, loc. cit.
  104. V. Crane, op.cit., 218-219, 222.
  105. Abraham Rees (1743-1825) in 1768 became assistant to Henry Read at the Presbyterian Congregation of St. Thomas's Southwark. He succeeded him as pastor in 1774. In 1778 he became chairman of the Presbyterian Board; he was also a prominent member of the General Body of the Ministers of the Three Denominations in and about the Cities of London and Westminster.
  106. V. Crane, op.cit., 222, 230.
  107. 'Minute book of the general body of ministers of the three denominations in and about the cities of London and Westminster', Dr. Williams's Library, II, 23/3/74.
  108. J. Priestley, Reflections on the present state of free inquiry in this country (Birmingham, 1785), 40-41.
  109. Early in the campaign, the Repeal Committee found it necessary to disavow any intention to move towards Dis-establishment following the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts. Guildhall MS. 3084, 27 February 1787.
  110. Priestley drew attention to the need to repeal all the penal laws against the Dissenters and to the anomalous situation in Ireland where the Established Church did not represent the religion of the majority. J. Priestley, A Letter to the Rt. Hon. William Pitt, 2nd. edn., (London, 1787), 24-26, 40-44.
  111. D. W. L. MS. 12, , J. Priestley to T. Lindsey, 18 December 1769.
  112. Ibid. Same to Same, 18 January 1770.
  113. Priestley never drew this analogy between the situation of the Unitarians and that of the Catholics, although he did remind Pitt in 1787 of 'the confiscation of goods and imprisonment for life, which would be my fate if the laws now existing were executed'. A Letter to...Pitt, 2nd. edn., 25.
  114. Autograph Letters of T. Lindsey, loc.cit., v.1785-1800, T. Lindsey to W. Tayleur, 23 February 1791; Same to Same, 9 April 1791; for Priestley, vide D. W. L. MS.12, 12, J. Priestley to T. Lindsey, 9 March (?) 1791 (dated by Rutt 'April 1791').
  115. The Autograph Letters of T. Lindsey contain ample evidence of this especially his numerous letters to William Tayleur of Shrewsbury. Tayleur was an influential benefactor of rational Dissent; he defrayed the expenses of some of Priestley's theological publications. The Autobiography of Joseph Priestley... 118.
  116. C. Robbins, op.cit., 330.
  117. Savile, like Priestley, believed that Catholicism would not survive the development of free inquiry. T. Belsham, Memoirs of the late Reverend Theophilus Lindsey, 43.
  118. B. M. Add. MS. 7961, ff. 49-55.
  119. C. Robbins, op.cit., 330, 438 f.n. 11.

120. D. W. L. MS. 24. 157 (135)i, S. Kenrick to J. Wodrow, 13 February 1788.
121. Autograph Letters of T. Lindsey, 1785-1800, T. Lindsey to W. Tayleur, 6 May 1788.
122. J. Priestley, The Importance and extend of free inquiry in matters of religion (Birmingham, 1785), 54-5.
123. The Right of Protestant Dissenters to a compleat toleration asserted (London, 1787). The evidence he used was drawn from a letter of Benjamin Franklin of 1772 in favour of relief for Dissenting Ministers and Schoolmasters from subscription to most of the Thirty Nine Articles.
124. The Morning chronicle, 27-9 March 1787; Public advertiser, 27 March 1787. Price's prefatory note was dated 26 July 1786, and it may have been circulated as a broad sheet soon after that. Certainly it was in circulation at the time of its publication in the Gentleman's Magazine in January 1787.
125. An Appeal to the candor, magnanimity, and justice of those in power (London, 1787), 8. The author was either a member of, or closely associated with, the Dissenters' Repeal Committee. It may have been written by Edward Jeffries, the chairman of the Committee. Vide The Monthly repository, 1814, IX, 246-7.
126. J. Debrett, The parliamentary register, XXVI (London, 1789), 118.
127. In fact, the printed Division Lists reveal that there was a considerable 'turn over' in Parliamentary support for repeal between the 1787 and 1789 motions: 34 M.P.s. who voted for repeal in 1787 did not do so in 1789; conversely, 43 M.P.s voted for repeal in 1789 who did not do so in 1787. Vide G. M. Ditchfield, 'The Parliamentary struggle over the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, 1787-1790', English historical review, LXXXIX (1974), 555; ibid. 'Debates on the Test and Corporation Acts, 1787-1790: the evidence of the Division Lists', Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research, L no. 121, 1977.
128. Guildhall MS. 3084, f.32. William Wood, Priestley's successor at Mill Hill, Leeds, argued for full toleration in the second of 'Two Sermons preached..on the celebtration of the hundredth anniversary of the happy revolution'. (Leeds, 1788).
129. Guildhall MS. 3084, f.32.
130. Public advertiser, February 12, 1790.
131. E. Duffy, 'Ecclesiastical democracy detected: II (1787-1796)', Recusant history, X (1970), 313-320.
132. J. Berington, The State and behaviour, 111, 15. He thought that the Catholics did not exceed 60,000 and estimated the number of priests at c.360.
133. E. Duffy, 'Ecclesiastical democracy detected: II', 313. The phrase was used in the oath which was intended to form part of the Catholic Committee's Relief Bill, and its purpose was to distinguish between 'Papists' and loyal English Catholics. Its effect even among the liberal or 'Cisalpine' Catholics was divisive, but there was some short term political gain in likening themselves to the Protestant Dissenters. Indeed in the title of their Relief Bill as presented to the Commons in June 1789 they were referred to as 'Protestant Catholic Dissenters'. It is also worth

- noting that the petition for relief was presented to both Houses of Parliament on 7 May 1789, the day before the debate on the repeal of the Corporation and Test Act. J. Debrett, Parliamentary register, XXVI, (1789) 93, 287.
134. R. W. Davis, Dissent in politics 1780-1830, the political life of William Smith M.P. (Epworth, London, 1971), ch.12.
135. Public advertiser, 12 May 1789, Letter from 'Oliver Cromwell'.
136. Essex County Record Office, The Petre Papers, MS. D/DP F187, Alexander Geddes, Considerations on the state of the English Catholics July 1791 And on the best means of improving it. f.6, 'The Catholics of the present day... are attached to the religion of the Country more sincerely than most sectaries in the nation..'.
137. Catherine Hutton, A Narrative of the riots in Birmingham (Birmingham, 1875), 5.
138. G. Williams, Artisans and sans-culottes (Edward Arnold, London, 1968), 7.

## Chemistry, Materialism and Theology in the Work of Joseph Priestley

Henri Laboucheix\*

Introduction

The thought of Joseph Priestley brilliantly exemplifies a period in the history of ideas when the sciences, philosophy and theology were intimately related. This, however, was not the first time such a synthesis had been attempted. Newton, for example, had been convinced that the intuitions of the alchemists concerning the transformation of matter were sound. He had interpreted gravity as a natural force the consequences of which are determinable even though its essence remains unknown. He maintained that light is constituted both by particles and waves, and that the human body receives sensations by way of the nerves, the brain acting as co-ordinator of this activity. For him infinite space cannot but be constituted by God.

Although Newton's influence in scientific circles was strong, he was, certainly as far as Priestley was concerned, not the sole source of inspiration. Hobbes, too, and Hartley need to be taken into account. Hobbes is to be numbered among those who have succeeded in showing how the relations between our ideas are dependent upon inter-connections in the brain, thus reducing psychology to physiology, and physiology to natural forces, the first cause of which must, for him, necessarily be God.

The eighteenth century can thus be seen to have continued the search for a synthesis in which human behaviour is understood to fall between what we would now call the exact and the human sciences. Three fields in particular were explored: chemistry, electricity and biology. All of these were studied, not in isolation, but, as it were, in their interdependence, excluding all a priori elements. The study of this phase in human thought is exciting because it takes us to the foundations of modern philosophy, at least in those respects in which philosophy is indistinguishable from science (scientia). To appreciate the originality of the enterprise we should remind ourselves of an earlier, equally notable, attempt at such a synthesis, that made by Thomas Aquinas. In so far as Aquinas strove to make the order of the universe, and the order of human nature and behaviour intelligible, crowning the enterprise with a rational metaphysics, he added immeasurably to the store of human knowledge. But to the extent that his Aristotelian physics - which contained an extremely simplified chemistry - became a rigid dogma, and to the extent that doctrine got the better of his rationalism, the pursuit of science

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was effectively subordinated to religion. In the course of this study we shall see whether or not the contrary became true once science was liberated from all restraints of dogma.

#### Chemistry, electricity, optics and biology

Many scholars in the eighteenth century, in Germany, Switzerland, France, Holland, the United States, Italy and Great Britain investigated the chemistry of bodies, the effects of electricity and light, and the chemical or electrical nature of respiration, motor activity, and the association of ideas. But it was Priestley who more than any one else concentrated his attention on the points of contact between the sciences; as though he had a presentiment that one single chain of being led, by a process of differentiation, from simple bodies to the natural forces. This is the reason why it would be futile to try to isolate his chemistry as though it could be shown to be the sole foundation of his thought. On the contrary, it is much more fruitful to study his work first in terms of those elements which derive from chemistry and electro-chemistry, and, secondly, in terms of those which relate to electro-biology and biochemistry.

In his scientific studies Priestley was wary of generalization and suspicious of philosophical and theological interpretations. We too shall respect his feeling for objectivity and his preference for empirical studies undertaken in the spirit of free enquiry.

It is a pity that Priestley paid more attention to the theories of Becher and Stahl than he did to those of Boyle and Mayow. Had he followed the latter he could have dispensed with phlogiston - that mythical substance. But if we bear in mind that despite the use of that unfortunate concept his discoveries were extremely fruitful, it may well be worthwhile to inquire whether or not Stahl's ideas in the form in which they were put forward by Priestley contain an underlying guiding principle. Let us consider the case of iron. Stahl thought that rust was produced by a kind of combustion since in both, phlogiston, the principle of fire, is set free. Iron is not, therefore, a simple substance but a complex one, since it contains phlogiston. On the other hand, rust is a simple substance because its phlogiston has been expelled. Since rust, moreover, is heavier than metal, whereas we would expect it to be lighter, we must conclude that phlogiston has a negative weight. Lavoisier was to have an easy task proving that the contrary is true, that iron is the simple substance, and that rust is in fact an oxide, that is, a substance which is both complex and heavier than iron. The thesis defended by Priestley, and which he never abandoned, was thereby shown to be erroneous. In his defeat on this issue and in his dogged perseverance we can surely see how Priestley was bewitched by the idols of the mind, and we can also see the free play of an imaginative intuition which moved from complex to simple substances in a transformational process which he had simply inverted. For Priestley it is this transformation which remains the really important feature of the theory. This explains why the phlogiston theory did not prevent him from discovering oxygen. Once again he set out to reduce a complex substance, and this time it really was a complex substance, namely mercuric oxide, by subjecting it to heat, and thus obtaining what he called 'dephlogisticated air'.

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Strangely

Strangely, Priestley succeeded in making important discoveries even though he was entrammelled in language that was for his purposes groundless. He admitted that he had difficulties in his choice of terms, (1) and so he stuck to the traditional vocabulary: Fixed air, mephitic, inflammable. What was required in order to know precisely at any given moment what new gas he had discovered was a table of correlation. But even given this there would have been difficulties, because inflammable air is not necessarily hydrogen. As early as 1772 Scheele had experienced similar difficulties: when he separated oxygen and nitrogen he called one 'the air of fire' and the other 'bad air'. It was Chaptal who gave to the latter the name nitrogen, and Lavoisier who invented the term azote (the term indicating that the gas in question does not support animal life). Without doubt nitrogen is the better term, because it suggests an association or transmutation. But to return to Priestley, one simply has to admit that he was not over much concerned with the vocabulary in which his discoveries were expressed. Had he been a mathematician he might well have given purely symbolic expression to the transformations he brought about; as it was, it was simply unfortunate that of all the terminologies open to him he chose the one which corresponded least well with the facts.

My aim, however, is not to make a comprehensive study of Priestley's researches. That has already been done, and magnificently well done, by Partington. (2) My purpose, rather, is to show how his mind advanced to the very frontiers of science in his quest for the substance and the forces of which the universe is composed. It was for this reason that Priestley strove repeatedly to submit chemical substances to tests for electricity, if only to demonstrate the falsity of the anti-phlogiston theory. (3) He refused to admit that water could be resolved into two elements, oxygen and hydrogen, and to demonstrate this he conducted the following experiment: he mixed in a retort some dephlogisticated air (oxygen) and some inflammable air (hydrogen) and subjected the whole to electrical discharges. The two gases were, he maintained, transformed, not into water but into 'phlogisticated nitric acid'. (4) John Maclean was to show quite easily that Priestley had neglected traces of water on the walls of the retort, adding that what was nitric acid could have been formed only if a trace of azote remained in the oxygen, i.e. if his sample was not pure. (5) In this experiment Priestley indeed made an error of the same magnitude as that entailed by his phlogiston theory. But he remained not one whit the less convinced of the importance of the part played by electrical forces in the transformation of chemical substances.

There are fascinating similarities in the genial supposition made by contemporary astro-physicists - who could just as easily be called astro-chemists - that high energy radiation can transform a mixture of methane of ammonia and water vapour into amino-acids, and in the notable experiments of Miller and Urey in which a series of electrical discharges through the same mixture produce the molecular chains which are present at the origin of life. Perhaps it is not wise to attempt to read contemporary science into the past, although it is eminently desirable to appraise from time to time the contributions of past scientists if only to appreciate more readily how penetrating their understanding was.

Scorn has long been heaped on Descartes's vortices, even though from the atom to the planetary systems and from the planetary systems to the galaxies we find nothing but a universal spinning motion. Although Priestley was unfortunately mistaken, his intuitions were nonetheless inspired; his experiments represent the stirrings of a new science: electro-chemistry.

Even in his early experiments Priestley was interested in the effect of electricity upon physiological processes. As early as 1767 he published The History and present state of electricity. He subjected a rat to an electrical discharge and saw it die. The same result occurred with a kitten. To kill a cat, however, two charges were required. When he repeated the experiment upon a dog he observed convulsions, respiratory difficulties and a state of listlessness - it was only very much later that this technique was used for treating certain anxiety states - and after several charges the dog became blind and died. Priestley dissected the animal and noticed a thickening of the cornea. (6) The convulsions demonstrated that there is a connection between the electrical fluid and the mechanism of movement; the state of listlessness showed that the working of the brain had been affected. The blindness produced by the experiment revealed that there is some relationship between sight and electricity. Beccaria had also demonstrated how the muscles could be stimulated by electricity, and at the end of the century Galvani was to show how the brain secreted an electrical fluid which controlled muscular movement. (7) Priestley's experiments were nonetheless of fundamental importance in showing that electricity is present in sensation, in movement, and in states of consciousness; in addition to electro-chemistry he was also investigating electro-neurology. In doing so he tried to answer questions that had been posed by Newton:

Query 12. Do not the rays of light in falling upon the bottom of the eye excite vibrations in the tunica retina? Which vibrations, being propagated along the solid fibres of the optic nerves into the brain, cause the sense of seeing?

Query 24. Is not animal motion performed by the vibrations of this medium, excited in the brain by the power of the will, and propagated from thence through the solid, pellucid and uniform capillamenta of the nerves into the muscles for contracting and dilating them? (8)

There is one further subject which excited Priestley's curiosity - the point where chemistry and vegetable and animal life come together. He had noticed that fixed air (carbon dioxide) is hostile to all forms of animal life, but he had also noticed that some mint placed in a sunlit retort containing foul air purified that air. When he informed Franklin of this, the latter replied, 'that the vegetable creation should restore the air which is spoiled by the animal part of it looks like a rational system'. (9)

This experiment was completed later by Ingenhousz who noticed that a plant deprived of light gives out carbon dioxide. Finally, at the beginning of the nineteenth century Nicolas de Saussure confirmed that a plant exposed to light absorbs carbon dioxide from the air and increases in weight. Priestley for his part had succeeded in establishing a connection between light and some chemical changes that occur both in the air and in the vegetable world, (10) a conclusion that Hales had only imperfectly anticipated in his Vegetable staticks (1727).

It now remained to give an account of respiration. Here again Priestley stayed faithful to his favourite theory: 'the use of the lungs is to carry off a putrid effluvia or to discharge that phlogiston which had been taken into the system with the aliment and was become, as it were, effete; the air that is respired serving as a menstruum for that purpose...the blood appearing to be a fluid wonderfully formed to imbibe, and part with, that principle which the chemists call phlogiston'. (11)

If we note that Priestley was writing to Young in 1782 that, 'phlogiston is the essence of the food of plants and animals' (12) what we can detect beneath this rather formal terminology is the foundation of another new science - biochemistry.

This was then a happy period in which science in its formative stages was multidisciplinary, apprehending the whole universe in all its variety as a limitless series of transformations: the study of heat leading us to the atom; light and electricity leading to chemical syntheses; these syntheses in their turn embracing the whole of life; and the series continuing even beyond death, for the process of decomposition renews the process of chemical change that is due to light, electricity, heat, and gravitation. It may be that Priestley made many serious mistakes, and that he was too heavily influenced by a rather obscure and oversimple terminology which derived from Paracelsus. But if we examine the more important of his many works to see what unity they have, it becomes clear that he believed that everything forms an indissoluble whole and that chemistry is inseparably bound up with every form in which energy manifests itself. It is this series of multiple effects that we shall have to bear in mind when we study Priestley the theologian and philosopher, remembering all the while that light would be nothing without the chemical elements with which it engages, and that these elements would be nothing were it not for the fundamental dynamism of the universe.

## II. Materialism and theology.

There is no debate more engaging than one in which a champion of an all-embracing determinism confronts a defender of liberty. When both opponents are scientists, philosophers, moralists and theologians, when both acknowledge Newton as their master, and when both attack the doctrines of established religion, we are presented with an invaluable opportunity of examining two arguments which proceed from matter and arrive at the Deity, having nonetheless parted company on the way precisely on the issue of liberty.

Although it is one of the most stimulating debates in the history of philosophy, this encounter between Joseph Priestley and Richard Price is also one of the most difficult. It requires a preliminary study of the scientific substrate which underlies their thought and without which little can be truly understood. And it requires that their terminology should be precisely defined at each stage of the argument. When Priestley entered the controversy his main work in science had already been done. What remained was to construct a philosophy and a theology based upon a new understanding of the world. He did not succeed in making anything more than a preliminary and a highly imperfect sketch

of such a system, but it was enough to indicate the outlines of a universal dynamism.

Price was the disciple of Clarke, Cudworth and Locke. He was a mathematician, a fine metaphysician and a formidable logician. Priestley was the disciple of Hobbes, Collins and Hartley. (13) He was an excellent observer, a fine psychologist, and, like Price, a formidable logician. Price was concerned with the normative study of man. Priestley, on the contrary, studied man as he is, the product of an intelligence whose mechanism operated according to necessary laws. 'Mr. Hobbes was the first who understood and maintained the proper doctrine of philosophical necessity.' (14)

#### The Sources.

Hobbes's influence upon Priestley was so strong that it is important to bear in mind the concept of the association of ideas (trayne of thoughts regulated) as we find it in Leviathan:

'The trayn of regulated thoughts is of two kinds; one, when of an effect imagined, we seek the causes, or means that produce it...the other is, when imagining anything whatsoever, we seek all the possible effects, that can by it be produced...'. (15)

In brief, every intention automatically stimulates a series of effects, and is the necessary condition for the adoption of a strategy: how can I achieve what I want, given that it can only be achieved if certain conditions are fulfilled? Obviously this necessary series of interrelated ideas might come into conflict with another, showing that the objective first considered stands no chance of being realized. But whether the original intention is abandoned or not, we can be certain that some such system will be put into operation. But Priestley was not just a disciple of Hobbes; for he also admired Collins whose influence he acknowledged by editing his essay on liberty. (16) In his preface to this edition Priestley regretted the fact that Hobbes and Collins were thought of as atheists, because, as far as he was concerned, the doctrines of philosophical necessity did not necessarily lead to atheism. As for Collins's preface, it removes many ambiguities in Priestley's later reasoning. The following passage is crucial:

'When I affirm necessity, I contend only for what is called moral necessity, meaning thereby that man, who is an intelligent and sensible being, is determined by his reason and his sense.' (17)

Collins adds:

'True liberty therefore is consistent with necessity, and ought not to be opposed to it, but only to compulsion.' (18)

But he also says:

'That alone is true goodness which flows from disposition. Whereas goodness founded on any reasonings whatsoever, is a very precarious thing.'

and:

'there can be no motives but pleasure and pain, to make a man do or forbear any action'. (19)

Collins

Collins does not deny that men can act in a rational manner, but he maintains that the actions of most men are ultimately determined either by hope or by fear, a view that leads to what we should now call the practice of conditioning.

A third important influence on Priestley was Hartley. Priestley edited his Theory of the human mind, and he wrote several essays on the doctrine of the association of ideas. (20) In the first of these essays he praised Hartley for basing his science upon the Principia, and particularly on the following passage from Newton's work:

'And now we might add something concerning a certain most subtle spirit which pervades and lies hid in all gross bodies; by the force and action of which spirit the particles of bodies attract one another at near distances, as well repelling as attracting the neighbouring corpuscles; and light is emitted, reflected, refracted, inflected, and heats bodies; and all sensation is excited and the members of animal bodies move at the command of the will, namely, by the vibrations of this spirit, mutually propagated along the solid filaments of the nerves, from the outward organs of sense to the brain, and from the brain into the muscles.' (21)

For Hartley, and for Priestley too, this subtle force which constitutes matter, and which animates all living beings is not an incorporeal substance. All incorporeality has to be rejected whatever the consequences for established theologies.

Hartley certainly utilizes the theory of the association of ideas which had been established by Hobbes. If in addition we emphasize the influence of Newton upon Hartley it is only to show that the ideas from these two sources become interdependent and inextricably linked in Priestley's thought. The first, the inexhaustible legacy of Newton, relies upon the notion of a universal mechanism regulated from the infinitely great to the infinitely small by natural forces of every kind - gravitational, electrical, cohesive, and subtle forces which animate all things and every being. The second, equally valuable - the legacy of Hobbes, Collins, and Hartley - demonstrates the activity of natural forces within the human brain whereby sensations, desires and intentions form another mechanistic order and produce different series of interconnexions in the course of which various trains of ideas can conflict without altering their basic natures.

There is, however, this difference: whereas Hobbes and Collins apply this analysis to explain the behaviour of the vast majority of human kind, they reserve to a small élite the power of supplementing this psychological determinism with the moral determinism of a rationality that is the source of its own laws. What we shall see is whether Priestley extends psychological determinism to the whole of human kind without exception, or whether he too allows that there are some men for whom reason is or can be a motive to action.

Matter

### Matter, force and Godhead

To understand Priestley's materialism it is essential to pay careful attention to his conception of matter. To refute Price's claim that atoms are impenetrable he published a new work in 1777, (22) using Newton's conception - also adopted by Price - of an atomic particle that is of necessity infinitely solid and therefore constituted by forces of attraction that are infinitely powerful. It would therefore seem as though the impenetrability thesis must prevail. Be that as it may, Priestley maintained that if we remove the cohesive force all solidity will disappear. (23) Although this conclusion follows, Priestley does not demonstrate how to dispense with the notion of an infinite force. He does indeed see the difficulty but contents himself with qualifying Newton's thesis by claiming that the infinite solidity of atoms is not absolute. (24) On this supposition the material atom disappears and we are left with nothing but the forces of attraction and repulsion: 'matter has, in fact, no properties but those of attraction and repulsion'. (25) Priestley does not therefore believe that there is any real difference between matter and force, and he would find it equally acceptable to be called the advocate of an uncompromising materialism or of an uncompromising 'spiritualism', or, rather, dynamism. If he had to choose, one feels that he would incline towards 'spiritualism' or dynamism, and deny that matter is in the final analysis inert. It is not that he believed that force is active and that matter alone is passive. Rather, he maintained that all forces whatsoever are passive, and since these could not exist without an active cause it is therefore necessary to postulate that that cause is God: 'As there is no active force in nature but that of God, this being is the infinite force which unites all the parts of matter, an immense spring which is continual action.' (26)

These considerations show that according to Priestley, electricity, light and gravitation are much more fundamental than the complex bodies that are continuously changing in accordance with the laws of chemical mutation. The whole of chemistry is therefore dependent upon what we in our day term energy, and the source of this is God. Newton had postulated that the greater the accumulation of atoms the more likely they are to fragment, and, conversely, that the nearer we approach to an absolute, irreducible atom the greater the need to postulate an infinite force. Priestley, although with some hesitation, rejected this last notion for he discovered in it little other than a mathematical contrivance, and modern science seems to be justifying his view. Recently the proton has been smashed and it did not require an infinite force to do this. But who knows whether or not some day a solid fragment will be discovered in this shattered particle that will resist all but an infinite force? If such a fragment is discovered Newton and Price will be vindicated.

A further point needs to be considered. Priestley was driven to postulate a God by the logic of necessity. If everything in the world is passive, including the human mind, we have to postulate an active cause. But if this proof of the existence of

God from science commits Priestley to an irrefutable metaphysical position, this is not to say that it gives even an indication of the nature of the Deity. What is the nature of that which transcends both matter and force? Of this we have no knowledge whatsoever: 'God is, and ever must remain, the incomprehensible.' (27)

Clarke too had maintained that the nature of God is unknown. Yet it is not because the divine nature is beyond the reach of human knowledge that no attribute can be predicated of Him. In a world becoming increasingly accessible to the understanding by virtue of the laws of gravitation, by the discoveries of chemistry and its attendant sciences, and by that providential equilibrium between animal pollution and vegetable regeneration, it is not possible, according to Priestley, not to conceive of an intelligent first cause. Priestley defended himself against the charge of atheism and quoted Cudworth to support his position:

'All corporealists must not be condemned for atheists, but only those of them who assert that there is no conscious, intellectual nature presiding over the whole universe.' (28)

The system put forward by Priestley lacks neither plausibility nor rigour. If, as he affirmed, activity in the precise meaning of the term is the cause of all movement, God is of necessity active and man is condemned to passivity. It is on this basic problem of universal determinism that Price and Priestley confronted the issue of philosophical liberty.

### III. Necessity and Liberty.

If all the forces in the universe are subject to law, and if all that occurs within the human brain is reducible to a rigidly mechanistic system, one may well wonder whether the notion of human freedom is absurd. Priestley does not hesitate:

'Indeed there is no absurdity more glaring to my understanding than the notion of philosophical liberty.' (29)

He devoted a whole work to defending his conception of philosophical necessity against Price's notion of philosophical liberty. But it would, however, be an error to attribute determinism in its extreme form to him. From the outset he readily admits that man has the power to suspend the last stage of an association of ideas: 'a liberty of suspending our determination...is a liberty that I am far from disclaiming', but he also adds that if a train of thought is interrupted it can only be so because another has intervened. In short one mechanism is displaced by another, and this is especially evident when the fear of punishment disrupts a series of ideas devoted to the pursuit of pleasure. While the thought associated with pleasure serves as a force of attraction, the fear of punishment acts as a force of repulsion. Thus man's situation is not really so different from that of a material body subject to two opposing forces and inevitably controlled by the stronger of them. From this point of view whether a man pursues pleasure or whether he avoids pain, there is no positive action, only passive reaction. Following Hobbes and Collins, Priestley therefore believes that fear is an efficient instrument in altering human

behaviour

behaviour:

'If the impossibility of acting well has arisen from a bad disposition or habit, its having been impossible with that disposition or habit, to act virtuously, is never any reason for our forbearing punishment: because we know that punishment is proper to correct that disposition and that habit.' (30)

Priestley is therefore a proponent of what we would now call conditioning by fear. To be thoroughly consistent he should have added conditioning by reward, and had he done so his position would have been not far removed from Skinner's behaviourism and the doctrine of 'reinforcement'. But the time was not ripe for replacing an educational system based on an austere and rigorous discipline with one that seeks to influence the development of personality by the systematic use of rewards. The question arises, moreover, as to the criteria on which the case for proposing the conditioning of an entire society may rest. It was for this reason that Priestley took a great deal of care in formulating what became his political philosophy. According to him the end of every political institution is the public interest, the greatest good, that is, not simply of a particular state, nor even (as with Bentham) of the greatest number, but of the whole human race. In the following crucial passage Priestley relates in a unique series of interdependencies chemistry and cosmology, moral science and political science (in the sense in which Hobbes used 'political science' and 'political philosophy' as interchangeable terms):

'Philosophical necessity has been shewn to imply a chain of causes and effects, established by infinite wisdom, and terminating in the greatest good of the whole universe: evils of all kinds natural and moral being admitted, as far as they contribute to that end...' (31)

This passage is noteworthy not simply because it defines utilitarianism in its widest possible sense, but also on account of its realism, the ready appreciation that such an objective could not be achieved without all kinds of suffering. One may well criticize Priestley on the ground that this toleration of suffering, which he regarded as inevitable, leads ultimately to the justification of the worst excesses of totalitarianism. But this was not his intention. In fact it was not Price, who criticized him on this score, but Calvinism - which they both attacked - that he had chiefly in mind. In place of the happiness of the whole, which admittedly entails certain constraints, Calvinism offered the eternal punishments that are the consequence of original sin and predestination, a process of redemption in which men are completely passive, and the curse that has afflicted humanity since the Fall. (32)

Here we have a dilemma. How did Priestley himself come to conceive of the doctrine of universal utility? If this doctrine already inheres in the human understanding, how is it that utilitarianism has not been admitted to be true by everyone? If, on the other hand, the doctrine is due to the effective exercise of intelligence, what then becomes of the theory of the association of ideas? Priestley does not give us a satisfactory solution to this problem, but he does hold that although in general men are determined in their actions either by the pursuit

of pleasure or by the fear of pain, there are some exceptions to this rule. If as Hobbes maintained every man seeks his own good, it follows that any general principle of action which claims to be valid for all men must of necessity include the good of everyone, and thus secure the welfare of the whole. And since the good admits of degrees, the dominant principle should be the highest possible good. Just as there exists a chain of consequences that secures the good of each individual man, there should be, by parity of reason, one that maximizes the happiness of all men. What distinguishes the good of the individual from the good of the whole is not so much a difference in kind in the scientific reasoning which makes no distinction between the one and the other, but a difference in degree, and the understanding engages ultimately with an abstract principle. One moves, so to speak, from the interplay of sensations, inclinations and desires, to the interplay of ideas, and it is at this point that the understanding, hitherto passive, takes control and marshals the whole into a coherent system. At this stage, Price would say, the understanding becomes active. Priestley, on the other hand, would say that it remains passive in the sense that even in the exercise of its power it could not do other than it does. And it is this consideration which leads him to claim that Price is a 'necessarian' without being aware that he is. Furthermore, Priestley would be the first to agree that the exercise of the rational faculty requires, beyond a certain critical stage, the most careful and exacting attention: 'the improvement of our natures, and consequently the advancement of our natures, and consequently the advancement of our happiness, by enlarging the comprehension of our minds...is, in its own nature, a gradual thing'. (33)

Priestley allows that action can be based upon abstract principles, although he has to admit that it is difficult to achieve:

'It requires much reflection, meditation and strength of mind, to convert speculative principles into practical ones ; and till any principle be properly felt, it is not easy to judge of its real tendency and power.' (34)

When Priestley writes in this way it is extremely difficult to distinguish the philosophical necessity that he defends from Price's philosophical liberty, especially since Price understands by moral liberty a capacity of power governed by laws that are grounded upon necessary truths. 'True liberty therefore is consistent with necessity, and ought not to be opposed to it, but only to compulsion.' (35)

What really distinguishes Priestley and Price is that the former sees man as a mechanism moved by sensations and inclinations, while the latter sees him as a being capable of regulating his own conduct. But it is important not to exaggerate the differences between them. Priestley shows how a rational order can be transformed into a political one when he demonstrates the possibility of overcoming, by conscious redirection, the natural order of things in which individual projects are motivated by individual objectives. Price, for his part, fully appreciates that most men are captive to their own dispositions and reflect the social order of their own times simply because they have neither the ability nor the opportunity to develop their powers of reasoning by exacting studies in science and philosophy.

'That alone is true goodness which flows from disposition... Whereas goodness founded on any reasonings whatsoever, is a very precarious thing.' (36)

Compared with the essay on philosophical necessity, the correspondence that Price and Priestley exchanged on the same theme is, in some respects, disappointing. Without doubt the debate sparkles in the rigour of the exchanges as well as in the excellence of its style. But the confrontation - and this was perhaps predictable - tends to formalize rather than develop their positions so that it is very difficult to see in Priestley's contributions how reason can be the source of our ideas of rectitude, and equally difficult to find in Price's any account of the way in which our behaviour is fashioned by the social order. We shall find it convenient to leave aside theological problems such as the immortality of the soul and the pre-existence of Christ; what is more relevant to our theme is to note that while Priestley was more concerned with the forces that constitute a penetrable atom - remembering from his experiments in chemistry the role of electricity and light - Price for his part, thinking in terms of an essentially mechanistic frame of reference, conceived matter to be composed of impenetrable atoms endowed with a force of inertia:

'(Dr. Price)...That matter is inert, or that it will continue in that state of rest or motion which it possesses till some foreign cause alters that state, and that this alteration of state must be in proportion to the impressed force...these positions are the foundations...in particular the foundation of Sir Isaac Newton's philosophy...To me they appear self-evident truths.' (37)

Price adds: 'but unsolid matter, that is matter which admits other matters into its place without resistance, cannot act by impulse; and this is the only way in which it is capable of acting.' (38)

Since for Priestley matter ultimately resolves itself into force, and for Price it retains its atomic structure, we find that whereas Priestley, the chemist, employs the language of dynamics, Price, the mathematician, retains the language of mechanics. What is nonetheless curious is that they both refer back to Newton.

But although it is true that Newton following Galileo and Kepler had identified in matter the vis insita that forms the basis of mechanics, it is no less true that the gravitational force which he was able to measure and the subtle forces whose extraordinary importance he anticipated were no less significant in his eyes. A similar antithesis is to be found, much later, in the controversy concerning the nature of light: some argue that it is corpuscular in nature, others maintain that it is composed of waves. In the seventeenth query of his treatise on optics Newton combined both concepts in the same theory.

This controversy sheds some light on another difficulty concerning the nature of liberty. To the question 'Does man possess a power of self-motion' Price answered emphatically 'Yes':

'There

'There must be somewhere a self-moving power. For one thing cannot move another, and that another in infinitum.. And, if there is one self-moving power in nature, why may there not be many?' (39)

Priestley on the other hand, referring his readers to his disquisition on necessity equally emphatically answered, 'No': 'As to a self-motive power I deny that man has any such thing.'

On this point, it has to be admitted, Price is extremely bold: from postulating the necessary existence of a first cause he proceeds to predicate of man the chief attribute of the Divine, and, where it is crucial to distinguish them, he confuses the notions of self-determination and self-motion. The former, which is borrowed from Locke ('determination to themselves'), implies that man is capable of making a judgement. He who exercises judgement in respect of his own fears determines them himself; and there is no better judge of the danger he finds himself in than the threatened person. It is this capacity for judgement that endows him with the right of self-defence. The notion of self-motion, on the other hand, is neither a political nor a legal concept, but a metaphysical notion applied to man's activity, his rationality and psychology.

Price bases his system on the notion that there are a number of self-evident, necessary truths that constitute the moral being of the Deity himself, just as the idea of infinity must, as it was for Clarke, (40) be a constituting mode of God. To the extent that man frames the kind of mathematical ethic that Locke speaks of, he partakes, in his finite nature, of the moral person of God. And if the moral imperative derived from these necessary truths turns him away from the course of passive reaction to motivating forces, causing him to act towards a given end, then the resulting action ought to be described as an 'automotion'. Price thought of his own work as deriving largely from Locke, but in fact it was Hobbes who created a complete political theory from what he called theorems, but which became in the treatment he gave to them, laws of nature. The difference between Hobbes and Price lies chiefly in the fact that Hobbes can be seen to have anticipated Priestley in maintaining that in the final analysis fear is much more important than reason in changing man's behaviour. Price, however, could justly have argued that Hobbes had in his own person given a good example of how reason can be brought to shape a man's conduct, and that he had not denied that there are some benevolent men for whom reason is a sufficient principle of action. Price thought that there is a danger in relying upon conditioning by fear, and addressed the following question to Priestley:

'Is it not more honourable to the deity to conceive of him, as the parent, guide, governor, and judge of free beings formed after his image, with powers of reason and self-determination, than to conceive of him, as the former and conductor of a conscious machinery, or the mover and controller of an universe of puppets?' (41)

Price did not think that the world could be constructed simply by conditioning. He preserved the role of hope and fear in the causal series which leads from man's perceptions to the individual strategies he adopts, but he also insisted upon the exercise of practical reason, so much so indeed that the highest link in

the ascending chain of reasoning which leads Priestley to philosophical necessity is identical with the point from which Price begins a descending series of arguments which lead him to philosophical liberty. But what, it may be asked, is philosophical liberty if it does not ultimately rest upon a moral necessity?:

'If Dr. Price admits, as in this place, he seems to do, that our determinations certainly depend upon the state of our minds, I shall have no objection to his calling us free agents. I believe we are so in the popular sense of the word, and I think it perfectly consistent with all the necessity that I ascribe to man'. (42)

### Conclusion

In chemistry Priestley's experimental work was far superior to his theoretical work. Nonetheless, at a time when the legacy of Newton was in danger of becoming so impoverished that it would be reduced to presenting the world wholly in mechanistic terms, he re-discovered all the riches of an underlying dynamism whose controlling influence had been in part revealed in his work on the nature of life henceforth considered as a series of chemical transformations. If the term matter is reserved for those atoms composed of cohesive forces and subject to the laws of mechanics, and if by forces we mean those powers of attraction and repulsion that constitute the atom as well as those that are external to it, Priestley appears to have been less a materialist than the author of a dynamic theory of the universe. The term spiritualist is far too ambiguous to be useful in this context. Priestley did not fall into the trap of thinking that the dynamism of the universe is necessarily a direct manifestation of the Divine. On the contrary he refused to distinguish between matter and force because he found the same unchangeable passivity in both. Even if this passivity assumes the form of radiation, of fluidity or attraction, in no instance does matter initiate movement; on the contrary matter is moved passively in an inexhaustible series of transformations whose mystery the understanding has not yet fully penetrated.

Priestley could have confined his attention to this universe in which we find an order of things favourable to the maintenance of life, the vegetable world restoring what the animal world destroys. But he was not just a scientist; he was also a metaphysician. He went beyond the passive forces in the universe that science progressively elucidates to infer by the strict exercise of logic and in complete independence of all dogma the existence of an active and intelligent Deity. He refused to accept a conception of the world according to which, from the very beginning, man's nature was corrupt, in which punishment pursues him beyond the grave, and where everyone is subject to a predestinated order that rewards him with eternal bliss or condemns him to eternal damnation. Priestley believes that it is on earth that man seeks his true happiness, and that the only just law, since it corresponds to his real nature, is the law of university utility conceived in the form of the greatest possible good. He acknowledges that this good cannot be reached without suffering, but given the ultimate goal of the good of the whole, this suffering is infinitely preferable to the arbitrary terrors of a religion that is inherently pessimistic.

His

His observations on human behaviour lead him to conclude that the same chain of cause and effect relationships regulates without distinction the material world and animal and human life. Fear and the prospect of pleasure stand in relation to each other as repulsion to attraction. Such is human nature, and if a man's behaviour leads him into crime, it is appropriate to modify it through fear of punishment. The majority of men can only be changed for the better by forces of this kind. But there is no need to prescribe a formal conditioning for universal application. Everyone is given an intelligence that enables him, by following the series of causes and effects which relates the individual to the common good, to discover the principles of practical reasoning, the ultimate determiner of the understanding, and thus to perform of his own volition what the political order would constrain him to do. Priestley, like Hobbes, had no great confidence in the effectiveness of rational choice unless it was reinforced, at least at the stage in the evolutionary process reached in his own society where ignorance and prejudice were too prevalent to allow full rein to the exercise of rational understanding. In thinking thus, he was not so much pessimistic as a realistic judge of the human condition at a time when science had hardly begun to offer itself as the source of morality and philosophy, politics and religion.

Like Newton, Priestley rejected the kind of esotericism derived from Egyptian sources that affirms the existence of incorporeal substances not reducible to forces subject to empirical verification. He retains nothing of Aristotelian physics in which matter is treated as being in a state of rest and in which motion becomes almost mythical. But could one say that he has borrowed from Aristotle his conception of a prime mover? The truth is that any intelligence inspired by a strict regard for logic, which transcends the existing frontiers of physics, could not help but postulate an active source to complement the passivity of the world. The alchemy of the middle ages and the Renaissance caught his imagination more than the brilliant intellectual edifice of Thomism, which was quite absent from his thought. In the history of ideas one could say that he reaches back beyond the school of Socrates to revive and develop the wide-ranging spirit of research of a Democritus.

By virtue of the fact that he combined Aristotelian physics, treated as a frame of reference, with the doctrines of the Church, conceived to be the criteria of truth, Thomas Aquinas may justly be said to have subjected science to religious control. Priestley, on the other hand, by relying upon a Newtonian dynamics, which was treated as a hypothesis capable of empirical verification, and upon the light of reason guided by the imperatives of philosophical necessity, was brought logically to a position where he subordinated religion to science without, however, sacrificing anything of the transcendental character of religion. Thus the finite nature of human intelligence becomes the foundation for an infinite Intelligence, and a relative good the foundation of an absolute one. With Newton, Hobbes and Priestley we are indeed at the beginnings of modern science and, by extension, modern philosophy, whether it is

natural science - or natural philosophy - or political science - or political philosophy. In so far as contemporary philosophy seems to seek a return to this noble tradition, it follows a rewarding path where it cannot be said that a dynamic materialism is necessarily hostile to rational theology.

Was Priestley the enemy of liberty? Taken in isolation the word has virtually no meaning for a scientist of his kind. If the question concerns the freedom to act and to express oneself without restraint, then Priestley, the dissenter, upheld and defended freedom. But this was not the question that taxed his understanding. What he sought to answer was whether, given the unalterable character of his powers of perception and reflexion, man really has an open choice between different courses of action in those situations where all the factors bearing on the decision are known to him. Priestley would not concede that there could be such an open choice. For what this would require is knowledge of the totality of causes, including not only the motives that originate in our sensations and inclinations, but the reasoning of the philosopher whose reflexion leads him to the discovery of the law of universal utility. This philosophical necessity justifies its name because it depends ultimately upon the workings of an intelligence, and has for its ultimate end that state of well-being after which all men, without exception, aspire. There is, therefore, nothing in common between Priestley's philosophical necessity and liberty as it is commonly understood. But neither is there anything in common between liberty as it is commonly understood and Price's philosophical liberty, since the latter is conceived to be a superior form of moral necessity.

The power of self-motion which Price invokes, grounded as it is in an abstract frame of reference which, though determined by reason, is identical with the framework attributed to God, is not in its essentials very different from Priestley's account of the nature of the decision making process in which his thought achieves a high degree of abstraction in the search for a natural law. Just as there is a point at which matter resolves itself into force so that we can no longer see why it should be thought that dynamism is opposed to materialism, philosophical liberty in turn resolves itself into necessity and we can no longer see why it is thought that 'necessarianism' is opposed to 'liberalism'.

The point at which the two systems diverge lies in their practical implications: Price fears that if the process of conditioning is applied to whole societies we shall end by de-personalizing individuals; Priestley fears that if there is no such conditioning the progress of civilization will be interrupted by a return to the law of the jungle. It is not easy then to reconcile the restraints that are necessary for the effective management of the State with a respect for the individuals that compose it, when those individuals are not yet, truly, persons.

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## Neither Democrat nor Republican

D. O. Thomas.

On 1 March 1790 on the eve of the debate in the House of Commons on Fox's motion for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, Richard Price wrote (1) to a Member of Parliament to give him some evidence which could be used in defence of the Dissenters in case it should be argued that they were republicans and democrats. The recipient of this letter was probably William Smith, the member for Sudbury, who was a prominent Dissenter and who had been closely identified with the campaign for repeal. (2)

Price sent Smith quotations from his own works. One was the following passage from The evidence for a future period of improvement in the state of mankind with the means and duty of promoting it, the address which Price had delivered to the supporters of New College, Hackney on 25 April 1787 to celebrate the first anniversary of the founding of the College:

'I cannot help taking this opportunity to remove a very groundless suspicion with respect to myself, by adding that so far am I from preferring a government purely republican, that I look upon our own constitution of government as better adapted than any other to this country, and in Theory excellent, etc. And this I believe to be true of the whole body of British subjects among Protestant Dissenters. I know not one individual among them who would not tremble at the thought of changing into a Democracy our mixed form of government, or who has any other wish with respect to it than to restore it to purity and vigour by removing the defects in our representation, and establishing that independence of the three estates on one another in which its essence consists.' (3)

The other passage to which Price referred was from Observations on the importance of the American Revolution. In his letter to Smith he wrote:

'In my pamphlet on the American Revolution, p.72, I have felicitated the United States on their being a confederation of states "without Kings, without Lords, and without Bishops". But in a Note I have explained this by saying, "that I did not mean by it to express a general Preference of a Republican constitution of Government, and that, in my opinion Britain did not admit of such a constitution; and that, in particular, by Bishops I meant, not any officers among christians merely spiritual, but Lords Spiritual as distinguished from Lords temporal, or Clergymen raised to pre-eminence and invested with civil honours and authority, by a state establishment.' (4)

In the debate on 2 March William Smith followed Edmund Burke, but from the account of his speech given in The Parliamentary history there is no indication that he referred to the material that Price had sent to him. Nor is there any evidence that the other speakers in the debate alleged or referred to allegations that Price was a republican and a democrat. Price was however criticized on other grounds. In commenting on A Discourse on the love of our country Charles James Fox, although he allowed that

Price 'had delivered many noble sentiments, worthy of an enlightened philosopher who was unconfined by local attachments, and gloried in the freedom of all the human race' thought that he was unwise to present his argument from the pulpit:

'To make of the pulpit, the altar, or sacramental table, political engines, he must ever condemn, whether in a dissenter or a churchman. The clergy in their sermons, ought no more to handle political topics, than the House to discuss subjects of morality and religion. Arguing as he had done against the prostitution of the sacramental test, religion and politics ought ever to be kept separate'. (5)

To preach politics, Fox maintained, however elevated the principles by which they were inspired, was hardly consistent with the dissociation of Church and State upon which the case for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts was based. Burke agreed with Fox on this point but his main complaint against Price - at least as far as this debate was concerned - was that he sought the destruction of the Anglican establishment. (6) Along with quotations from Samuel Palmer's The Protestant Dissenter's catechism and Robert Robinson's A Plan of lectures in the principles of Nonconformity for the instruction of catechumens, and Priestley's notorious 'gunpowder' passage (7) Burke quoted an extract from Price's Discourse, all to show that the Dissenters were hostile to the Established Church. The account of his speech in The Parliamentary history does not specify the passage which Burke cited, but it was probably the one in which Price suggested how men of weight 'from their rank or literature' may set up a form of rational and manly worship outside the Established Church and so 'bear a testimony against that application of civil power to the support of particular modes of faith, which obstructs human improvement, and perpetuates error'. (8)

Although those who opposed the Dissenters in the debate on the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts seem to have been more concerned with the threat they posed to the Established Church than with their alleged avowal of republican and democratic principles, Price's fears that the Dissenters would be attacked on these grounds were not unreasonable, for the allegations had been and still were frequently made. Earlier in his career when he published Observations on the nature of civil liberty in defence of the American rebels, the pamphlets written in reply were full of denunciations of republicanism and democracy. Some of these were crude. John Shebbeare, for example, had not scrupled to include Price among those who would repeat the crimes of the regicides: 'George the third, like Charles the first, is to be murdered, to give the people liberty.' (9) Others more temperate assumed that Price's advocacy of the principle of self-government prepared the ground for the justification of democracy. Henry Goodricke, for example, claimed that Price was in error in supposing that 'a democratical constitution' is the only just and lawful form of government. (10) John Lind argued that it would be impossible to sustain democratic institutions because even if introduced they would soon give way to more oligarchic forms. (11) Thomas Hutchinson assumed that it was a good argument against Price that the degree of virtue necessary to sustain a democracy was not to be found in any

known

known society, (12) and J. Moir, author of Obedience the best character, claimed that 'the universal degeneracy and selfishness of modern time was fatal to representative institutions'. (13)

Many of the criticisms made in 1776 were repeated in the pamphlets evoked by Price's A Discourse on the love of our country. From a pulpit in Birmingham George Croft maintained that the 'charge of Republican principles' against the Dissenters was well founded. (14) In Observations on Dr. Price's revolution sermon Edward Sayer noted that 'the overbearing insolence of sedition that commands a resistance of authority, is the traditional, hereditary and indefeasible prerogative of the conventicle throne'. (15) In A Free examination of Dr. Price's and Dr. Priestley's sermons William Keate claimed that Price and Priestley upheld as writers 'who are supposed to have diffused useful knowledge on the rights of mankind, to have vanquished error, and to have established truth' only those whose principles are avowedly republican. Among the latter he included Milton, Locke, Sidney and Hoadly. (16) Burke, as Christopher Wyvill noted in A Defence of Dr. Price and the reformers of England, found it only too easy to raise against the Dissenters fears of conspiracy and republicanism. (17) The critics were eager to show that democratic ideals were not practicable: William Coxe, for example, claimed that experience had shown that 'democracy is not a proper form of government for a large state' and that in 'great confines it must either end in monarchy, or engender perpetual anarchy'. (18) In a celebrated passage Edward Gibbon depicted the members of the French Assembly as:

'a set of wild visionaries like our Dr. Price, who gravely debate, and dream about the establishment of a pure and perfect democracy of five-and-twenty millions, the virtues of the golden age, and the primitive rights and equality of mankind'. (19)

The allegations made against the Dissenters had achieved such general currency that Price had good cause to warn those Members of Parliament who were sympathetic to the campaign for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts that they might be repeated in the course of the debate. But why, it may be asked, did Price take such pains to disavow republican and democratic principles. In the light of his contributions to the pamphlet literature were not his critics justified in thinking of him as a republican and as a democrat? Had he not invoked the principle of self-government in defence of the American rebels? Had he not maintained that the people are the source of all legitimate power?

'All civil government, as far as it can be denominated free, is the creature of the people. It originates with them. It is conducted under their direction, and has in view nothing but their happiness. All its different forms are no more than so many different modes in which they chuse to direct their affairs, and to secure the quiet enjoyment of their rights.' (20)

Had he not maintained that every community has the right to govern itself and that every member of it, provided that he is capable of independent judgement, has the right to participate in government? (21)

To understand why Price was averse to being thought to be a republican and a democrat we have first to note some of the different ways in which these terms were used in the eighteenth century. Let us begin with republic and republican. One, and perhaps the dominant, meaning of republic is that given in the Oxford English Dictionary: 'a state in which the supreme power rests in the people and their elected representatives or officers, as opposed to one governed by a king or the like'. (22) Here it will be seen that two distinct elements are presupposed: that the state is not a monarchy; and that sovereignty resides in the people or in their elected representatives or officers. From this it might be assumed that a republican is one who advocates that the state should not be governed by a monarch and that sovereignty should reside in the people or in their representatives. Republican was, however, also used in a much less restricted sense to refer to one who simply advocates the exclusion of monarchy. Dr. Johnson, for example, while he takes the adjective to mean 'placing the government in the people' defines the noun substantive as: 'one who thinks a commonwealth without monarchy the best government', and Miss Zera S. Fink writing of the republicans of the seventeenth century claims: 'when they spoke of a republic they had in mind primarily a state which was not headed by a king and in which the hereditary principle did not prevail in whole or in part in determining the headship.' (23)

In Remarks on the use and abuse of some political terms Sir George Cornewall Lewis argues that there is a significant difference in the use of republic and republican:

'For republic is applied to all aristocracies and democracies of which a king is not the head; whereas a republican generally signifies a democrat, as opposed to an aristocrat, or to a favourer of kingly government.' (24)

There is good reason, however, to believe that the association with democracy was not always confined to republican but held of republic as well. In America at least, as Bernard Bailyn has pointed out, (25) republic and democracy were often used synonymously. One of the reasons for this identification was the widespread belief that the health of a republic depends upon extensive and vigorous participation. In Common sense, for instance, Thomas Paine, insisted upon 'the necessity of a large and equal representation'. (26)

But whether the distinction in the use of republic and republican which Cornewall Lewis mentions was widespread or not, it is evident that both terms imply the exclusion of and a hostility towards monarchy, and from his letter to Smith it is clear that Price understood republican in this way. Here lies the reason why he resented being thought of as a republican, for although he advocated popular political sovereignty he was not hostile to monarchy. On the contrary throughout his career he was a staunch supporter of the balanced constitution and the mixed forms of government that depends upon three estates, King, Lords and Commons. It is true that Price could congratulate the Americans on their good fortune in avoiding a hereditary monarchy and a hereditary aristocracy, but he explicitly warned his readers

against

against assuming that what was good for America would of necessity prove beneficial in Britain. The well-being of Britain depended upon maintaining the kind of constitution it already enjoyed, and this meant retaining both King and Lords as independent estates.

Although Price advocated the principle of self-government his reforming intentions concerning the British Constitution were much more limited than has often been supposed. His main aim was to make the Commons a much more effective representative of the people within the balanced constitution, and this could best be done by improving the representative character of the Commons (principally by extending the franchise and redistributing the constituencies) and by making the Commons less dependent on the Executive. All or nearly all the proposals for reform that he supported derived from these aims: extension of the franchise, redistribution of seats, shorter parliaments, and the elimination of placemen. The practical reforms that Price sought were quite consistent with maintaining the King and the Lords in their established constitutional positions.

But how, it may be queried, can a defence of the balanced constitution be made consistent with the assertion of popular political sovereignty? Surely the latter will not brook the limitations that are essential to the former? In so far as Price's position can be made coherent it depends on the assumption that the people, whose right to choose what constitution they please remains unquestioned, will adopt the conventions of the balanced constitution. In their wisdom the people will choose those constitutional forms that effectively distribute the exercise of power and responsibility and so avoid the evils of absolute power. Properly understood Price's argument tries to reconcile the assertion of the ultimate power of the people with the traditional defence of mixed government. His opponents, however, did not scruple to awaken fear and distrust by implying that the projects for reform which he and his fellow-Dissenters advocated were very much more radical and ambitious than they in fact were. It was convenient to suggest that the Dissenters sought the abolition of the monarchy in Britain and the enthusiasm which Price and his fellow-Dissenters greeted the adoption of the Federal Constitution in America made the suggestion seem plausible. As we have seen Edward Sayer, like John Shebbeare before him, was eager to revive the fear that the Dissenters had the same objectives as the regicides of the seventeenth century. It must be admitted that Price was not always sufficiently careful in his choice of expressions not to give his opponents the material they required. He was injudicious in the way he greeted the French Revolution and in the terms in which he congratulated the French upon the creation of the National Assembly. Writing on 14 October 1790 to the Citizens of the District of Quimper he said this of the example of France:

'From the instruction there given, the world will learn, that, as subjects of government and law, all men are equal; that in every State the Majesty of the People is the only Sacred Majesty; that all civil authority is a trust from them; that its end is not to take away, but to establish liberty, by protecting equally all honest citizens; and that the governing power in every nation ought to be, not the will of any man or classes of men pretending to hereditary rights, but the collected wisdom of the nation drawn from the general mass, and centered in a NATIONAL ASSEMBLY by such modes of election, and such

an extension of its rights, as form a part of the new constitution of France.' (27)

At a meeting of the Society for Commemorating the Revolution in Great Britain (the Revolution Society) held on 4 November 1790 - a year after he had delivered the address A Discourse on the love of our country Price proposed a toast, 'The Parliament of Britain, may it become a National Assembly'. This unmeasured and unqualified enthusiasm for recent developments in France was bound to cause misunderstandings especially as the Constitution adopted on 14 July 1790 abolished hereditary orders and distinctions and dissolved all ecclesiastical orders save those with responsibilities for education and health. Price realized the damage he had done, especially in providing further grounds to justify Burke's angry denunciation of him in Reflections on the revolution in France, so in the fourth edition of A Discourse which appeared on 24 November 1790 he introduced a new preface and additions in which he explained and qualified his enthusiasm for the National Assembly. He was particularly concerned to show that his faith in the balanced constitution was undiminished: to the letter to the Citizens of the District of Quimper which I have just quoted he added the following footnote to the word masses:

'The Government of BRITAIN would be nearly such a Government as is here meant, and its constitution all that the writer of this letter can wish to see it, were the three States that compose it perfectly independent of one another, and the House of COMMONS in particular, an equal and fair representation of the kingdom, guarded against corruption by being frequently renewed, and the exclusion of placemen and pensioners.' (28)

During the eighteenth century the term republican was used in a much more extended sense than either of the two that I have discussed. Aware that the main element in the established use was hostility to monarchy and that this had served to make the term a term of opprobrium in many quarters, some writers sought to attach that pejorative force to other things. One writer to attempt such persuasive redefinition was Samuel Horsley, Bishop of St. David's, who used the term to refer to those who maintained that the authority of government is founded in a social contract or in the consent of the governed. In his celebrated address to the House of Lords on 30 January 1793 he described as republican all those who hold that the authority of the government and the obligation of the individual to obey derive only from 'the consent of the multitude'. (29) Horsley himself believed that every citizen's obligation to uphold the government of his own society was founded in the will of Providence. This was the true Christian justification of obedience: St. Paul never once mentioned 'that god of the republican's idolatry, the consent of the ungoverned millions of mankind'. (30) But although Horsley rejected the doctrine of the social contract and the belief that the authority of government is founded in the consent of the people, he nonetheless allowed that 'in this country the king is under the obligation of an express contract with the people'. The fact that the powers of the king are limited by the constitution, and that these limits are 'drawn out at length and in detail in the Great Charter and the corroborating statutes, in the Petition of Right, in the Habeas Corpus Act, in the Bill of Rights, and in

the Act of Settlement... 'imply that there is such a contract between the king and the people, but they do not imply, and here although he does not mention him by name he has Price in mind, that 'our kings are the servants of the people; and that it is the right of the people to cashier them for misconduct'. Horsley, however, was by no means the first to attempt such a persuasive redefinition. *Richard Watson, who was incensed by Horsley's* reference to Benjamin Hoadly as a 'republican bishop' (31), had earlier in his career been much aggrieved by ministerial writers who referred to him as a 'man of republican principles' (32) and on a famous occasion he strenuously resisted George III when the latter implied that Watson was a republican. 'His Majesty, I doubt not, had given credit to the calumnies which the court-insects had buzzed into his ears, of my being a favourer of republican principles, because I was known to be a supporter of revolution principles, and had a pleasure in letting me see what he thought of me.' (33)

What made the radicals angry was to find that the opprobrium which attached to those who sought to destroy the monarchy was transferred to those who believed that political authority derives ultimately from the people. Those who thought that they were good Whigs and defenders of the balanced constitution found themselves calumniated in a way that was all the more dangerous because it was difficult to resist. Political sympathies at least at the popular level did not always wait upon the niceties of logical distinctions.

That Price should have objected to being thought of as a democrat is, perhaps, at first sight very much more puzzling than his aversion to being considered a republican. As I have noted earlier, in Observations on the nature of civil liberty he had defended the principle of self-government not simply in the form that every community has the right to govern itself, but also in the form that it is the right of every rational and independent man to participate in the government of his society. At the very least, Price had argued, every man capable of independent judgement should have a vote in the choice of his representatives. In Additional observations he had stated unequivocally that:

'The people are the spring of all civil power, and they have a right to modify it as they please.' (34)

And in A Discourse on the love of our country he had claimed that the people have a right to choose their own governors, to cashier them for misconduct and to frame a government for themselves. (35) Moreover, Price had been active in practical attempts to secure political reform; he had been a founder member of the Society for Constitutional Information, and, although more moderate in his proposals than many of the other members, he had been a warm advocate for the abolition of rotten boroughs, the redistribution of constituencies, shorter parliaments and the extension of the franchise. Why then was he so reluctant to be thought to be a democrat?

The answer lies in the fact that in the sense in which the term democracy was generally understood in the eighteenth century Price was not, and did not consider himself to be, a democrat. I shall try to establish how and why this was so. Montesquieu defined democracy - and, incidentally, gave a characterization of republican that does not entail that all republicans are democrats - as follows:

'Le gouvernement républicain est celui où le peuple en corps, ou seulement une partie du peuple a la souveraine puissance; ... Lorsque, dans la république, le peuple en corps a le souveraine puissance, c'est un Democratie.' (36)

The emphasis upon the political community as a whole being the ultimate seat of power is also found in the definitions of democracy given by Pufendorf (37) and Burlamaqui (38), but in Spinoza we find that the notion that the people are to exercise the powers of government - in addition to being the ultimate source of authority - is made much more explicit:

'This corporate right, which is defined by the power of a people, is generally called sovereignty, and is entirely vested in those who by common consent manage the affairs of state, i.e. who make, interpret, and repeal laws, fortify cities, take decisions about war and peace, and so on. If such functions belong to a general assembly of the people, then the state is called a democracy (democratia)...' (39).

Rousseau followed in this tradition by reserving the term democracy for the form of government in which ultimate sovereignty resides in the people and in which the executive, judicial and legislative functions of government are discharged by the assembly of the whole people. Even though he maintained that in all legitimate government sovereignty resides in the general will, democracy as he defined it was, he believed, a form of government suitable for gods but not for mortal men. (40) Most eighteenth century writers, whether they thought of democracy as a form in which the will of the people is the ultimate sovereign, or whether they thought of it as one in which the people actually discharge all the main functions of government, disapproved of it. They thought that the claim to be a democracy would prove to be fraudulent - that what purported to be democratic would not really be such - or they believed that even if realized a democracy could not be expected to last very long, being a form of government that is inherently unstable and likely to degenerate and be superseded by some other form. De Lolme illustrates the former of these, in The Constitution of England he wrote:

'An attempt to establish liberty in a great nation, by making the people interfere in the common business of government, is, of all attempts, the most chimerical: that the authority of all, with which men are amused, is, in reality, no more than the authority of a few powerful individuals, who divide the republic among themselves.' (41)

Edward Gibbon exemplifies the latter:

'Under a democratical government, the citizens exercise the powers of sovereignty; and those powers will be first abused, and afterwards lost, if they are committed to an unwieldy multitude.' (42)

As R. R. Palmer points out in The Age of Democratic Revolution, before the outbreak of the French Revolution it is rare to find the term democracy being used in a laudatory way. (43) Palmer mentions some exceptions - Helvetius and d'Argenson - but in general use the term was pejorative. The majority of writers on political topics in the eighteenth century disapproved of a system of government in which authority and the exercise of power was located in the body of the people. That the term was pejorative owes much to the influence of Aristotle who in his classification

of the different forms of government reserved the term *δημοκρατία* for a perversion of the rule of the many where power is exercised not in the interests of the whole community but in the interests of the rulers. (44) Aristotle thought that in most societies the rule of the many would also be the rule of the poor; and the poor, it was feared, would use their power to redistribute the property of the rich. (45) For this reason a democracy would be likely to prove to be unstable, and this tendency to anarchy would be aggravated by the high degree of civil liberty citizens would claim for themselves. (46) Democracies were likely to degenerate and prepare the way for tyranny. The fears of mob rule and spoliation articulated by Aristotle echoed strongly down the centuries and remained a constant source of anxiety for political theorists, not least for those who held that political authority derives ultimately from the people.

Despite his advocacy of the principle of self-government and the ultimate political sovereignty of the people, Price remained hostile to what he took democracy to mean: sovereignty located in the people and all the main functions of government exercised either by the people or by their representatives. According to Price a democracy is constituted neither by the people's possessing the right to change the Constitution nor by the representatives of the people participating in the legislative process; neither of these is by itself sufficient, for democracy requires forms of government in which the people either directly or through their representatives have complete control over all the functions of government. To this conception he was hostile for the same reasons that he was averse to being thought to be a republican: it was alien to the balanced constitution. The concentration of power into one assembly that democracy required would destroy the prospects of good government which, he believed, depend upon the diffusion of power and responsibility over three separate and independent estates. As I have noted earlier, Price harmonized his defence of the balanced constitution with the principle of popular political sovereignty by supposing that the people would always use their undisputed right to refashion the constitution so as to strengthen the operation of the principle of the balanced constitution. It may, of course, be argued that this is an unrealistic assumption: that the people, or their representatives, will use their opportunity to concentrate power into their own hands. It may also be argued that by preaching the doctrine of popular political sovereignty in the form that he did, Price was advancing a conception of the structure of government that was inimical to the defence of the balanced constitution. Whatever the truth of these complaints, however much his elaboration of the principle of self-government served to popularize conceptions of authority that came to displace the notion of a balanced constitution, it can hardly be denied that Price considered himself to be a good Whig. This was the reason why he was averse to being thought of as a republican and a democrat.

1. The manuscript of this letter is in the possession of the National Library of Wales. The document bears a note - not in Price's hand - which reads: 'From Dr. Price to W.S.'
2. William Smith (1756-1835) entered Parliament as M.P. for Sudbury in 1784. He first made his mark in the Commons in supporting the Dissenters in the 1787 and 1789 debates on motions for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. Later he became a member of the Committee of the Protestant Dissenting Deputies. See Richard W. Davis, Dissent in politics 1780-1830. The Political life of William Smith M.P. (London, 1971). Smith was a Unitarian and, like Price, joined the militant Unitarian Society on its foundation in 1791. Both Price and Smith were members of the Committee of the New College at Hackney. See 'Resolutions and proceedings relating to the establishment of a new academical institution among Protestant Dissenters in the vicinity of London in the year 1786' in Andrew Kippis, A Sermon preached at the Old Jewry on Wednesday the 26th of April 1786 (London, 1786), 69.
3. Price's quotation from his own work reads the same as the corresponding passage in the printed version of the address, op.cit. (London, 1787), 30 and 31, except that for the words that I have marked with a broken line in the quotation the printed version reads, 'excellent. (Fn.) What I here say of myself I believe...'
4. The 1785 London edition of Observations on the importance of the American Revolution reads: 'In a word, let the united States continue for ever what it is now their glory to be - a confederation of States prosperous and happy, without LORDS - without BISHOPS\* - and without KINGS.' (Fn) \*'I do not mean by Bishops any officers among Christians merely spiritual; but Lords spiritual, as distinguished from Lords temporal, or Clergymen raised to pre-eminence, and invested with civil honours and authority, by a State establishment. I must add, that by what is here said I do not mean to express a general preference of a republican constitution of government. There is a degree of political degeneracy which unfits for such a constitution. BRITAIN, in particular, consists too much of the high and the low, (of scum and dregs) to admit of it. Nor will it suit America, should it ever become equally corrupt.' It will be noted that Price did not think it the better part of wisdom to include in his letter to Smith the reason why he thought that Britain was unfit to receive a republican constitution.
5. Parl. Hist., xxviii. 401. The Speech of the Right Hon. C. J. Fox...upon his motion for the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts (London, 1790) contains a passage in which Fox reprobated Price for the personal attack in A Discourse 'nor can I forbear observing, that when the pulpit becomes the vehicle of a personal libel, a holy rite is profaned, and a most just and public disapprobation should mark and discountenance so great an indecency.' (Op. cit., 42).

6. Ibid., 439.
7. See Martin Fitzpatrick, above p.16 . Although his reference to gunpowder was metaphorical, and Priestley had to insist that it was so, it was, nonetheless, injudicious and his opponents made the most of it. Unfortunately for the Dissenters, Priestley repeated this indiscretion in the preface to his Letter to the rev. Edward Burn which was published in Birmingham in 1790 and extracts from which were circulated to Members of Parliament before the debate on Fox's motion: 'In fact, they (the friends of hierarchy) are assisting me in the proper disposal of those grains of gunpowder, which have been some time accumulating, and at which they have taken so great an alarm, and which will certainly blow it up at length; and, perhaps, as suddenly, as unexpectedly, and as completely, as the overthrow of the late arbitrary government in France...They the clergy are labouring for its destruction much more than I am. If I be laying gunpowder, they are providing the match, and their part of the business seems to be in greater forwardness than mine.' The Theological and miscellaneous works of Joseph Priestley, ed. J. T. Rutt, 25 vols. (London, 1817-31), xix, 311.
8. A Discourse on the love of our country, 2nd edn. (London, 1789), 18.
9. An Essay on the origin, progress and establishment of national society (London, 1776), 86.
10. Observations on Dr. Price's theory and principle of civil liberty and government (York, 1776), 91.
11. Three Letters to Dr. Price (London, 1776), 40.
12. Experience preferable to theory (London, 1776), 6.
13. Op.cit., (London,1776), 13.
14. The Test laws defended (Birmingham, 1790), v.
15. Op.cit., (London, 1790), 38.
16. Op.cit., (London, 1790), 8.
17. Op.cit., (London, 1792), 77.
18. William Coxe, A Letter to the Rev. Richard Price (London, 1790), 21.
19. Misc. Works, ed. Lord Sheffield, 5 vols. (London, 1814), i. 304.
20. Observations on the nature of civil liberty, 7th edn. (London, 1776), 6.
21. Additional observations (London, 1777), 10. Many were alienated by Price's preoccupation with the notion of self-government. Jeremy Bentham, for example, confessed that 'Dr. Price with his self-government made me an anti-American.' See H.L.A. Hart, 'Bentham and the United States of America', The Journal of Law and Economics, XIX (3), (October 1976), 553.
22. On the different meanings given to the terms in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see the Editor's introduction to Two Republican tracts, ed. Caroline Robbins (Cambridge, 1969), 41ff. and the same author's 'European Republicanism in the century and a half before 1776', The Development of a revolutionary mentality (Washington, 1972), 31-51.

23. Dictionary of the English language (Dublin, 1798) and Zera S. Fink, The Classical Republicans (Evanston, 1945), x. See also Colin C. Bonwick, 'Contemporary implications of the American Revolution for English radicalism', Maryland historian, 7 (Spring, 1976), 43.
24. Op.cit., (London, 1832), 43.
25. The Ideological origins of the American Revolution (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), 282. Cf. the same author's introduction to Pamphlets of the American Revolution 1750-1776 (Cambridge, Mass., 1965), i. 176.
26. The Complete writings of Thomas Paine, ed. Philip S. Foner (New York, 1969), i.37. In Rights of man Paine holds that republican government is 'no other than government established and conducted for the interest of the public, as well individually as collectively. It is not necessarily connected with any particular form, but it most naturally associates with the representative form, as being best calculated to secure the end for which a nation is at the expense of supporting it.' Ibid., i. 370.
27. Appendix to the fourth edition of A Discourse, 41, 42.
28. Ibid.
29. Samuel Horsley, Sermons (London, 1839), 520-44.
30. Op.cit., 529.
31. Richard Watson, Anecdotes of the life of Richard Watson, Bishop of Landaff, 2nd edn., 2 vols. (London, 1818), i.70.
32. Ibid., i.96.
33. Ibid., i.314.
34. Op.cit., 26.
35. Op.cit., 5th edn. (London, 1790), 34. For further details of Price's defence of representative institutions see my The Honest mind. The thought and work of Richard Price (Oxford, 1977), 187-213, 284-308.
36. De l'esprit des lois, edn. Garnier, Bk. ii, chs. i and ii.
37. The Law of nature and nations, trans. B. Kennet (London, 1717), vii, v, sect. iii.
38. The Principles of politic law, trans. Nugent (London, 1752), 70.
39. The Political works, ed. A. G. Wernham (Oxford, 1958), 277-8.
40. Contrat Social, ed. de Jouvenel (Geneva, 1947), iii, iv.
41. Op.cit. (London, 1821), 50-51.
42. The History of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, ed. H. H. Milman (London, n.d.), i.24.
43. Op.cit., (Princeton, 1959), i.14.
44. Politics, 1279a.
45. Ibid., 1281a.
46. Ibid., 1317b.

The Richard Price Exhibition

As part of the celebrations to commemorate the United States Bicentennial an exhibition on the life and work of Richard Price was held at The Gallery, The University College of Wales, Aberystwyth in July 1976.

Thereafter it was shown at The National Eisteddfod at Cardigan under the auspices of the Welsh Tourist Board, in the Old College at Aberystwyth, at The University College of North Wales at Bangor, at The University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire at Cardiff, at The Richard Price Centre at Llangeinor under the auspices of Glamorgan Archive Service and at The Swansea Museum under the auspices of The Royal Institution of South Wales and The University College, Swansea. By the time this newsletter will reach readers it will also have been staged at King's College, The Strand, London with the help of the London Branch of the Guild of Graduates of the University of Wales.

This exhibition would not have been possible without generous contributions made by The University College of Wales, The Bicentennial Welsh Sub-Committee, The Equitable Life Assurance Society, and The Council for Museums in Wales. Neither would it have been successful were it not for the generosity of its hosts in the various centres listed above.

When the Exhibition returns from London in December it will be stored at The University College of Wales, Aberystwyth. It will still be available for display at other centres, and those interested can obtain further details from Mr. Richard Brinkley, The Hugh Owen Library, The University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, Dyfed SY23 3DY, Great Britain. Copies of the brochure for the Exhibition are also available (price 20p).

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