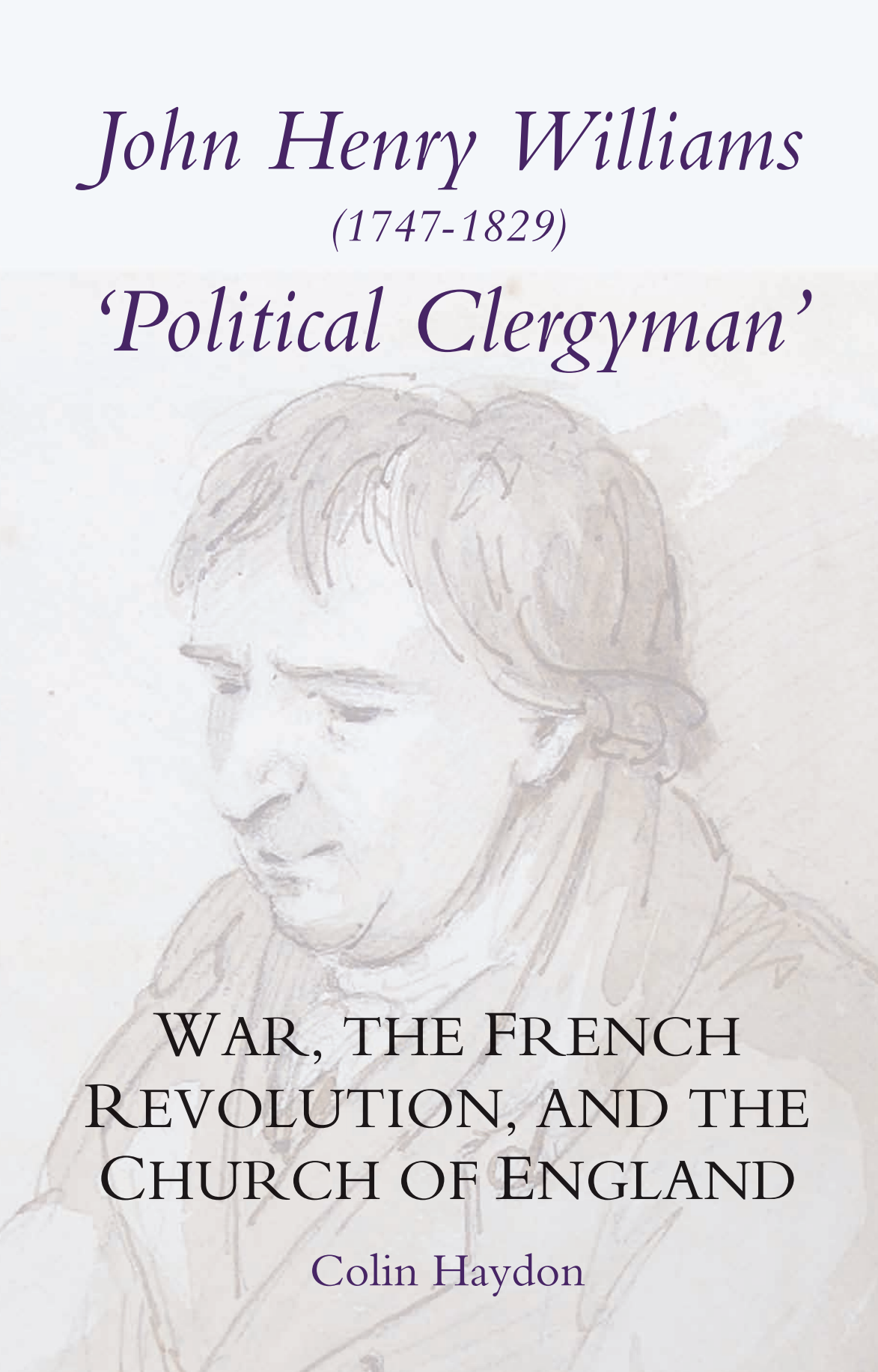


*John Henry Williams*

(1747-1829)

*‘Political Clergyman’*



WAR, THE FRENCH  
REVOLUTION, AND THE  
CHURCH OF ENGLAND

Colin Haydon

STUDIES IN MODERN BRITISH RELIGIOUS HISTORY

Volume 16

JOHN HENRY WILLIAMS

(1747–1829)

‘POLITICAL CLERGYMAN’

WAR, THE FRENCH REVOLUTION, AND  
THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

STUDIES IN MODERN BRITISH RELIGIOUS HISTORY

ISSN: 1464–6625

General editors

Stephen Taylor  
Arthur Burns  
Kenneth Fincham

This series aims to differentiate ‘religious history’ from the narrow confines of church history, investigating not only the social and cultural history of religion, but also theological, political and institutional themes, while remaining sensitive to the wider historical context; it thus advances an understanding of the importance of religion for the history of modern Britain, covering all periods of British history since the Reformation.

*Previously published volumes in this series are listed at the  
back of this volume.*

JOHN HENRY WILLIAMS

(1747–1829)

‘POLITICAL CLERGYMAN’

War, the French Revolution, and the  
Church of England

COLIN HAYDON

THE BOYDELL PRESS

© Colin Haydon 2007

*All Rights Reserved.* Except as permitted under current legislation no part of this work may be photocopied, stored in a retrieval system, published, performed in public, adapted, broadcast, transmitted, recorded or reproduced in any form or by any means, without the prior permission of the copyright owner

The right of Colin Haydon to be identified as  
the author of this work has been asserted in accordance with  
sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988

First published 2007  
The Boydell Press, Woodbridge

ISBN 978-1-84383-330-7

The Boydell Press is an imprint of Boydell & Brewer Ltd  
PO Box 9, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 3DF, UK  
and of Boydell & Brewer Inc.  
Mt Hope Avenue, Rochester, NY 14620, USA  
website: [www.boydellandbrewer.com](http://www.boydellandbrewer.com)

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available  
from the British Library

This publication is printed on acid-free paper

Typeset by Pru Harrison, Hacheston, Suffolk

**Disclaimer:**

Some images in the printed version of this book are not available for inclusion in the eBook.  
To view these images please refer to the printed version of this book.

## CONTENTS

|  |      |
|--|------|
| Illustrations  | vii  |
| Preface and Acknowledgements   | ix   |
| Abbreviations  | xii  |
| Editorial Note   | xiii |
| 1. The Grave and the Memory  | 1    |
| 2. The Formative Years   | 18   |
| 3. The Ivy-mantled Tow'r: Parish and Pastoralia                              | 37   |
| 4. The Gathering Storm   | 63   |
| 5. By Far the Heaviest of All Earthly Calamities: Williams' Anti-War Sermons | 91   |
| 6. Anxiety, the 1797 Campaign, and Afterwards                                | 115  |
| 7. Assessment  | 139  |
| Bibliography   | 155  |
| Index  | 169  |

To JDW,  
who so consistently exhibits JHW's best qualities; and  
In Memory of  
T (1986–2005)

## ILLUSTRATIONS

Jacket: John Henry Williams, sketch by Bertie Greatheed Jr (now in the possession of Mr Michael Heber-Percy)

Frontispiece: John Henry Williams, portrait by William Artaud

Page 38: The Church of St Peter at Wellesbourne, Warwickshire (reproduced by permission of English Heritage, National Monuments Record, B42/2,858)

### **Disclaimer:**

Some images in the printed version of this book are not available for inclusion in the eBook.  
To view these images please refer to the printed version of this book.





## PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This short book is an offshoot of a larger project on which I am still engaged, a study of religion and society in south Warwickshire from c. 1660 to c. 1820. For that project, I determined to read all the relevant extant sermons and, of those, I was especially interested by four anti-war discourses which the Reverend John Henry Williams, the vicar of Wellesbourne from 1778 to 1829, preached and published in 1793, 1794, 1795, and 1802. When William Gibson and Robert G. Ingram kindly invited me to contribute to their volume on religion, society, and politics in Britain 1660–1832, I decided to produce an essay on Williams, focusing principally on those sermons.<sup>1</sup> Subsequently, I was able to persuade Brian, now Sir Brian, Harrison that Williams deserved an entry in the on-line version of *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. For that article, I needed to learn more about Williams as both a man and a clergyman, and the new information which I uncovered convinced me that it would be possible to write a book-length – though imperfect – study of Williams’ life, his work as a parson, and his involvement in politics. Just how imperfect this study is, readers will judge. One defect which I have endeavoured to avoid, however, is the imprint of recent politics on this book. Of course, it is currently impossible not to think of the war against Iraq, and its aftermath, when reading parts of Williams’ anti-war sermons (for example, his doubts as to whether ‘it is *lawful* to commit a *certain evil* with the prospect of an *uncertain good*’).<sup>2</sup> But, for the record, I began to study Williams in the late 1990s and delivered a paper on him at the Religion and Romantic (Re)Vision Conference 1780–1830 in Oxford in 2000 – before a second war against Iraq seemed even likely. In fact, when completing this book, my difficulty lay not in excluding Iraq from my thinking but rather in envisaging the conflict between Britain and revolutionary/Napoleonic France as it gradually unfolded to contemporaries, unable to anticipate its next twists and turns, not knowing its eventual outcome.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Colin Haydon, ‘The “most horrid and unnatural state of man”: John Henry Williams and the French Wars 1793–1802’, *Religious Identities in Britain 1660–1832*, ed. William Gibson and Robert G. Ingram (Aldershot, 2005), pp. 255–76.

<sup>2</sup> J. H. Williams, *War the Stumbling-block of a Christian; or, the Absurdity of Defending Religion by the Sword* (1795), p. 25.

<sup>3</sup> Bertie Greatheed, Warwickshire landowner, playwright, and Williams’ closest friend, noted in his journal in 1812, ‘the great struggle between France & Russia is begun. I suppose the french slaves as heretofore will carry all before them.’ Warwickshire CRO, CR 1707/120, Entry, 18 July 1812.

Many people have helped me while preparing and writing this book, and it is a pleasure to record my thanks to them.

First, I am grateful to the staff of the many archives and libraries in which I have worked, and, above all, to the archivists and librarians of the Bodleian Library, Oxford, the British Library, and the Warwickshire County Record Office, where the greatest portion of my research was undertaken. I should also wish to thank the archivists of three Oxford colleges for permitting me to consult records in their care: Judith Curthoys at Christ Church, Ellena Pike and Lucie Walker at Pembroke College, and Julian Reid at Merton College.

I wish to record my gratitude to Melanie Barber, David Evans, Peter Forsaith, Mike Rogers, Marion Symonds, and Susan Wollenberg, all of whom answered a number of specialized questions.

At the University of Winchester, I am grateful to Helen Betts and Michael Hicks for granting me a prolonged sabbatical; to my colleagues in the History Department who gave me time to pierce the veil; and to the staff of the Martial Rose Library, who obtained numerous works on inter-library loan for me.

My sabbatical was extended by the award of an Arts and Humanities Research Council grant, and I should like to thank the Council (and the two anonymous assessors who refereed the project) for this. Without this grant, the book could not have been completed so quickly.

Other people have given me much practical assistance. The enormously generous hospitality of Fred and Rosemary Marcus in Oxford has permitted me to work in the Bodleian Library in a sustained and fruitful way. Matthew Acland and Susan Campbell photocopied source material for me. Stephen Smith kindly drove me to various places where Williams lived. Malcolm Henson produced the index with great speed and precision. Moreover, I doubt if the work would have been finished so quickly without pleasant interludes with Rees and Laura Jenkins and Mark and Sophie Tilden in Devon, and with Adrian Beard and Alan and Caroline Bishop in the Land of the Mountain and the Flood and the Land of the Mountain and the Bog.

At Boydell & Brewer, I am grateful to the general editors of *Studies in Modern British Religious History* for supporting my proposal for a book-length study of John Henry Williams, and especially to Stephen Taylor, who read and commented on the whole text. I wish, too, to record my thanks to Peter Clifford, who agreed to publish the book; to Vanda Andrews, who organized the book's production, and Caroline Palmer and Anna Morton, who oversaw the entire project; to Judith Oppenheimer, my copy editor; and to Pru Harrison, my typesetter, and Helen Barber, who designed the jacket.

The cover illustration is a reproduction of a sketch of John Henry Williams by the son of Williams' friend Bertie Greatheed of Guy's Cliffe, Warwickshire. It, and other sketches of the Williams family, are now in the possession of Mr Michael Heber-Percy, and I am greatly obliged to him for first allowing me to see them and for later granting me permission to reproduce the sketch of Williams. The frontispiece shows William Artaud's portrait of John Henry Williams, and I

## PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

am likewise obliged to its current owner, who wishes to remain anonymous, for permission to reproduce it here. Phil Marter photographed the sketch and the portrait for me.

Many friends have given sustaining encouragement while I worked on this project: in particular, Chris Aldous, Mark Allen, Nigel Aston, Jeremy Black, Clive Bond, Bernard Capp, Utrick Casebourne, Neil Curtin, Grayson Ditchfield, Liz Fox, Monica Gale, Lawrence Goldman, Jeremy Gregory, Jan and Mark Housby, Paul Langford, Tom Lawson, Jean Morrin, Peter Nockles, Frank O’Gorman, Laurretta Peters, David Scourfield, Mark Smith, Pat Thompson, Kate Tiller, Will Van Reyk, John Walsh, Blair Worden, and Barbara Yorke. I thank them all.

Sir Nikolaus Pevsner dedicated one of his *Buildings of England* volumes to ‘the inventor of the iced lolly’. Perhaps I should have dedicated this book to the inventors of the word-processor, e-mail, and the world-wide web, all of whom have so greatly eased the task of historians. However, it is more pleasing, and fitting, to acknowledge two far greater obligations in the dedication.

Colin Haydon,  
Winchester,  
May 2007

## ABBREVIATIONS

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| Add. MS     | Additional Manuscript   |
| BL          | British Library, London   |
| Bodleian L  | Bodleian Library, Oxford  |
| CRO         | County Record Office  |
| L           | Library   |
| LPL         | Lambeth Palace Library  |
| <i>ODNB</i> | H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, eds, <i>The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i> (Oxford, 2004) |
| RO          | Record Office   |
| TNA         | The National Archives, Kew  |
| <i>VCH</i>  | <i>The Victoria History of the Counties of England</i>  |

## EDITORIAL NOTE

In quotations from contemporary sources, I have retained the original spelling, capitalization, and punctuation. I have italicized words underlined in manuscripts.

Dates before the introduction of the Gregorian calendar in 1752 are given in the Old Style – except that the year is taken to have started on 1 January.

Unless otherwise stated, the place of publication in references and the bibliography is London.



# Chapter One

## THE GRAVE AND THE MEMORY

### The Churchyard at Wellesbourne

John Henry Williams was vicar of Wellesbourne in Warwickshire for over fifty years. He died on 12 May 1829 at Leamington, and, six days later, when his body had been brought back to Wellesbourne, his funeral was conducted at the church, St Peter's, which he had served so faithfully. He was buried in the graveyard, by the church porch.<sup>1</sup> If one visits Wellesbourne today, his resting place is easily overlooked: the worn, dingy horizontal slab which marks it has no decoration, no laudatory epitaph, only the simple inscription 'IHW 1829', the letters and numbers thick with moss.

Williams' inconspicuous grave is symbolic of his diminished reputation. The year before Williams' death, William Field, the prominent Unitarian minister and writer, stated that the Vicar of Wellesbourne might 'justly claim a distinguished place among the most enlightened and liberal clergymen of his time'.<sup>2</sup> Williams was, Field continued, 'honourably known to the public, by . . . [his] admirable sermons' – sermons which, preached and published in 1793, 1794, 1795, and 1802, eloquently denounced the war against revolutionary France.<sup>3</sup> The celebrated pedagogue, cleric, and writer Dr Samuel Parr, who knew Williams well, 'often spoke of him in terms of fervent admiration and esteem'.<sup>4</sup> Yet, when Williams died, *The Gentleman's Magazine* baldly recorded, under 'Clergy Deceased', 'Aged 82, the Rev. John Henry Williams' (and noted his Oxford college affiliations less than accurately).<sup>5</sup> Locally, the *Leamington Spa Courier* just stated – in very small print – 'DIED. – On Tuesday, the 12th inst., aged 82, the Rev. J. H. Williams, Vicar of Wellsbourne [*sic*]'.<sup>6</sup>

Historians have largely neglected Williams' life and publications. In 1870, Frederick Leigh Colville published *The Worthies of Warwickshire who Lived*

<sup>1</sup> Worcestershire RO, BA 2,245/24, Ref. S132–8, p. 41, No. 326.

<sup>2</sup> William Field, *Memoirs of the Life, Writings, and Opinions of the Rev. Samuel Parr, LL.D.*, I (1828), p. 206.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine* xcix, Part ii (1829), p. 90.

<sup>6</sup> *Leamington Spa Courier*, 16 May 1829.



between 1500 and 1800. Colville knew of Williams' career,<sup>7</sup> but he did not include an account of it in his compendious work – though he included the lives of Williams' closest friend, Bertie Greatheed of Guy's Cliffe, near Warwick, and Samuel Parr (who, living at Hatton, was Williams' and Greatheed's neighbour).<sup>8</sup> Warren Derry did not discuss the friendship of Williams and Parr in his biography of the latter, published in 1966.<sup>9</sup> Even in his fine survey of English anti-war liberalism from 1793 to 1815, *The Friends of Peace* (1982), J. E. Cookson does not examine Williams' 'admirable sermons' separately from other comparable publications, but rather subsumes arguments from the 1793, 1794, and 1795 discourses into the book's general treatment.<sup>10</sup>

It was Nancy Uhlar Murray's influential 1975 doctoral thesis which identified Williams' importance in the anti-war debates in the period 1793–1802.<sup>11</sup> In it, Murray investigated the French Revolution's impact on the English churches, and she concluded that, judging by the published evidence, Williams 'stood alone among [Anglican] clergymen in consistently and openly attacking the war during successive public fast services'.<sup>12</sup> Citing her thesis, Martin Ceadel, in *The Origins of War Prevention* (1996), likewise draws attention to Williams' brave stance, though he slightly (and rightly) tempers Murray's praise by noting the limits to Williams' anti-war arguments.<sup>13</sup> Emma Vincent Macleod's study of British attitudes to the conflict with revolutionary France, published in 1998, depicts Williams as seemingly the most vocal of the small minority of Anglican clerics that denounced the war.<sup>14</sup> Nonetheless, given the overall scope of their studies, Murray, Ceadel, and Macleod could devote little space to Williams' ideas. The comments of Ceadel and Macleod fill less than half a page; Ceadel explicitly examines only one of Williams' sermons, Macleod two. Robert Hole's examination of preaching and politics from 1760 to 1832, published in 1989, notes Williams' thinking, but the analysis is, again, necessarily fleeting.<sup>15</sup>

If Williams was indeed one of 'the most enlightened and liberal clergymen of his time', his career and writings would seem to merit more than a few brief comments in works exploring broad themes. Of course, William Field was not an

<sup>7</sup> Frederick Leigh Colville, *The Worthies of Warwickshire who Lived between 1500 and 1800* (Warwick and London, [1870]), p. 321.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 320–3, 564–70.

<sup>9</sup> Warren Derry, *Dr Parr* (1966).

<sup>10</sup> J. E. Cookson, *The Friends of Peace: Anti-War Liberalism in England 1793–1815* (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 297, 298.

<sup>11</sup> Nancy Uhlar Murray, 'The Influence of the French Revolution on the Church of England and its Rivals 1789–1802', University of Oxford DPhil thesis, 1975, pp. 87, 98.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98.

<sup>13</sup> Martin Ceadel, *The Origins of War Prevention* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 159–60. 'Williams was merely arguing that no war could be considered holy – admittedly, a controversial point for an Anglican clergyman to choose to make in wartime' (*ibid.*, p. 160).

<sup>14</sup> Emma Vincent Macleod, *A War of Ideas: British Attitudes to the Wars against Revolutionary France 1792–1802* (Aldershot, 1998), pp. 148–9.

<sup>15</sup> Robert Hole, *Pulpits, Politics, and Public Order in England 1760–1832* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 145–6, 149.

impartial witness: he had good reasons for gratitude to Williams (while, when ‘Parr felt as a friend, he was much too apt to speak and write as a panegyrist’).<sup>16</sup> But Williams’ political publications – displaying, in Field’s words, ‘the united powers of argument and eloquence’<sup>17</sup> – deserve thorough consideration, as does the career of the man who stood ‘alone among [the established Church’s] clergymen’ in his unwavering opposition to the conflict of 1793–1802. Moreover, Williams’ life as a parish parson, his theological convictions, and his pastoral endeavours merit sustained examination. His ministry of nearly sixty years, at Wellesbourne and elsewhere, was far more important to him than his comparatively shortlived forays into political debate, and it was his religious principles which guided, indeed largely moulded, his political reasoning.

### Unfashionable Subjects

One principal reason for the scholarly neglect of careers like Williams’ is clear: until recently, there was little interest in the Hanoverian Church, and, during the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, in religious history more generally.

Victorian writers smugly – and anachronistically – found much to condemn in the Hanoverian Church because it failed to conform to their standards and vision. Evangelicals deplored its rejection of Wesley, Whitefield, and their followers, while, for High Churchmen, the years between the Caroline divines and the Oxford Movement constituted a slump in the Church’s fortunes. In their 1906 survey of the Church’s history from 1714 to 1800, J. H. Overton and F. Relton reiterated the wider charges: the age was one, they stated, ‘of lethargy instead of activity, of worldliness instead of spirituality, of self-seeking instead of self-denial, of grossness instead of refinement’.<sup>18</sup> There persists today the influential stereotype of the Georgian parson: grasping and selfish, port-soaked, gouty, and bigoted, caring more for his tithes than his parishioners, and enhancing his income, whenever possible, through pluralism. This caricature, ultimately derived from attacks by jaundiced sceptics like Gibbon, anti-clerical radicals like John Wade, and vicious cartoons, is unhelpful; but some modern scholars remain critical of a Church which, in their eyes, delayed the implementation of much-needed administrative reforms until the 1830s.<sup>19</sup> Even Norman Sykes, whose *Church and State in England in the Eighteenth Century* (1934) did so much to rehabilitate the Georgian Church’s reputation, diagnosed a gradual calcification in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.<sup>20</sup> Sykes’ view of

<sup>16</sup> See below, pp. 81–2; Richard Warner, *Literary Recollections*, II (1830), p. 477.

<sup>17</sup> Field, *Parr*, I, p. 206.

<sup>18</sup> John H. Overton and Frederic Relton, *The English Church from the Accession of George I to the End of the Eighteenth Century (1714–1800)* (1906), p. 1.

<sup>19</sup> E.g., Peter Virgin, *The Church in an Age of Negligence* (Cambridge, 1989).

<sup>20</sup> Norman Sykes, *Church and State in England in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1934), pp. 407, 409.

Parson Woodforde as ‘representative of the [period’s] country clergy’ is also disconcerting.<sup>21</sup> For if Woodforde, keeping the noiseless tenor of his way in his Norfolk backwater, seems a decent and affable man, his piety, while firm, appears limited and uninspiring, and his concern for his flock shallow, rarely going beyond the strict call of duty.<sup>22</sup>

For left-wing historians from the 1960s to the 1990s, mere sloth was not the Georgian Church’s besetting sin. That was rather its nexus with the state and its rulers. The Church was easily presented as the handmaiden of a state which treated the lower orders harshly, and the clergy pilloried as toadies to the rich, the beneficiaries of, and apologists for, an unjust *status quo*. Parsons were depicted as parasitic on the labouring classes. When land was enclosed, did they hesitate to enhance their incomes by driving hard bargains over tithe commutation? In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, as food prices rocketed, did they hesitate to extract increasingly valuable tithes from increasingly impoverished families? In those years, did not the number of clerical magistrates grow, so that ‘squarsons’ routinely enforced a harsh penal code, and, notoriously, the severe game laws? More generally, of course, left-wing historians scorned to examine religion autonomously, and declined to engage seriously with religious thinking *per se*. In their eyes, religion was false consciousness, conjured by economic and social imperatives, and a confidence trick to drill the masses into doltish obedience.<sup>23</sup> Why study, such a historian could understandably ask, the purveyors of discredited, baneful merchandise, like John Henry Williams? Why investigate their political stance, given its seemingly easy predictability?

It is equally unsurprising that historians have shown little interest in the British opponents of the wars against revolutionary France and Napoleon. Notoriously, historians tend to investigate most thoroughly the lives of successful figures and the rise and development of successful movements. They pay less, or little, attention to the careers of those who failed, the course of declining movements, the might-have-beens of the past. Certainly, those who decried the wars from 1793 to 1802 and from 1803 to 1815 backed the wrong horse. These were epic, and ultimately triumphant, wars. To fight them, successive governments organized an unprecedented mobilization of manpower for the army, navy, militia, and volunteer bodies. The wars’ financial costs were vast but the administrations met them through efficient taxation and skilful borrowing. Trafalgar remains Britain’s most celebrated naval victory, while, in popular perception, Waterloo surely out-tops Cr  cy, Agincourt, and Blenheim. In 1815, Britain was both the vanquisher of Napoleon and, definitively, the victor in the ‘second hundred years’ war’ against France. And, since the wars had been fought not only in Europe but also in India,

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 270.

<sup>22</sup> R. L. Winstanley, ‘Woodforde, James (1740–1803)’, *ODNB*, LX, p. 181.

<sup>23</sup> E.g., Robert W. Malcolmson, *Life and Labour in England 1700–1780* (1981), pp. 83–5; Roy Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century* (Harmondsworth, 1982), pp. 188–91; E. P. Thompson, *Customs in Common* (1991), p. 32.

South Africa, South America, and the West Indies, Britain made global gains by 1815 – in Africa, in the Caribbean, in India – and continued her imperial expansion in the 1820s. The ‘fiscal–military’ state, created after 1688 and now showing its full vigour, was amazingly effective.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, Linda Colley argues that the years from 1793 to 1815 witnessed, a century after the Union of 1707, the full emergence of a British identity shared by the English, Scots, and Welsh. The stoking of patriotism and huge pride in victories and imperial expansion, together with a common Protestantism, had ‘forged the nation’.<sup>25</sup>

Any grand narrative is naturally open to criticism. From the vantage-ground of Waterloo, it is easy to overlook or forget Britain’s exhaustion in 1802, how advantageous the Peace of Amiens was to France, and how deleterious to the British,<sup>26</sup> the inept Convention of Cintra of 1808,<sup>27</sup> and the disastrous Walcheren expedition of 1809. N. A. M. Rodger has stressed that Trafalgar did not save Britain from invasion in 1805 – by October, Napoleon’s plans for that had collapsed.<sup>28</sup> Peter Hofschröder has vigorously argued that Waterloo was a German, not a British, victory.<sup>29</sup> Nonetheless, it is doubtful whether historians’ qualifications and reassessments, valid or invalid, ever much adjust Churchillian perceptions. During Margaret Thatcher’s premiership, portraits of Nelson and Wellington hung in the dining room of 10 Downing Street, expressly calculated to overawe foreign visitors.<sup>30</sup> The two men pre-eminently personified Britain’s past glories on sea and land. Accordingly, it is understandable that those who opposed the wars of 1793–1802 and 1803–15 – the prelude to Britain’s century of world dominance – have rarely attracted attention. These men appear foolish and backward-looking. J. E. Cookson admits that they rarely influenced government decisions;<sup>31</sup> and one might question whether the ineffectual merit study. Moreover, the number of men like John Henry Williams was small. The anti-war Christian ‘minority view had a sound intellectual base’, and its advocates were ‘well organized and vocal, not to say vociferous’, Dr Hole notes. But they constituted ‘a minority of Christians, and an even smaller minority of trinitarian Christians’.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Martin Dauntton, ‘The Fiscal–Military State and the Napoleonic Wars: Britain and France Compared’, *Trafalgar in History*, ed. David Cannadine (Basingstoke, 2006), pp. 18–43. By 1815, as Miles Taylor observes, the empire reflected ‘Britain’s global-power status, rather than her benign and humanitarian instincts as a trading and colonizing people’: *Wellington’s World: The Duke of Wellington and the Making of the British Empire* (Southampton, 2003), p. 10.

<sup>25</sup> Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707–1837* (New Haven and London, 1992).

<sup>26</sup> By the treaty, France retained nearly all her Continental conquests, whereas Britain lost nearly all her overseas gains.

<sup>27</sup> Following Wellesley’s victory at Vimeiro, the agreement permitted Junot’s defeated forces to return to France.

<sup>28</sup> N. A. M. Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean: A Naval History of Britain 1649–1815* (2004), p. 543. However, Rodger, unlike some modern historians, emphasizes the long-term importance of the battle (*ibid.*).

<sup>29</sup> Peter Hofschröder, *1815, The Waterloo Campaign: The German Victory – from Waterloo to the Fall of Napoleon* (1999).

<sup>30</sup> Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years* (1993), p. 24.

<sup>31</sup> Cookson, *Friends of Peace*, pp. 257–8.

<sup>32</sup> Hole, *Pulpits, Politics, and Public Order*, p. 149.

Another grand narrative that focuses on these years concerns the progress, or otherwise, of reform and ‘radicalism’. E. P. Thompson’s seminal work, *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963), depicted the 1790s as key years in the development of working-class consciousness. Forged by exhilaration at the Revolution in France, Paineite ideology, and economic vicissitudes and industrialization, a new radicalism was displayed by working men, debating in popular societies, and organizing mass meetings, strikes, and demonstrations to achieve democratic political and social change. Government repression drove this movement underground, but did not kill it; radicalism emerged fully again after 1815. Other left-wing historians followed Thompson’s lead: for instance, Gwyn Williams surveyed the French and English popular movements and Roger Wells examined the politics of insurrection from 1795 to 1803.<sup>33</sup> However, in the 1980s and 90s, with the resurgence of conservative politics in Britain and the USA and the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union and its satellites, historians addressed the importance of ‘Church and King’ loyalism in the 1790s, stressing that it was both widespread and popular. ‘Patriotism was the order of the day,’ Robert R. Dozier concluded, ‘and in this respect the loyalists represented the true nature of Englishmen during those chaotic years.’<sup>34</sup> Loyalist arguments, stated H. T. Dickinson, convinced ‘a far greater proportion of the middling and lower orders than was ever won over to the radical cause in the 1790s’.<sup>35</sup> Unfortunately, men like Williams failed to interest the historians of either radicalism or conservatism. Thompson, while reserving his cruellest invective for Methodism, repeated left-wing censures of the Church (‘it had a peculiar charge over the souls of the poor – indeed, the duty to inculcate in them the virtues of obedience and industry’)<sup>36</sup> and gratefully and uncritically accepted William Cobbett’s caricatures of its clergy.<sup>37</sup> The historians of conservatism sometimes emphasized the Church’s rôle in maintaining political stability (and Ian Christie carefully examined the subject as Ford Lecturer at Oxford in 1984).<sup>38</sup> But they had no time for a man like Williams.

Some of the other Anglican or former Anglican clergymen who denounced the wars against France have received adequate historical commemoration; and, consequently, have overshadowed the Vicar of Wellesbourne. First, there was the knot of the Whig Latitudinarians that, despite Socinian leanings, remained in the

<sup>33</sup> Gwyn A. Williams, *Artisans and Sans-Culottes* (1968); Roger Wells, *Insurrection: The British Experience 1795–1803* (Gloucester, 1983).

<sup>34</sup> Robert R. Dozier, *For King, Constitution, and Country: The English Loyalists and the French Revolution* (Lexington, Kentucky, 1983), p. 180.

<sup>35</sup> Harry T. Dickinson, ‘Popular Loyalism in Britain in the 1790s’, *The Transformation of Political Culture: England and Germany in the Late Eighteenth Century*, ed. Eckhart Hellmuth (Oxford, 1990), p. 505.

<sup>36</sup> E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963), p. 37.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 757.

<sup>38</sup> Ian R. Christie, *Stress and Stability in Late Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford, 1984, repr. 1986), pp. 183–214.

Church of England, and whose politics appeared disturbingly unconventional or radical.<sup>39</sup> Richard Watson, bishop of Llandaff, initially praised the French Constituent Assembly and deplored the war until 1798, when he published his *Address to the People of Great Britain*, asserting the necessity of the conflict's continuation.<sup>40</sup> Peter Peckard, master of Magdalene College, Cambridge, and dean of Peterborough, opposed the war until his death in 1797.<sup>41</sup> Francis Stone, deprived of his living in 1808 for heresy, was politically suspect too, and published, among other works, a witty rebuttal of Burke's *Reflections*.<sup>42</sup> John Horne Tooke and Christopher Wyvill were also clergymen, though the former had little vocation and abandoned his clerical career, while the latter's parochial duties were discharged by a curate. By the 1790s, when they both opposed the war, they were political veterans – Horne Tooke had defended Wilkes in print in 1765, and Wyvill had been the prime mover of the Yorkshire Association from 1779.<sup>43</sup> Williams lacked the stature of Horne Tooke, Peckard, Watson, and Wyvill, and, rightly, never acquired the notoriety of Stone.

Further 'radical' views were advanced, and attacks made on the wars, by Anglican clergymen who became Unitarians. Theophilus Lindsey, who seceded from the Church in 1773, was a prominent anti-war liberal.<sup>44</sup> William Frend hated the struggle against France and also demanded parliamentary reform, scorned the Church–state alliance, and even refused to condemn Louis XVI's execution.<sup>45</sup> The Reverend Thomas Fyshe Palmer, who left the Church in c. 1783 and became a Unitarian minister in Scotland, was involved in radical politics in Dundee and decried the government's war taxes. Tried for treason, he was sentenced to transportation at a notorious trial in 1793.<sup>46</sup> In 1798, the Unitarian Gilbert Wakefield, condescendingly disparaged by E. P. Thompson as an 'eccentric classical scholar',<sup>47</sup> published a devastating attack on the 'unnecessary, ruinous, and fruitless war', the Church–state alliance, and the government's 'antichristian tyranny'.<sup>48</sup> In consequence, he was imprisoned for seditious libel in 1799.<sup>49</sup> Compared to Frend's and Wakefield's publications, Williams' sermons were

<sup>39</sup> John Gascoigne, 'Anglican Latitudinarianism and Political Radicalism in the Late Eighteenth Century', *History* lxxi (1986), pp. 22–38.

<sup>40</sup> See below, pp. 73, 122.

<sup>41</sup> See below, pp. 107, 110.

<sup>42</sup> Alexander Gordon, rev. R. K. Webb, 'Stone, Francis (*bap.* 1738, *d.* 1813)', *ODNB*, LII, p. 893.

<sup>43</sup> Michael T. Davis, 'Tooke, John Horne [*formerly* John Horne] (1736–1812)', *ibid.*, LV, pp. 8–10; H. T. Dickinson, 'Christopher Wyvill (1738–1822)', *ibid.*, LX, pp. 717–20.

<sup>44</sup> Cookson, *Friends of Peace*, p. 126.

<sup>45</sup> William Frend, *Peace and Union Recommended to the Associated Bodies of Republicans and Anti-Republicans* (St Ives, 1793), pp. 14, 25–7, 46–9.

<sup>46</sup> A. H. Millar, rev. G. M. Ditchfield, 'Palmer, Thomas Fyshe (1747–1802)', *ODNB*, XLII, pp. 539–40.

<sup>47</sup> Thompson, *Making of the English Working Class*, p. 175.

<sup>48</sup> Gilbert Wakefield, *A Reply to Some Parts of the Bishop of Landaff's* [*sic*] *Address to the People of Great Britain*, 2nd edn (1798), pp. 28, 39. As for the ministers, they were, Wakefield declared, 'worse than heathens and infidels in their lives', 'greedy, obstinate, baffled, tyrannical, and sanguinary men . . . the scourge of this nation, and the contempt of Europe' (*ibid.*, pp. 45, 48).

<sup>49</sup> Bruce E. Graver, 'Wakefield, Gilbert (1756–1801)', *ODNB*, LVI, p. 737.



restrained; and, set beside Palmer's and Wakefield's fortitude and punishments, his life in secluded Wellesbourne seems unheroic.

Williams, while deploring war, always recognized the right to self-defence. Consequently, his thinking attracted less attention, and provoked less rage, than the more startling, 'advanced' arguments of contemporary clerical pacifists, most notably the Reverend Richard Warner, curate of St James's church, Bath.<sup>50</sup> Warner advocated pacifism early in the Napoleonic wars and thereby sparked debate in numerous tracts and sermons; one opponent – incorrectly, of course – accused him of advancing a 'new and unfounded proposition'.<sup>51</sup> Warner was a better self-publicist than Williams. This was also true of another figure who overshadowed Williams, his Warwickshire neighbour Dr Samuel Parr. Parr was a clever, witty man, who mixed regularly in exalted Whig circles. 'The Whig Dr Johnson' was fortunate, too, in having two Boswells, John Johnstone, his former pupil, and William Field, to eulogize him.<sup>52</sup> Historians tend to unduly favour clever men,<sup>53</sup> and have treated Parr generously, but he was often insufferable, displaying the aggression of a baboon and the manners of a pig: 'a most fatiguing companion', moaned the good-natured Greatheed.<sup>54</sup> One 'merry night', the Whig lawyer and politician Thomas Erskine, anticipating the Great Seal, asked Parr and Williams what preferment they desired. The conceited Parr wanted a bishopric, the modest Williams a prebend.<sup>55</sup> Such self-effacement has not served Williams well posthumously.

## The Turning Tide

The sources for Williams' life and thinking are plentiful. They include his published and extant manuscript sermons, letters, schools' and Oxford colleges' records, ecclesiastical records, diaries of friends, and newspapers, besides some visual evidence, such as paintings and medals. From these sources, it is possible to produce a detailed – and sometimes an astonishingly detailed – picture of Williams' ministry at Wellesbourne, his theological convictions, his social connections and outlook, and his political beliefs and campaigning. Notwithstanding this, does Williams' career really merit detailed consideration? Richard Cobb once sought to justify an essay describing a double-murder, committed in 1809 on the Franco-Dutch border: the crime 'was something that had happened at

<sup>50</sup> See below, p. 134.

<sup>51</sup> Ceadel, *Origins of War Prevention*, p. 191. Noting the adversary's error, Dr Ceadel observes that, nonetheless, 'Warner was probably the first clergyman of a state church to preach non-resistance to soldiers during an invasion crisis' (ibid.).

<sup>52</sup> Field, *Parr*, 2 vols (1828); John Johnstone, ed., *The Works of Samuel Parr, LL.D.*, 8 vols (1828).

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Jeremy Black, *British Foreign Policy in the Age of Walpole* (Edinburgh, 1985), p. 3.

<sup>54</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/119, Entry, 27 January 1810. Parr's 'mode of feeling is so peculiar and all his habits so strange and uncouth', Greatheed had earlier complained, 'that one is intirely put out of one's way': CR 1,707/116, Entry, 25 October 1805.

<sup>55</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/116, Bertie Greatheed to Thomas, Baron Erskine, 27 March 1806.

a given place in a given period', he observed, 'and as the account of it . . . was remarkably complete, it appeared . . . worth telling'.<sup>56</sup> Such 'because-it-is-there' justifications risk spawning constricted, inexpressibly dull, unrepresentative studies (precisely the history which Cobb despised). However, a study of Williams' clerical life and political endeavours illustrates, and illuminates, the religious, social, and political history of an exceptionally exhilarating and alarming period. It is also in step with recent historical approaches to the age – and, indeed, with more general historical advances.

During the past twenty years, the historiographical context for the study of religion in the past generally, and for the Hanoverian Church and its clergy in particular, has changed enormously. The collapse of communism in the old USSR and eastern Europe and the concomitant discrediting of Marxism have encouraged scholars to reappraise the rôle of religion in past societies. So has the rise of an uncompromising, strident Christian Right in the USA facing a militant Islamic fundamentalism. Historians have consequently sought to reconstruct sensitively religious beliefs in the past, convinced that these beliefs cannot be ignored, mocked, or castigated anachronistically.<sup>57</sup> *Religious* history – as distinct from older *ecclesiastical* histories – has tended to analyse religion in earlier societies very broadly, eschewing a focus on denominations, clerics, and church leaders.

One facet of this widespread interest in religious history has been a substantial reappraisal of the Hanoverian Church. In his *English Society 1688–1832* (1985), Jonathan Clark sought to 're-integrate religion into . . . [our] historical vision' of the years from the Revolution to the Reform Act.<sup>58</sup> Specialist religious historians have countered the principal charges against the Hanoverian clergy, and, collectively, have presented a favourable picture of the Church in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, maintaining that its achievements were far from negligible, especially since it encountered new and serious problems during that period. As attendance at services was, from 1689, legally unenforceable, parsons worked hard to maintain, or to swell, their congregations. Pluralism, often necessitated by meagre livings, produced few problems when – as was common – a pluralist's parishes were close together. New church buildings were erected or old ones extended. Efforts were made to ensure that parishioners properly understood Christian doctrine through catechizing and careful, intelligible preaching. Taken together, in the eyes of 'revisionists', such endeavours constitute an 'eighteenth-century Reformation' in England, aimed at bringing the Anglican message with increasing effectiveness to the lower orders.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Richard Cobb, *A Sense of Place* (1975), pp. 3–4.

<sup>57</sup> Two Conferences of Anglo-American Historians on religious history, held at the Institute of Historical Research, London, in 1996 and 2006, highlighted the renewed interest in the subject.

<sup>58</sup> J. C. D. Clark, *English Society 1688–1832* (Cambridge, 1985), p. ix.

<sup>59</sup> E.g., William Gibson, *The Church of England 1688–1832: Unity and Accord* (2001); Jeremy Gregory, 'The Eighteenth-Century Reformation: The Pastoral Task of Anglican Clergy after 1689', *The Church of England c. 1689–c. 1833: From Toleration to Tractarianism*, ed. John Walsh, Colin Haydon, and Stephen



The resurgence of religious history has also altered perceptions of radicalism. Jonathan Clark depicted Hanoverian England as a ‘confessional state’, controlled by Trinitarian Anglicans who excluded Roman Catholics, Orthodox Protestant Dissenters, and the heterodox from power. In the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the excluded therefore wanted to destroy the Church–state alliance, and so, for Clark, the roots of English radicalism lay largely in religion.<sup>60</sup> Leadership was provided by Arians and Socinians, notably Richard Price and Joseph Priestley, and Anglican clerics who had become Unitarians. Yet John Henry Williams’ religious opinions – Trinitarian, but consistently Latitudinarian in character – overlapped with some of Rational Dissent’s tenets: the principles of *sola scriptura*, the importance of free enquiry and candid discussion, the right of private judgment, the need to preserve and extend religious – and, correspondingly, civil – liberties. Moreover, in the 1790s, Williams denounced the Church–state alliance, regarding the subservience of the Church to Pittite politicians as odious. Professor Clark’s analysis therefore helps to place Williams, though himself Orthodox, in the wider context of contemporary doctrinal heterodoxy and political radicalism, and partly explains why court clergy found his opinions peculiarly obnoxious and traitorous.<sup>61</sup>

Besides national surveys, diocesan, sub-diocesan, and parish studies have enormously enhanced historians’ understanding of religion in past societies; and such sub-national studies have contributed substantially to the revised, optimistic picture of the Hanoverian Church. Jeremy Gregory has shown the Church functioning effectively in the diocese of Canterbury from 1660 to 1828, and Mark Smith has described how ably the Church coped with the problems produced by early industrialization in north-west England.<sup>62</sup> Arthur Burns has demonstrated the capacity of dioceses to reform themselves in the early nineteenth century.<sup>63</sup> Some writers, however, highlight the Georgian Church’s failings. Donald Spaeth’s study of the diocese of Salisbury from 1660 to 1740 and M. F. Snape’s work on eighteenth-century Whalley in Lancashire (probably England’s largest parish) describe a widening gulf between the cultures of parsons and congregations.<sup>64</sup> Many scholars have noted variations in religious practice, between and, indeed, within dioceses.<sup>65</sup>

Taylor (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 67–85 and ‘The Making of a Protestant Nation: “Success” and “Failure” in England’s Long Reformation’, *England’s Long Reformation 1500–1800*, ed. Nicholas Tyacke (1998), pp. 307–33.

<sup>60</sup> Clark, *English Society*, pp. 277–348.

<sup>61</sup> Murray, ‘Influence of the French Revolution’, p. 87.

<sup>62</sup> Jeremy Gregory, *Restoration, Reformation, and Reform 1660–1828: Archbishops of Canterbury and their Diocese* (Oxford, 2000); Mark Smith, *Religion in Industrial Society: Oldham and Saddleworth 1740–1865* (Oxford, 1994).

<sup>63</sup> Arthur Burns, *The Diocesan Revival in the Church of England c. 1800–1870* (Oxford, 1999).

<sup>64</sup> Donald A. Spaeth, *The Church in an Age of Danger* (Cambridge, 2000); M. F. Snape, *The Church of England in Industrializing Society: The Lancashire Parish of Whalley in the Eighteenth Century* (Woodbridge, 2003).

<sup>65</sup> F. C. Mather, ‘Georgian Churchmanship Reconsidered: Some Variations in Anglican Public Worship

This study of Williams' splendidly well-documented ministry, and, tangentially, of the ministries of contemporary clergymen in south Warwickshire, usefully contributes to the debate. It also highlights the extent to which informal sources can yield information about subjects which the formal records largely or wholly ignore. At Wellesbourne, Williams appears largely typical of a conscientious country clergyman. He performed the weekly services dutifully, preached movingly, catechized, and conducted the baptism, marriage, and funeral services until almost the end of his life. His ministry was properly integrated into the rhythm of the parish's year: he preached, for instance, at Wellesbourne's wakes.<sup>66</sup> Possessed of a thoughtful and enquiring mind, his theology is interesting – much more interesting than Woodforde's (it could, perhaps, hardly be less so). Williams sought to reconcile, to his own satisfaction at least, Christian doctrine with the principles of the Enlightenment. Simultaneously, he sought to combine rational religion, the religion of the intellect, with evangelical fervour, the religion of the heart. In short, in his sequestered parish, he remained cognizant of, and receptive to, the great religious and intellectual currents of his age.

Turning from religious history, many scholars – in Britain and abroad – have investigated provincial and local history in recent years. Their works are often rigorously planned and painstakingly researched. Such studies are plainly valuable in providing more accurate, vivid pictures of past societies than necessarily generalized national surveys can achieve. They can confirm, challenge, qualify, or correct broad trends outlined in national histories. Their disadvantages are, nevertheless, obvious. Examinations of unrepresentative local societies are potentially misleading about past periods, and, though not pointless, at best pointillist, exercises. The wealth of detail found in regional and local studies is frequently impressive, but there is always the danger that inadequate sources may render some analysis shaky or preclude the investigation of certain topics. Studies of Georgian towns are often more convincing than studies of villages and hamlets, because urban sources are generally superior to rural records; and this is regrettable since, throughout John Henry Williams' lifetime, town-dwellers were the minority of England's population. The most thought-provoking works on local societies are perhaps 'microhistories', whose authors consistently endeavour to link local circumstances and events to national shifts in politics, society, and culture.<sup>67</sup> Miss Marple saw individuals and communities through the prism of St Mary Mead; is it possible to see late Georgian England, and its social and political history, through the prism of Wellesbourne?

John Henry Williams' adult life is a window not only on the clerical society

1714–1830', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* xxxvi (1985), pp. 255–83; Jeremy Gregory and Jeffrey S. Chamberlain, eds, *The National Church in Local Perspective: The Church of England and the Regions 1660–1800* (Woodbridge, 2003).

<sup>66</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/120, Entry, 12 July 1812.

<sup>67</sup> For a particularly impressive example, see Paul Monod's *The Murder of Mr Grebell* (New Haven and London, 2003).

depicted and satirized by Jane Austen,<sup>68</sup> but also, more broadly, on polite society in the provinces under George III and George IV. Williams was not immured in his parsonage, marooned in his parish. He naturally enjoyed the company of nearby clerics, educated and civilized men, and their families, but he also had friends among the neighbouring landowners and was forever visiting them or entertaining them at home. He mixed with polite society in Leamington, fast developing as a major spa town, where the family acquired property. His anti-war campaigning involved him in county politics and meetings. More generally, the tectonic plates of society were shifting during Williams' lifetime, as the English became an increasingly commercial and imperial nation. Williams' vision of society was traditional and aristocratic, as his concern about his pedigree, his unswerving gentlemanly conduct, his gentry friendships, and his ambitions for enhancing his children's status all demonstrate. Yet his financial and property dealings also reveal a man with the realism and acumen to profit in a commercialized setting. In this light, he appears a man of the competent, well-informed professional classes. His life thus accords with the divergent visions of Hanoverian England of Jonathan Clark and Paul Langford.<sup>69</sup>

Nonetheless, it is Williams' responses to the French Revolution, its impact on Britain, and the wars it engendered that are most fascinating. Williams and his circle were initially enthused by the Revolution's glorious promise, then disappointed by its blunders, and finally appalled by the bloodshed of the Terror and the civil war. Soon, Williams was no longer just a spectator of events abroad, since the hurricane was felt even in rural Warwickshire. He was alarmed by the rise of militant conservatism and the spread of loyalist associations in his locality. He abhorred the renewed hostility to Protestant Dissenters in the 1790s, and publicly decried it following the Priestley riots. When war with France began in February 1793, he was mortified. Then came commands to hold fast-day services, read a liturgy justifying the war, and to preach accordingly: commands which he thought were affronts to his conscience and his sense of honour. His anti-war sermons, proudly defiant, were, therefore, a logical and, as his admirers observed, a 'manly' response to these orders. The discourses' publication made him 'honourably known to the public' – or notorious in the eyes of opponents – and brought him new contacts in the capital, including radicals like William Godwin. These sermons were widely reviewed. Significantly, *The English Review's* policy was to examine religious publications and sermons very sparingly and briefly;<sup>70</sup> but, it made an exception with Williams' discourses which, it held, contained 'truths worthy of the attention of all parties'.<sup>71</sup> 'Mr. Williams is a sound divine,

<sup>68</sup> On this, see Irene Collins, *Jane Austen and the Clergy* (London and Rio Grande, 1994).

<sup>69</sup> Clark, *English Society*; Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727–1783* (Oxford, 1989).

<sup>70</sup> *The English Review* xxvi (1795), p. 378.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 382.

and not a less sound politician', it declared. 'He unites piety with morality; and he recommends an union of both with policy.'<sup>72</sup>

If he is to be believed, Williams had before 1793 eschewed politics when preaching:<sup>73</sup> it was multiple dilemmas of the 1790s which made him a 'political clergyman'. Between 1793 and 1815, politicians, parsons, and, indeed, society at large had to decide their political allegiances and priorities. Scrutinizing an individual's response to titanic events provides a valuable counterbalance to viewing, often imprecisely, the reactions of whole classes or faceless groupings. The themes which Eamon Duffy explored in *The Stripping of the Altars* (1992) – the strength and popularity of late medieval Catholicism and the Reformation as a traumatic rupture with traditional religion – are most movingly brought to life in his *The Voices of Morebath* (2001), recounting the Reformation's impact on the flesh-and-blood inhabitants of a Devon village from the 1530s to the 1570s.<sup>74</sup> Given the rich sources for Williams' life, it is possible to replicate Duffy's human-scale approach by detailing the consequences of the French Revolution and the ensuing wars for Wellesbourne's vicar and his circle – and his enemies.

From the 1790s, Williams' politics and behaviour verged on the quixotic. He retained his loyalty to the Whigs, as the party disintegrated. He deplored war; but war brought Britain's European and world hegemony in the nineteenth century. His defiance of the Church's conservative authorities scuppered the possibility of a better benefice or further ecclesiastical preferment. Ultimately, those whom he opposed were vindicated, their politics victorious. Yet it is wrong to judge Williams with hindsight, or deny his arguments without a hearing. As Hugh Trevor-Roper eloquently contended, 'at any given moment of history there are real alternatives, and to dismiss them as unreal because they were not realized . . . is to take the reality out of the situation'.<sup>75</sup> 'It is only if we place ourselves before the alternatives of the past, as of the present,' he continued,

only if we live for a moment, as the men of the time lived, in its still fluid context and among its still unresolved problems, if we see those problems coming upon us, as well as look back on them after they have gone away, that we can draw useful lessons from history . . . [It is necessary to] restore to the past its lost uncertainties, to reopen, if only for an instant, the doors which the *fait accompli* has closed . . .<sup>76</sup>

Such admonitions – which have, for instance, so valuably spawned modern scholarly interest in Jacobitism earlier in the eighteenth century – are plainly

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> J. H. Williams, *Two Sermons Preached on the Public Fasts of April 1793, and February 1794* (1794), p. viii.

<sup>74</sup> For a comparably moving example, see John McManners, *The French Revolution and the Church* (1969), pp. 107–8.

<sup>75</sup> Hugh Trevor-Roper, 'History and Imagination', *History and Imagination: Essays in Honour of H. R. Trevor-Roper*, ed. Hugh Lloyd-Jones, Valerie Pearl, and Blair Worden (1981), p. 363.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., p. 365.

applicable in a case like Williams'. His anti-war sermons appear ill-judged because it is so hard to banish 1812, Elba, Waterloo, St Helena, and the Vienna settlement from one's mind. Yet, as late as 1810, the conflict's military consequences could appear simply dreadful to well-informed Britons: 'the annihilation of a part or all of our disposable military force; impotency in all the grand objects of warfare not connected with maritime power; disappointment in all our expeditions, whenever we have aimed at more than the attack of an island'.<sup>77</sup> Before Napoleon invaded Russia, a satisfactory peace seemed inconceivable; and, before 1814, decisive victory impossible. Furthermore, though the wars against Napoleon – which, however hateful, Williams could at least intermittently view as wars of self-defence – repeatedly encountered setbacks between 1803 and 1811, the war of 1793–1802 – the struggle he had decried so passionately – had been even less successful. The West Indies campaign of 1793–98 was appalling: some 45,000, out of 89,000, soldiers died in it. At home, there were soaring food prices in 1795–96 and 1799–1801, and, in 1797, a financial crisis and the naval mutinies. Ireland rose in 1798. In late 1795, Pitt's government thought that a negotiated peace – though a 'regicide peace' – with France was possible. Viewed year by year from 1793, therefore, Williams' attacks on the war and calls for peace do not seem foolish, misguided, or unrealistic, or mere clerical rhetoric. In this 'still fluid context', his arguments, though based on religious and humanitarian principles, dovetailed with political, military, and financial arguments for ending the struggle.

It is very fortunate that there are so many sources for Williams' life and career. Nonetheless, there are regrettable gaps in the evidence. Predictably, it is difficult to uncover much about Williams' early life. It is impossible to know much about his parents, besides their rank. It is only possible to make generalized comments on the education which Williams received when at the College School, Gloucester, which he attended between 1755 and 1763: most of the school's records were destroyed in a fire in 1849.<sup>78</sup> In 1770, Williams' life dips out of view, and one can only conjecture what he did, and where he was, during that year.<sup>79</sup> Regarding his years at Wellesbourne, churchwardens' returns can give a glimpse of parishioners' views of their parson, but only one survives for Williams' incumbency.<sup>80</sup> No records cast light on his relations with Wellesbourne's vestry. Records relating to poor relief are sparse and so it is impossible to investigate satisfactorily how Williams oversaw the distribution of charity during the hard years of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Some gaps in the sources are particularly frustrating. Bertie Greatheed started

<sup>77</sup> Philip Harling, 'A Tale of Two Conflicts: Critiques of the British War Effort 1793–1815', *Resisting Napoleon*, ed. Mark Philp (Aldershot, 2006), p. 21. The quotation is from *Essay on the Military Policy and Institutions of the British Empire* (1810) by the military strategist C. W. Pasley.

<sup>78</sup> I am grateful to Mr Lowinger Maddison for information about this.

<sup>79</sup> See below, p. 24.

<sup>80</sup> Worcestershire RO, BA 2,289/21 (viii), Ref. 807.

a journal when he travelled in Europe between 1782 and 1786. Later diaries cover the period from 1802 to 1805, when he again lived abroad, and, after returning to Guy's Cliffe in the latter year, he continued to keep the journal until his death in 1826.<sup>81</sup> But he apparently kept no diaries – or they have perished – in the 1790s, when Williams was most politically active. The Reverend John Morley, another of Williams' friends and neighbours, kept a journal, but only parts covering the period 1797–1801, and a few entries from later years, survive.<sup>82</sup> Worst of all, however, are two other losses. First, Greateed kept his entire correspondence with Williams from 1782.<sup>83</sup> When, after Greateed's death, his granddaughter and her husband discovered it, they read it over several days, and even concluded that, since it contained 'interesting matter', 'by & bye a selection might be made & published'.<sup>84</sup> Yet, seemingly, the letters were subsequently destroyed. Second, in his will, Williams bequeathed his papers to his son, Harry.<sup>85</sup> However, in 1834, only a few years after his father's death, Harry died, and his widow apparently did not preserve the papers. Had she done so, it is likely that they would provide answers to many questions which are now unanswerable. Disconcertingly often, historical reconstruction depends merely on the chance survival of a few sources, while the casual destruction of evidence precludes accurate reconstitution. Sometimes an instance of fortunate preservation underlines how flimsy the life-lines are. Williams' name is listed in the register of the College School, Gloucester; and this is the only record of where the boy was educated.<sup>86</sup> But half of the following page is missing:<sup>87</sup> had the vandal ripped out the page with the entry, one could only speculate about Williams' schooling.

Besides the gaps in the sources, there is also the problem of perspective. The most important source for this study is Williams' sermons, and they not only advanced a range of political and religious arguments but also sought to justify Williams' conduct in opposing the conflict with revolutionary France. Both when preached and in print, the sermons were designed to persuade and query or quash opposing views; they are forceful, but one-sided. Clearly they cannot be taken at face value. The heroine of *HMS Pinafore* observes of the First Lord of the Admiralty, 'I know that he is a truly great and good man, for he told me so himself.' Are not Williams' sermons bound to show the author in a highly commendable light? They need careful interrogation, and a range of questions needs to be asked about them. How consistent were Williams' arguments? How, if at all, did Williams adapt them to changing circumstances? Was he sometimes disingenuous, evasive, or self-deceiving – notably about the character of the French Revolution,

<sup>81</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/110–26.

<sup>82</sup> Warwickshire CRO, MI 142; CR 2,486.

<sup>83</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/117, Entry, 10 December 1807.

<sup>84</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/126, Entries, 4–8 November 1826. They thought that Greateed had 'kept every letter he recieved' [sic]: *ibid.*, Entry, 1 January 1828.

<sup>85</sup> TNA, Prob. 11/1,759.

<sup>86</sup> Gloucester Cathedral L, MS 85, p. 129.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 130–1.



and the threats which the revolutionary régimes posed to Britain? Did he sometimes side-step difficult issues by feigning ignorance and use rhetoric or sophistry to obscure problematical issues? What, if anything, did he expect to gain personally by adopting an anti-war stance? There are also awkward questions respecting general historical practice which cannot be eschewed. Above all, can historians judge Williams impartially, or will any evaluation be merely subjective, reflecting each individual's sympathy, cynicism, or hostility when reading the sermons?

Similar comments can be made on evidence left by Williams' friends, admirers, or adversaries. Bertie Greatheed's journals for the years 1805–26 are immensely useful. Greatheed was a sincere Christian and a staunch Whig, and, for over forty years, Williams' foremost friend. Williams' 'thoughts have been so moulded and fashioned together with my own by the close intimacy of above five and twenty years', Greatheed stated in 1806, 'that we are actuated as it were by one mind'.<sup>88</sup> The very detailed journals provide a mass of information about Williams' character, preaching, social circle, financial skills, and family life. But Greatheed was monotonously uncritical of his friend: for example, whenever Williams preached, according to the diary, he did so 'admirably', 'incomparably', 'finely', or 'most divinely'.<sup>89</sup> Dr Parr appears equally uncritical: he was as overgenerous to his friends, like William Field and Williams, as he was merciless to his enemies and those with whom he broke, notably William Godwin and James Mackintosh.<sup>90</sup> The sources also show, however, that Williams and his politics could inspire considerable dislike. John Lucy, a fellow clergyman, but also the owner of the Charlecote landed estate adjoining Wellesbourne, strongly disapproved of Williams' political activity and sometimes railed against it.<sup>91</sup> He probably disliked Williams personally: the two men clashed over financial matters, and perhaps Lucy knew that Williams was apt to mock his doltish, Squire-Western speech.<sup>92</sup> Political opponents belittled Williams – 'an angry . . . political Clergyman'<sup>93</sup> – while reviews of his publications predictably reflected the political stance, hostile or supportive, of the reviewers and periodicals.<sup>94</sup> Overall, it is hard to find balanced appraisals of Williams by contemporaries. But perhaps the conflicting opinions simply reveal the same essential characteristic viewed from different angles: an obstinate consistency of conduct, grounded on sincerely-held principles, a resolve which Williams' supporters admired and his adversaries detested.

<sup>88</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/116, Bertie Greatheed to Thomas, Baron Erskine, 27 March 1806.

<sup>89</sup> See, e.g., Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/118, Entries, 7, 21 August 1808; CR 1,707/119, Entries, 20 October, 3 November 1811.

<sup>90</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/33, 10, 11, 12; Bodleian L, Dep. c. 512, Samuel Parr to William Godwin, 29 April 1800; Derry, *Parr*, pp. 235–7.

<sup>91</sup> See below, pp. 128–9.

<sup>92</sup> See below, pp. 64, 75, n. 123.

<sup>93</sup> *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 3 July 1797.

<sup>94</sup> See below, pp. 111–14.

John Henry Williams' world was one of concentric circles – parish, neighbourhood and county, kingdom. Broadly, these tally with the principal themes of this study – religion, society, and politics. Yet, naturally, the different subjects overlap: in particular, religion and politics were utterly entwined for Williams. How effectively the sources have been used, and how impartially, is for the reader to judge. The author can only follow the wise example of Pontius Pilate and say What I have written I have written.



## Chapter Two

### THE FORMATIVE YEARS

#### Family and Early Life

On 10 April 1747, John Henry Williams, the son of John and Mary Williams, was baptized in Gloucester cathedral.<sup>1</sup> As an adult, he would carefully commemorate the day on which he had received the sacrament admitting him to the body of Christ's church.<sup>2</sup> That the infant was christened in the splendid medieval cathedral which dominated the city of Gloucester, and not merely in his parents' parish church, was a mark of honour in a society wedded to conceptions and expressions of hierarchy.<sup>3</sup> For John Williams was a prominent citizen of Gloucester and a scion of a proud, distinguished family.

The antiquarian county histories of the eighteenth century reflect the consuming interest of élite families in their lineage, the descent of manors, and their ancestors' memorials; and those which treated the Williams family, notably Samuel Rudder's *A New History of Gloucestershire* (1779), were no exceptions. The founder of the Williams family's fortunes was the distinguished judge Sir David Williams (1550–1613). The son of a yeoman of Ystradfellte, Brecknockshire, he was admitted to the Middle Temple in 1568, called to the bar in 1576, and thereafter practised chiefly in south Wales. From 1581 to 1604, Williams was recorder of Brecon, from 1584 to 1598, he was MP for the Brecon boroughs, and, in 1604, he became a puisne justice of the King's Bench. Knighted in 1603, he was now a rich man – 'a man of great living and personall wealth'<sup>4</sup> – with large estates in Wales and lands in Berkshire and Oxfordshire. When he died a decade later, he was buried in St John's chapel (now the cathedral), Brecon, in an elaborate tomb.<sup>5</sup>

Sir David left his mansion at Gwernyfed, Brecknockshire, and his Welsh

<sup>1</sup> Gloucestershire RO, 'Cathedral Church of St Peter and the Holy and Invisible Trinity Gloucester. Cathedral Registers 1661–1872. Baptisms and Burials' (1976), fol. 15.

<sup>2</sup> See below, pp. 25, 34.

<sup>3</sup> It is possible that Williams' parents resided in the cathedral close: children of such families were baptized in the cathedral. But no evidence survives showing that the Williams family lived there. I am grateful to David Smith for advice about this matter.

<sup>4</sup> John Bruce, ed., *Liber Famelicus of Sir James Whitelocke*, Camden Society LXX (1858), p. 30.

<sup>5</sup> J. H. Baker, 'Williams, Sir David (1550–1613)', *ODNB*, LIX, pp. 153–4.

estates to his eldest son, Sir Henry Williams MP. Sir Henry's son, also Henry, was a staunch royalist who entertained Charles I after Naseby at Gwernyfed, and was created a baronet.<sup>6</sup> The family remained powerful in the early eighteenth century, though thereafter its influence waned. Sir Edward Williams was MP for Brecknockshire in 1697–98 and from 1705 to 1721, and the family exercised some church patronage in the county.<sup>7</sup> There was, too, a cadet, Gloucestershire, branch of the family – John Williams' branch. Sir David left Cokethorpe, his house at Ducklington in Oxfordshire, to his second son, Thomas; it was sold and Thomas acquired a seat, Corndean, at Winchcombe in Gloucestershire.<sup>8</sup> The family were still there in the eighteenth century, though Thomas' younger son, also Thomas, became a lawyer, moved to Gloucester, and was elected the city's common clerk in 1662.<sup>9</sup> His elaborate monument in the middle chancel of St Mary de Crypt, Gloucester, commemorated his legal expertise, august family, virtues, and piety. It also bore the family arms – principally, a chevron between three fighting cocks.<sup>10</sup> The young John Henry was presumably shown the memorial by his parents and told of his honourable lineage; and, in later life, he sealed documents using a signet ring with the Williams arms.<sup>11</sup> It is also likely that he was taken to St Peter, Winchcombe (of which, in 1774, he would become vicar). There, other members of the family were buried; in the chancel, the monument to Thomas, Sir David's son, is striking, with its kneeling effigy and the Williams coat of arms.<sup>12</sup> Certainly, John Williams was proud of this pedigree; and when, in 1755, the eight-year-old John Henry was enrolled at the College School, Gloucester, the boy was listed as 'Johannis Williams de Civit: Gloc: Arm: filius' – the son of John Williams, armiger.<sup>13</sup>

The College School enjoyed something of a golden age in the eighteenth century.<sup>14</sup> Its fine reputation was, naturally, grounded on its sustained tradition of classics teaching: indeed, a famous grammar of the Greek language, later used even in America, was originally composed for the School's use.<sup>15</sup> The study of

<sup>6</sup> Emma Dent, *Annals of Winchcombe and Sudeley* (1877), p. 308.

<sup>7</sup> D. W. Hayton, 'Williams, Sir Edward (1659–1721)', *The House of Commons 1690–1715*, ed. Eveline Cruickshanks, Stuart Handley, and D. W. Hayton, V (2002), p. 866; Peter D. G. Thomas, 'Williams, Sir Edward (1659–1721)', *The House of Commons 1715–1754*, ed. Romney Sedgwick, II (1970), p. 541; *The Clergyman's Intelligencer* (1745), p. 218.

<sup>8</sup> *VCH Oxford*, XIII (1996), p. 123; Bodleian L, MS Top. Oxon. b. 78, fol. 300v.

<sup>9</sup> Bodleian L, MS Top. Oxon. b. 78, fol. 300v; T. Fitz-roy Fenwick and Walter C. Metcalfe, eds, *The Visitation of the County of Gloucester* (Exeter, 1884), pp. 202–3; [Samuel Rudder], *A New History of Gloucestershire* (Cirencester, 1779), p. 119.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas Dudley Fosbrooke, *An Original History of the City of Gloucester* (1819), p. 164. The church was extensively restored in the early 1840s and the chancel was cleared of monuments: *VCH Gloucester*, IV (1988), p. 302. Thomas Williams' stone escutcheon survives in the south chapel, however: personal observation, 21 February 2006.

<sup>11</sup> Gloucestershire RO, GDR/D14/1, Resignation of John Henry Williams, 23 July 1774.

<sup>12</sup> [Rudder], *Gloucestershire*, p. 829.

<sup>13</sup> Gloucester Cathedral L, MS 85, p. 129.

<sup>14</sup> *The Gloucester Guide* (1792), p. 57.

<sup>15</sup> *A Grammar of the Greek Language: Originally Composed for the College-School, at Gloucester* (Boston, Mass, 1800).

Latin and Greek not only trained the mind but was also the basis for male élite culture. Boys were taught to appreciate the grandeur and beauties of the poetry, prose, art, and architecture of ancient Greece and Rome; the skill of ancient rhetoricians; the power of classical drama; the wisdom and sophistication of Greek and Roman philosophers; and the lessons of ancient history. Classical cultural achievements were the products of social élites, analogous to the élite of Georgian England; and classical studies reinforced the social superiority of boys from wealthy and honourable families. The austere virtue of Greek and Roman statesmen instilled notions of service and patriotism, while the exploits of mythical heroes and the deeds of ancient commanders fostered courage and daring. One can imagine, during Williams' later schooldays, the parallels drawn between Rome's victories and Britain's contemporary successes in the Seven Years' War, and especially in the *annus mirabilis*, 1759. Classical studies could therefore provide an invaluable training for boys who might later enter Parliament, govern the shires, or serve in the military or the expanding empire. Or in the Church: those seeking ordination were to be men 'learned in the Latin Tongue'.<sup>16</sup> Whether, given his later outlook, Williams had any ill-formulated doubts about the glorification of war when at school, it is impossible to know.<sup>17</sup> But he certainly remembered his classics. His published works contain references to Greek drama and philosophy and Roman history and religious practice.<sup>18</sup> *The English Review*, when examining the sermon which he published in 1795, also noted that his style was sometimes modelled overtly on classical authors.<sup>19</sup>

Given his concern with rank, John Williams was doubtless concerned that his son should develop the behaviour of a gentleman while at the College School. In later life, John Henry Williams displayed the masculine qualities of courtesy and sociability, and was at ease in the company of gentlemen and aristocrats. In the face of criticism or adversity, he showed courage and resilience: one reviewer thought his writings 'truly manly'.<sup>20</sup> The School naturally sought to foster gentlemanly behaviour and social poise. The sons of the most distinguished Gloucestershire families, and some sons of gentlemen from the Welsh marches, attended it, and William Warburton, bishop of Gloucester from 1760 to 1779, sent his son there.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, when Edward Sparkes, master of the School from 1742 to 1777, died, *The Gloucester Journal* noted that 'under his tuition, were formed many, who have been, and still are, the shining ornaments of this county'.<sup>22</sup> That the adult Williams exhibited both intellectual and social self-confidence owed

<sup>16</sup> *The Form and Manner of Making, Ordaining, and Consecrating of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, According to the Order of the Church of England* (1717), preface.

<sup>17</sup> Though see below, p. 111.

<sup>18</sup> Bertie Greatheed, *The Regent: A Tragedy* (1788), pp. v–vi; J. H. Williams, *Two Sermons Preached on the Public Fasts of April 1793, and February 1794* (1794), pp. 62–3.

<sup>19</sup> *The English Review* xxvi (1795), p. 382.

<sup>20</sup> *The Monthly Review*, New Series, xiv (1794), p. 355.

<sup>21</sup> David Robertson, *The King's School Gloucester* (London and Chichester, 1974), p. 82; Gloucester Cathedral L, MS 85, pp. 141, 146, 150.

<sup>22</sup> *The Glo[u]cester Journal*, 2 May 1785.

much to his education at the College School and his mixing there with the sons of the provincial landed élite. Two of Williams' schoolfellows were Thomas and Charles Raikes, the sons of Robert Raikes, promoter of many philanthropic causes, and famously of Sunday schools, and *The Gloucester Journal's* proprietor.<sup>23</sup> One wonders if Williams knew the family well, and whether he partly imbibed from the Raikeses the sympathy which he later displayed for the lower orders' problems.

Lastly regarding the College School, it probably encouraged the young Williams' sense of religion. The College School was Gloucester cathedral's school, and so, from the age of eight until his death, Williams was continuously attached to Christian foundations – the School, then the University of Oxford, and thereafter the various churches which he served. The School was situated in the cathedral itself, over the chapter house, and entered from the cloisters or the north transept.<sup>24</sup> Each school day, therefore, the boy went to the huge and imposing cathedral, used for Christian worship since Norman times – and on the site of a religious house founded in 681. The stately central tower, the beautiful cloisters, the nave with its massive columns, the sculptures, and the stained glass cannot but have awed him. The boys attended some of the services, and the cathedral's other offices could be glimpsed or, in the schoolroom, distantly heard. The cathedral's bells could be heard across the city and, every third year, Gloucester hosted the Three Choirs Festival. Besides the emotional and cultural imprint left by the majesty and beauty of the Church's worship, Christian teaching moulded Williams intellectually. As Jeremy Gregory has emphasized, the period's ideal of the manly Christian tempered inflatedly bellicose or severe ideals of classical heroism; and, as an adult, Williams declared that those 'ancient heroes, who ... presided over ... horrid scenes of carnage, must appear to the sober philanthropic mind but as dignified butchers of human flesh'.<sup>25</sup> An ideal Christian man, it was maintained, should display magnanimity, modesty, and forgiveness. He needed to strive actively in the world. His duty lay in aiding others, particularly through charitable acts.<sup>26</sup> These were standards to which, in later life, Williams endeavoured to adhere.

For most of the eighteenth century, it was not requisite for a gentleman's education to attend university. But Williams determined to study civil law at Oxford, and, in July 1763, aged sixteen, he matriculated from Pembroke College.<sup>27</sup> This was a natural progression for him, since Pembroke had strong links with Gloucestershire. From the late seventeenth century, the College

<sup>23</sup> Gloucester Cathedral L, MS 85, pp. 127, 129.

<sup>24</sup> *Gloucester Guide*, p. 57.

<sup>25</sup> Jeremy Gregory, 'Homo Religiosus: Masculinity and Religion in the Long Eighteenth Century', *English Masculinities 1660–1800*, ed. Tim Hitchcock and Michèle Cohen (Harlow, 1999), p. 92; Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. 20.

<sup>26</sup> Gregory, 'Homo Religiosus', pp. 85–110.

<sup>27</sup> Joseph Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses: The Members of the University of Oxford 1715–1886*, IV (Oxford, 1888), p. 1,567.

awarded scholarships to boys from Gloucestershire schools,<sup>28</sup> and, from 1713, one of Gloucester cathedral's prebends was reserved for the College's master.<sup>29</sup> When residing in Gloucester, the master of Pembroke was invited to inspect the College School, report to the chapter, and meet those boys who wished to proceed to Oxford.<sup>30</sup>

Pembroke was a little college. It had one small quadrangle, completed in the seventeenth century, and a master's lodgings, 'a handsome modern Edifice',<sup>31</sup> dating from 1695. Beyond the quadrangle were the gardens and the chapel (1728–32) – 'a small, elegant Building' which, a 1764 guidebook noted, 'tho' seldom visited by Strangers . . . merits that Favour more than some others which rarely escape their Notice'.<sup>32</sup> The College seems a homely place. In the gardens, there were Guernsey lizards, presumably brought by Pembroke's Channel Island undergraduates.<sup>33</sup> The total number of students was about seventy when Williams was at the College; a mere fifteen others matriculated with him in 1763.<sup>34</sup> At least one of the connections which Williams made in this intimate society was, it appears, subsequently useful to him.

Like the College School, Gloucester, Pembroke flourished in the eighteenth century. Its most famous sons were Samuel Johnson, George Whitefield (like Williams, a native of Gloucester), William Blackstone, and 'the triumvirate' – the poet and novelist Richard Graves and the poets William Shenstone and Anthony Whistler. Williams' legal studies at Oxford presumably sharpened his wits and developed his analytical powers – valuable training for subsequent political debate. Nonetheless, his university years were probably important chiefly for honing his social accomplishments. Williams matriculated as a commoner, not as a gentleman commoner, from Pembroke;<sup>35</sup> this was not unusual for the sons of armigers in the eighteenth century.<sup>36</sup> He would doubtless have enjoyed the privileges accorded the gentlemen commoners – dining at high table and the like – but, judging by the battels bills, he lived almost as well at college as they did.<sup>37</sup> His overall expenditure as an undergraduate suggests that he enjoyed good living – and this was so in later life. Graves described the variety of social groupings at Pembroke in the 1730s. There was 'a very sober little party, who amused themselves in the evening with reading Greek and drinking water' and 'a set of jolly,

<sup>28</sup> Charles Lepper, *The Crypt School Gloucester 1539–1989* (Gloucester, 1989), pp. 17–19.

<sup>29</sup> G. V. Bennett, 'The Era of Party Zeal 1702–1714', *The History of the University of Oxford, Volume V: The Eighteenth Century*, ed. L. S. Sutherland and L. G. Mitchell (Oxford, 1986), p. 97.

<sup>30</sup> David Welander, *The History, Art, and Architecture of Gloucester Cathedral* (Stroud, 1991), p. 396.

<sup>31</sup> *A Pocket Companion for Oxford*, new edn (Oxford, 1764), p. 94.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 93–4.

<sup>33</sup> Douglas Maclean, *A History of Pembroke College, Oxford*, Oxford Historical Society XXXIII (Oxford, 1897), p. 276.

<sup>34</sup> *Pocket Companion for Oxford*, p. 95; Pembroke College, Oxford, Archive, 40/5/3, p. 1v.

<sup>35</sup> Pembroke College, Oxford, Archive, 4/4/1, fol. 59r.

<sup>36</sup> I owe this information to an unpublished paper by Mr Brian Wilson, although his sources predate Williams' matriculation.

<sup>37</sup> Pembroke College, Oxford, Archive, 9/1/96–101, *passim*.

sprightly young fellows . . . who drank ale, smoked tobacco, punned, and sung bacchanalian catches the whole evening'.<sup>38</sup> There were, too, '“bucks of the first head”', who enjoyed 'port-wine and arrack-punch; and now and then . . . would conclude with a bottle or two of claret. They kept late hours, [and] drank their favourite toasts on their knees . . .'.<sup>39</sup> Lastly, there was 'a sort of flying squadron of plain, sensible, matter-of-fact men, confined to no club, but associating occasionally with each party'.<sup>40</sup> If a comparable range of groupings still existed in the 1760s, Williams doubtless found his own milieu. When older, he was a convivial man, and two entries in particular in Pembroke's battels books indicate that he enjoyed merry-making as a student. In December 1765, just before departing for Christmas, and in May 1769, just before leaving the College, his bills were twice his usual weekly expenditure.<sup>41</sup> He had seemingly held two, rather extravagant, parties.

The University's politics – overwhelmingly and suffocatingly Tory – were probably less congenial to Williams than his lifestyle at Oxford, however. That he was already a convinced Whig cannot be definitely proved, but a few strands of evidence indicate that he was. He later wrote of his 'rooted and inborn hatred of Popery', suggesting an early education in Whig principles.<sup>42</sup> Pembroke College was earlier a Whig enclave in a Tory university.<sup>43</sup> It may also be significant that one of Williams' forebears, Richard Williams of Cabalfa (c. 1654–92), who had himself attended Pembroke, was a noted Whig, becoming MP for, variously, Brecknockshire, Radnorshire, and the New Radnor boroughs in the late seventeenth century.<sup>44</sup> All told, it seems likely that John Henry Williams was sometimes uneasy in 'the capital of Toryism'.<sup>45</sup> In 1759, the Earl of Westmorland, a former Jacobite, was installed with much pomp as the University's chancellor (though he died the year before Williams' matriculation).<sup>46</sup> If Pembroke retained a vestigial Whig character, that was fortunate; though, in any case, as later events showed, when Williams was going against the stream, his resolve was stiffened.

When Williams went to Oxford, it is likely that he envisaged a career in the

<sup>38</sup> Lilian M. Quiller Couch, ed., *Reminiscences of Oxford by Oxford Men 1559–1850*, Oxford Historical Society XXII (Oxford, 1892), pp. 97–8.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Pembroke College, Oxford, Archive, 9/1/98, Entry, 6 December 1765; 9/1/101, Entry, 26 May 1769. The sums exceed those usually expended on college gaudies.

<sup>42</sup> John Johnstone, ed., *The Works of Samuel Parr, LL.D.*, VIII (1828), p. 293. By 'Popery', Williams meant not only Roman Catholicism but also the imposition and enforcement of religious dogma and political conformity; in short, ecclesiastical and political tyranny.

<sup>43</sup> G. V. Bennett, 'Against the Tide: Oxford under William III', *History of the University of Oxford V*, ed. Sutherland and Mitchell, p. 46.

<sup>44</sup> J. P. Ferris, 'Williams, Richard (c. 1654–92)', *The House of Commons 1660–1690*, ed. Basil Duke Henning, III (1983), pp. 725–6; D. W. Hayton, 'Williams, Richard (c. 1654–92)', *House of Commons 1690–1715*, ed. Cruickshanks, Handley, and Hayton, V, pp. 869–70.

<sup>45</sup> The phrase was that of Charles James Fox, who matriculated, fifteen months after Williams, from Hart Hall: L. G. Mitchell, *Charles James Fox* (Oxford, 1992, repr. Harmondsworth, 1997), p. 8.

<sup>46</sup> Jonathan Spain, 'Fane, John, seventh earl of Westmorland (bap. 1686, d. 1762)', *ODNB*, XIX, p. 5.



law, like his distinguished ancestor, Sir David.<sup>47</sup> He probably wanted a period when, principally, he could enjoy the University's social life, aiming to enter one of the Inns of Court thereafter. It is just possible, however, that he had already resolved to take holy orders and was carefully planning ahead. For the degree of Bachelor of Laws entitled clerics to hold two benefices and could thereby ease advancement in the Church.<sup>48</sup> But the – admittedly fragmentary – evidence suggests that Williams' decision to seek ordination resulted from a clear sense of vocation, which grew while at Oxford, coupled with some form of evangelical conversion. Williams saw providential intervention in his calling: he later spoke of the 'holy religion which *I was called to teach*';<sup>49</sup> and he drew a distinction between 'real' and nominal Christians, seemingly implying his own conversion experience.<sup>50</sup> It may be significant that Williams' elder daughter was christened Grace, a favourite evangelical name. Furthermore, Williams' later thinking was consistently grounded on the 'blessed Gospel' and, in his preaching, he emphasized 'the agonies of a *crucified Saviour*' – two of the most pronounced hallmarks of evangelical theology.<sup>51</sup> It is unsurprising that he committed himself to a clerical career while at university. In eighteenth-century Oxford, religion was all-pervasive. The University's chief purpose was produce Anglican clergymen, and the majority of its graduates took orders. The cathedral was splendid, the churches and college chapels beautiful or magnificent. Undergraduates were obliged to attend chapel services and received some instruction in divinity. This setting fostered Williams' religious sensibilities. In October 1769, John Henry Williams cleared his bills at Pembroke, and quitted the College, resolved to prepare for ordination.<sup>52</sup>

## Ordination

In order to study for the ministry, Williams returned to Gloucester – though perhaps not immediately. Regrettably, no sources permit the tracking of his career in 1770. Possibly he travelled in Europe: given his rank and education, this seems quite probable. In later life, he mentioned visiting Ireland: perhaps it was at this time.<sup>53</sup> But, by 1774, he felt ready to become a candidate for ordination and

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Jeremy Gregory, *Restoration, Reformation, and Reform 1660–1828: Archbishops of Canterbury and their Diocese* (Oxford, 2000), p. 77.

<sup>48</sup> Edmund Gibson, *Codex Juris Ecclesiastici Anglicani*, II (1713), p. 948; Richard Burn, *Ecclesiastical Law*, II (1763), pp. 160–1; J. L. Barton, 'Legal Studies', *History of the University of Oxford V*, ed. Sutherland and Mitchell, p. 595.

<sup>49</sup> J. H. Williams, *A Thanksgiving Sermon for the Peace, Preached June 1, 1802* (1802), pp. 9–10. My italics.

<sup>50</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, pp. vi–vii; cf. Williams, *Thanksgiving Sermon*, p. 3.

<sup>51</sup> Williams, *Thanksgiving Sermon*, p. 4; Williams, *Two Sermons*, pp. 9–10; D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain* (1989), p. 4.

<sup>52</sup> Pembroke College, Oxford, Archive, 4/4/1, fol. 59r.

<sup>53</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/118, Entry, 16 December 1808. That Williams visited Ireland is known only because he once recited to Bertie Greatheed a verse written in a privy there.

he accordingly collected the necessary papers: a copy of his baptismal entry in the Gloucester cathedral register; a certificate of his residence at Pembroke; and a testimonial from three clergymen.<sup>54</sup> These men were John Hippisley, Erasmus King, and John Parsons, the incumbents, respectively, of the Gloucestershire parishes of Stow-on-the-Wold, Lower Guiting, and Toddington. Since they stated that they had known Williams ‘for the space of three years last past’, it is likely that he lived at home in Gloucester from 1771 to 1774, reading the Scriptures and theological works.<sup>55</sup> Hippisley, King, and Parsons declared that Williams had ‘diligently applied himself to his Studies’, and that he ‘lived piously, soberly, & honestly’.<sup>56</sup> They further declared that, to their knowledge, he had not maintained or written anything contrary to the Church’s doctrine and discipline, and that, in their opinion, he was ‘a Person worthy to be admitted to the sacred Order of a Deacon’.<sup>57</sup> Bishop Warburton then issued the letters dimissory, authorizing the ordination by any bishop, provided that Williams was found ‘fitly qualified’ in ‘Learning and understanding in the holy Scriptures’.<sup>58</sup> (Warburton presumably did not intend to conduct the ordination himself because, at this time, he was a sick man.)<sup>59</sup> Williams was ordained deacon by the bishop of Lichfield and Coventry, Brownlow North, on 10 April 1774: ignoring, of course, the 1752 calendar change, it was the anniversary of Williams’ baptism. The private service – only one other man was ordained at it – was held at St George’s, Hanover Square, London.<sup>60</sup> The splendid Baroque church (1721–24), in the pronouncedly Whig quarter of the capital, was among the most fashionable – indeed, was probably the most fashionable – of London’s churches.

Erasmus King, the vicar of Lower Guiting, had nominated Williams to be his curate in March 1774, and Williams now duly subscribed to the Thirty-Nine Articles.<sup>61</sup> King’s assistance resulted from a personal connection; for the two men had been acquainted for more than just three years. King had matriculated from Pembroke two years before Williams:<sup>62</sup> in a small college, the two undergraduates must have known each other, though perhaps one of the fellows brokered the arrangement, whereby one old member helped another. Probably King and Williams were friends.<sup>63</sup> They came from similar social backgrounds: King’s father was a gentleman – a man with a keen interest in science<sup>64</sup> – and the young

<sup>54</sup> Gloucestershire RO, E1, Deacons, 1774.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., John Hippisley, Erasmus King, and John Parsons to William Warburton, 29 March 1774.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Lichfield RO, B/A/10/W, William Warburton to John Henry Williams, 6 April 1774.

<sup>59</sup> A. W. Evans, *Warburton and the Warburtonians* (1932), pp. 266–8.

<sup>60</sup> Lichfield RO, B/A/1/23, p. 56.

<sup>61</sup> Gloucestershire RO, E1, Deacons, 1774, Erasmus King to William Warburton, 30 March 1774; GDR 307, p. 44.

<sup>62</sup> Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses 1715–1886*, II (Oxford, 1888), p. 794.

<sup>63</sup> King may have had real need of a curate, however. He died in his early thirties in 1777, and one wonders if he was a sickly man: *ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> Erasmus King, *A Catalogue of the Experiments Made by Mr. King, in his Course of Natural Philosophy* [London?, 1741?].



Erasmus had attended Westminster and Charterhouse.<sup>65</sup> King agreed to give Williams a stipend of £30 per annum;<sup>66</sup> curates were often paid less. The curacy at Lower Guiting was a mere staging post for Williams, however: he was shortly to be priested and secure his own benefice. The week following his diaconal ordination, he returned to Oxford and, migrating from Pembroke, became a member of Merton College.<sup>67</sup> His precise status at Merton is unclear – though he was not a fellow<sup>68</sup> – but a buttery book for 1774 suggests that, although he did not initially dine with the fellows, he was soon doing so with some of them.<sup>69</sup> This may be a tribute to his personality. Certainly, Merton had much to attract Williams. It was a pronouncedly Whig college, and, during the second half of the eighteenth century, its fellowship was a distinctly aristocratic body.<sup>70</sup> The Archbishop of Canterbury was its visitor, and possibly Williams hoped to join his patronage nexus. The College's buildings were beautiful: the fine medieval hall and splendid medieval chapel, the ancient Front and Mob Quads – the latter the oldest in the University – and the spacious, Jacobean Fellows' Quad. Williams resided in Merton in April and May 1774, and this was doubtless a very happy sojourn.<sup>71</sup> On 17 May, he graduated LLB.<sup>72</sup> Then, he returned to Gloucester and, on 29 May, he went to the episcopal palace. In his private chapel, Bishop Warburton ordained him, with one other, priest.<sup>73</sup>

To Williams, 10 April and 29 May 1774 seemed two of the most important – if not the most important – days in his life. It is therefore worth examining the ordination services in order to see the ideals they proclaimed, and how far they set the pattern for Williams' subsequent ministry. Williams doubtless found the services emotionally uplifting and intellectually compelling. St George's, Hanover Square, austere and light-filled, was emblematic of his Churchmanship, while Warburton had been bishop of Gloucester since Williams' schooldays at the College School, and was now a venerable, though obviously ailing, man.

When priested, following the *Veni Creator*, Williams knelt before Warburton, who, with the other priests assisting, laid his hands on the young man's head, the ceremony culminating in the ordinal's emphatic charge:

<sup>65</sup> G. F. Russell Barker and Alan H. Stenning, *The Record of Old Westminster*, I (1928), p. 538.

<sup>66</sup> Gloucestershire RO, E1, Deacons, 1774, King to Warburton, 30 March 1774.

<sup>67</sup> Merton College, Oxford, Archive, Buttery Book 1773–74, Entry, 15 April 1774.

<sup>68</sup> Merton College, Oxford, Archive, College Register; MCR 4.16.

<sup>69</sup> Merton College, Oxford, Archive, Buttery Book 1773–74, Entry, 6 May 1774.

<sup>70</sup> G. H. Martin and J. R. L. Highfield, *A History of Merton College, Oxford* (Oxford, 1997), p. 240.

<sup>71</sup> Merton College, Oxford, Archive, Buttery Book 1773–74, bill at volume's conclusion.

<sup>72</sup> Bodleian L, EW1/3, p. 539.

Joseph Foster, in *Alumni Oxonienses 1715–1886* (IV, p. 1,567), stated that Williams graduated 'B.C.L. 1769 (as John)'. This is incorrect. Another John Williams, not listed by Foster (*ibid.* IV, p. 1,565), matriculated from Jesus College but migrated to Pembroke, where he was in residence from 1764 to 1769 (Pembroke College, Oxford, Archive, 40/5/3, fols 2v–3r). He read civil law, and it was he who graduated LLB (i.e. BCL) in 1769 (Bodleian L, EW1/2, p. 387). He was ordained deacon and priest by the Bishop Lowth of Oxford in 1768 and 1769 respectively (Oxfordshire RO, MS Oxf. Dioc. Papers, b. 21, fols 78r, 82v). Foster thought wrongly that it was one John Herbert Williams, who matriculated from Merton in 1755, who graduated 'B.C.L. 1774 (as John Henry)' (Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses 1715–1886*, IV, p. 1,567).

<sup>73</sup> Gloucestershire RO, GDR 307, p. 47.

Receive the holy Ghost for the office and work of a Priest in the Church of God, now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands. Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained. And be thou a faithful dispenser of the word of God, and of his holy sacraments . . .<sup>74</sup>

From that moment, mindful that the Lord had ‘placed . . . [him] in so high a Dignity’, Williams passed out of the ordinary society of men. He was henceforth principally God’s servant, like those who had preceded him: ‘apostles, prophets, evangelists, doctors, and pastors, by whose labour and ministry . . . [Christ had] gathered together a great flock in all the parts of the world’. Williams, with his hatred of Popery, detested excessive sacerdotal claims, and deplored how, in earlier centuries, the church had exerted ‘all . . . [its] power and influence in making Courts and Cabinets the instruments of its ambition’.<sup>75</sup> Yet, slightly jarringly, he came to proclaim the distinct character of the priesthood and the clergy’s duty to resist the state’s ‘arbitrary interference’ in sacred matters.<sup>76</sup> These convictions partly underpinned his political stance in the 1790s.

During the two services, those seeking ordination had to affirm their belief that they were called to teach God’s word. Did they ‘trust that . . . [they were] inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost, to take upon . . . [themselves the ministerial] Office’? Did they ‘think that . . . [they were] truly called, according to the Will of . . . [the] Lord Jesus Christ . . . to the Ministry of the Church’? Warburton unequivocally told Williams and his fellow deacon that ‘it hath pleased God to call you’ to the ministry; and, when he priested the two deacons, he declared that God had ‘vouchsafed to call these . . . [His] servants here present to the . . . office . . . appointed for the salvation of mankind’. Williams’ sense of vocation was already strong; and it remained so. Nearly thirty years later, Williams remained utterly convinced that God had chosen him to preach the Gospel.<sup>77</sup>

The ordination services also emphasized that the ministerial office was one not only of ‘great excellency’ but also of ‘great difficulty’; and so Warburton prayed that God would grant the new priests ordained the ‘strength and power’ needed to discharge their duties. Above all, priests and deacons needed His grace, and so the bishops besought God ‘to bless . . . [them] and to pour . . . [His] grace upon them’. Priests had to endeavour to ensure the salvation of each member of their congregations, and accordingly the ordinal stressed ‘how great a treasure . . . [was] committed to . . . [their] Charge’. They were ‘to instruct the people . . . and to teach nothing, as required of necessity to eternal salvation, but that which . . . [they thought might be] proved by the Scripture’. They had to administer diligently the

<sup>74</sup> Unless otherwise noted, quotations in this and the subsequent six paragraphs are from *The Form and Manner of Ordering of Deacons and Priests, According to the Order of the Church of England* [London?, 1765?], unpaginated.

<sup>75</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. v.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. vi.

<sup>77</sup> Williams, *Thanksgiving Sermon*, pp. 9–10.

sacraments and buttress their flocks' faith by 'both publick and private monitions and exhortations'. They had to maintain 'quietness, peace, and love among . . . Christian people' generally, and particularly in the parishes they served. Williams' view of the clergy's duties was entirely consonant with this. The 'whole and sole business of a parish-priest', he later stated, 'is this, by the influence of his example, and the frequency and soundness of his instruction, to promote the general cause of virtue and religion, and to increase the number of real christians and good men'.<sup>78</sup> And by his unceasing labour to save others' souls, he believed that he would save his own. As Warburton unequivocally told the the two men,

[t]he Church and Congregation whom you must serve, is . . . [Christ's] Spouse and his Body. And if it shall happen, the same Church, or any Member thereof do take any hurt or hindrance by reason of your negligence, ye know the greatness of the fault, and also the horrible punishment that will ensue . . .

Williams certainly took such admonitions very seriously, convinced that it was the 'Fear of God which restrains our feet from every evil way'.<sup>79</sup> Later, in his sermons at Wellesbourne, he unflinchingly reminded his congregation of the coming last judgment,<sup>80</sup> and 'those Terrors of the Lord which await the impenitent'.<sup>81</sup>

The ordinal naturally stressed that those who entered the ministry should determinedly strive after holiness. One of its sentences was I Corinthians IX:14, 'they who preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel'. Prayers were said asking God to 'adorn . . . [priests and deacons] with innocency of life, that . . . by . . . good example, they . . . [might] faithfully serve . . . [Him] in . . . [their] Office'. At Wellesbourne, Williams was very conscious that he needed to be a 'wholesome and godly' example to his parishioners.<sup>82</sup> He also wanted his family life to be a model to his flock. His mother was buried at Wellesbourne,<sup>83</sup> and so it is likely that he brought her to live in the parsonage after his father's death. Rather touchingly, he had her interred close to the spot which he had chosen for his own grave.<sup>84</sup> Williams was delighted when his 'dear Son', Harry, took holy orders:<sup>85</sup> after Harry was ordained deacon in 1807, Williams proudly told Samuel Parr that he would send the young man to Hatton so that he could assist the Doctor at a service.<sup>86</sup> When a family tragedy struck in 1814, a friend described Grace

<sup>78</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, pp. vi–vii.

<sup>79</sup> Williams, *Thanksgiving Sermon*, p. 30.

<sup>80</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. 40.

<sup>81</sup> Williams, *Thanksgiving Sermon*, p. 30.

<sup>82</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, pp. vi–vii.

<sup>83</sup> Warwickshire CRO, DR 69/5, Entry, 7 March 1800.

<sup>84</sup> See below, pp. 144, 145–6.

<sup>85</sup> TNA, Prob. 11/1,759; see below, p. 139.

<sup>86</sup> Johnstone, ed., *Works of Parr*, VIII, p. 293.

Williams as ‘a pattern of fortitude and of faith’.<sup>87</sup> Harry’s decision to enter the ministry and Grace’s steadfast faith in adversity were testimonies to their upbringing in the Williamses’ warm Christian household; very much the model household which it was envisaged young priests would create. At both ordination services, the Bishops asked, ‘Will you apply all your diligence to frame and fashion your own lives, and the lives of your Families, according to the Doctrine of Christ, and to make both yourselves and them, as much as in you lieth, wholesome examples of the flock of Christ?’ Williams’ affirmative answer was no mere form: in later life, he was as good as his word.

Besides virtuous living, and ‘godly conversation’, sound learning was requisite for clergymen. Indeed, the attributes were deemed inseparable. ‘[C]onsider how studious ye ought to be in reading and learning the Scriptures’, Bishop Warburton stated, ‘and in framing . . . [your] manners . . . according to the rule of the same Scriptures.’ Since the religious instruction given to Oxford undergraduates and graduates was often patchy,<sup>88</sup> it was necessary for those ordained to continue studying the Scriptures, and commentaries on them, when installed in their parishes. By ‘daily reading and weighing of the Scriptures . . . [they would] wax riper and stronger in . . . [their] Ministry’, and so Warburton asked whether Williams would ‘be diligent . . . in reading of the holy Scriptures, and in such studies as help to the knowledge of the same’. Williams certainly intended to maintain his biblical studies. When vicar of Wellesbourne, he had his own study – often a cleric’s pride, though he unpretentiously called it merely ‘my own little Room’.<sup>89</sup> The range of the biblical quotations, citations, and allusions is impressive in his surviving sermons. So are the arguments – especially when they eschew conventional or shallow thinking.<sup>90</sup> This learning was plainly grounded on long, painstaking hours of reading and reflection. Indeed, when in 1802 he described his intellectual development, Williams spoke unselfconsciously of ‘upwards of thirty years increased conviction of the Truth, and mature consideration of the real nature, of’ Christianity.<sup>91</sup>

The Word was at the centre of Protestants’ faith. Accordingly, at the ordination services, those to be priested were asked whether they were ‘persuaded that the Holy Scriptures contain[ed] sufficiently all Doctrine required of necessity for eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ’. They were further asked whether they would ‘with all faithful diligence . . . banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrines, contrary to God’s word’. The ordinal instructed the bishop to give them each a Bible, telling them, ‘Take thou authority to preach the word of God . . .’; and to give a copy of the New Testament to each deacon, saying, ‘Take thou Authority to read the Gospel in the Church of God . . .’ Williams was

<sup>87</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/120, Entry, 19 April 1814; see below, p. 142.

<sup>88</sup> R. Greaves, ‘Religion in the University 1715–1800’, *History of the University of Oxford V*, ed. Sutherland and Mitchell, pp. 404–5.

<sup>89</sup> TNA, Prob. 11/1,759.

<sup>90</sup> See below, pp. 102–3, 104.

<sup>91</sup> Williams, *Thanksgiving Sermon*, p. 9.

committed to the principles of *sola scriptura* and private judgment; and these were underwritten by his affirmative answer to Warburton's question 'are you determined . . . to teach nothing . . . but that which *you shall be persuaded*, may be concluded and proved by the Scripture?'<sup>92</sup> There was, however, another important formula in the ordinal which, potentially, conflicted with these principles. The final question which priests were asked before the imposition of hands concerned ecclesiastical authority: 'Will you reverently obey your Ordinary, and other chief Ministers, unto whom is committed the charge and government over you; following with a glad mind and will their godly admonitions, and submitting your selves to their godly judgements?'<sup>93</sup> If Williams had misgivings about assenting unconditionally, he did not voice them. For the future, the ordinal's wording perhaps assured him that the Church authorities could not justly press a clergyman to teach what he himself regarded as unscriptural.<sup>94</sup> Nonetheless, given Williams' intellectual self-assurance, and, certainly in later years, obstinacy, clashes with insensitive Church authorities were all too likely.

There was also, of course, the matter of royal authority. At ordination, deacons and priests swore the oaths of allegiance and supremacy. The ordinal contained prayers for George III, 'thy chosen servant . . . our King and Governor'. One prayer asked God to incline those at the services 'and all . . . [the King's] Subjects (duly considering whose Authority he hath) . . . [to] faithfully serve, honour, and humbly obey him, in thee, and for thee'. Here too were some seeds of difficulties for Williams. How could he consistently venerate and obey the King if he came to detest some royal decisions and the policies of the King's government? But in 1774 he probably gave the issue little thought. Possibly more concerning were the services' comments on unworldliness. Williams was genuinely concerned about the poor,<sup>95</sup> and presumably agreed unreservedly with the ordinal's sentences commending charitable giving. But he was perhaps slightly troubled by the injunction from Matthew VI:19 – if Warburton used it – 'Lay not up for your selves treasure upon earth.' He had been bred a gentleman and educated accordingly. He had good taste, wanted a comfortable home, and enjoyed the amusements of fashionable society. Williams did not intend to banish his various pleasures – pleasures which he expected, when married, his wife and, later, his children to share. But then, most Church of England clerics felt similarly in the later eighteenth century.

<sup>92</sup> My italics.

<sup>93</sup> The question for deacons was slightly less detailed.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Francis Stone, *A Letter to the Right Rev. Dr. Beilby Porteus, Lord Bishop of London, on the Subject of his Citation of the Writer before the Spiritual Court* (1807), pp. 5–6.

<sup>95</sup> Johnstone, ed., *Works of Parr*, VIII, p. 293.

## Winchcombe

On 30 May 1774, the day after his ordination as priest, Williams was instituted to the vicarage of Winchcombe in Gloucestershire, along with the chapel of Gretton and Greet.<sup>96</sup>

Williams' preferment to Winchcombe resulted from the exercise of civilized, aristocratic patronage. The living's patron was Thomas, Lord Tracy of Toddington.<sup>97</sup> And, it will be remembered, Williams' family had strong connections with Winchcombe. On a hill overlooking the town was Corndean, the seat built by Thomas Williams, and, although the house was sold in the early eighteenth century, some of the family continued to live in the parish.<sup>98</sup> In St Peter's church, there were the monuments to members of the family. Viscount Tracy no doubt thought it fitting that a Williams should become the vicar of the church after the death of John Taylor, the former incumbent. Moreover, Hippisley, King, and Parsons all lived close to Lord Tracy's mansion, and presumably recommended Williams to Tracy. (Indeed, given that their parishes were all near Winchcombe, one wonders whether Williams lived there for some time between 1770 and 1774, and hence kept company frequently with the three men.)

At first sight, it would seem that all was now well for Williams. He had obtained a living of his own, and one with historic links with his family. St Peter's was a beautiful, fifteenth-century church, built of golden stone. The exterior was impressive, decorated with forty grotesques, and dominated by the ninety-foot tower. The interior was capacious, with a very wide nave and chancel and a high ceiling. This was a church in which to take pride. Furthermore, Winchcombe was an agreeable, though decayed, market town, whose fine, eighteenth-century stone buildings still proclaim its limited prosperity in Williams' time. It was conveniently close to Williams' native Gloucester, to Cheltenham, which was gradually developing as a spa town, and to Oxford. Even the little chapel at Gretton, two miles from Winchcombe, was picturesque.<sup>99</sup> In short, by his late twenties, Williams had seemingly secured a highly satisfactory parish. Presuming that he was satisfied to remain a parson and did not desire grander preferment, might he not have stayed there contentedly for the rest of his life?

Yet, there were distinct problems, and, on 23 July 1774, less than two months after his institution, Williams resigned the living. He gave no reason for this. The resignation's wording is formal and opaque: 'without compulsion Fraud or Deceit', he 'purely simply and absolutely resign[ed] and . . . [gave] up . . . [his] Vicarage and Parish Church with the Chappel . . . annexed'.<sup>100</sup> Rather sadly, the

<sup>96</sup> Gloucestershire RO, GDR 307, p. 48.

<sup>97</sup> Gloucestershire RO, GDR/D1/311/382/2.

<sup>98</sup> Sir Robert Atkyns, *The Ancient and Present State of Glo[u]cestershire*, ed. Brian S. Smith, I (Wakefield, 1974), p. 825; Bodleian L, R. Top. 850/3, pp. 776, 784; [Rudder], *Gloucestershire*, p. 829.

<sup>99</sup> See David Verey and Alan Brooks, *Gloucestershire, Volume II: The Vale and the Forest of Dean*, 3rd edn (New Haven and London, 2002), p. 516.

<sup>100</sup> Gloucestershire RO, GDR/D14/1, Resignation of John Henry Williams, 23 July 1774.



document bears Williams' seal, with the reduced imprint of the family crest so proudly displayed on Thomas Williams' memorial in Winchcombe church. There are two likely – and probably connected – explanations for Williams' resignation.<sup>101</sup> Possibly Williams quarrelled with Lord Tracy; and this may be indicated by Tracy's brusque use of 'John Williams', instead of 'John Henry Williams', in the letter presenting Williams' successor to the living.<sup>102</sup> Was Williams' Churchmanship a difficulty? Significant differences between patron and parson about that could produce day-to-day friction.<sup>103</sup> The other plausible explanation concerns Winchcombe's meagre value – and this may well have produced tension between Williams and Tracy. In 1745, *The Clergyman's Intelligencer* had listed its value as a derisory £18 per annum – though its real value was more than that.<sup>104</sup> In 1747, it was reported to the Queen Anne's Bounty office that the living was 'a very poor one', while Gloucester diocesan officials noted that Winchcombe had no glebe, and the vicarage was in a poor condition.<sup>105</sup> As late as 1807, Winchcombe was still worth only a pitiful sum – £72 per annum – and, by that date, the vicar had no parsonage.<sup>106</sup> In the near future, Williams' chief hope of substantially augmenting his income was by securing a second benefice – and his LLB degree would facilitate obtaining one. But would a suitable parish soon become available? Given his liking for gentlemanly living, Winchcombe was clearly a distinct disappointment for Williams. Of course, on paper, he knew that Winchcombe was a poor benefice before his institution; but residing in an unsatisfactory parsonage, presuming he did so, could only emphasize that his income was simply inadequate for his aspirations, if not his needs. If Williams' decision to resign, before obtaining a second or alternative living, seems precipitant, a low income was no incentive to remain in Winchcombe if relations with his patron were unsatisfactory. A clean break was preferable to the risk of rotting slowly.<sup>107</sup>

<sup>101</sup> It is implausible that disagreements with his parishioners could have induced Williams to resign in so short a time.

<sup>102</sup> Gloucestershire RO, GDR/D1/311/382/3. When presenting Williams, Tracy had used 'John Henry Williams': GDR/D1/311/382/2.

<sup>103</sup> One such instance, concerning the Warwickshire parish of Whitchurch in the early eighteenth century, is usefully detailed in Thomas Hearne's correspondence – though, in that case, the living's patron had further reasons for his dislike of the rector: Bodleian L, MS Rawl. Letters 4, fol. 462r, 39, fol. 81r; Colin Haydon, 'The Church in the Kington Deanery of the Diocese of Worcester c. 1660–c. 1800', *The National Church in Local Perspective: The Church of England and the Regions 1660–1800*, ed. Jeremy Gregory and Jeffrey S. Chamberlain (Woodbridge, 2003), pp. 157, 161.

<sup>104</sup> *Clergyman's Intelligencer*, p. 201; Church of England Record Centre, F5,064, Response to Enquiry, 14 December 1747.

<sup>105</sup> Church of England Record Centre, F5,064, Response to Enquiry, 14 December 1747; John Fendley, ed., *Bishop Benson's Survey of the Diocese of Gloucester 1735–1750*, Gloucestershire Record Series XIII ([Gloucester], 2000), pp. 101–3.

<sup>106</sup> Church of England Record Centre, F5,064, John James Lates to Richard Burn, 4 November 1807; *ibid.*, Response to Enquiry, 17 November 1807.

<sup>107</sup> Significantly, Williams' successor at Winchcombe, John Weeks Bedwell, resigned after only three years, in December 1777: Gloucestershire RO, GDR 307, p. 54; GDR/D14/1, Resignation of John Weeks Bedwell, 18 December 1777.

## The Road to Wellesbourne

After leaving Winchcombe, Williams sought another living. He probably moved to south Warwickshire in 1775,<sup>108</sup> and, by 1776, he was acting as the curate of Cherington, just over the Gloucestershire–Warwickshire boundary.<sup>109</sup> Set in rolling hills and enjoying splendid views, Cherington was a pleasant rural parish, which, in 1782, contained forty families.<sup>110</sup> The village, built of rich Hornton stone, had a beautiful church. Its rector was the Reverend John Warner, now in his sixties and, judging by the parish registers, a man increasingly reliant on a succession of curates.<sup>111</sup> A strong friendship developed between Warner and Williams. Their social backgrounds were similar. Warner's father was a gentleman from Ditchley in Oxfordshire, and John's second wife was Elizabeth Ashhurst, the daughter of Thomas Henry Ashhurst, the squire of Waterstock, near Oxford.<sup>112</sup> Warner had matriculated from Lincoln College, Oxford, in 1733, graduated BA and proceeded MA in 1737 and 1739 respectively, and had become rector of Cherington in 1742. In 1763, the University created him DCL.<sup>113</sup> He appears civilized and well read. He pursued antiquarian interests, and collected stained and painted glass, with some fine pieces dating from the sixteenth century; the glass was set into the windows of Cherington church.<sup>114</sup> Warner soon started to feel a paternalistic concern for Williams. Since his son, George, went to Oxford in 1775,<sup>115</sup> it is hardly fanciful to suggest that Warner came to see his curate as a substitute.

John Warner resolved to assist Williams' advancement in the Church. He clearly understood the levers of ecclesiastical patronage. The patron of his living at Cherington was the Earl of Lichfield, whose beautiful mansion, Ditchley Park, dominated Warner's native village.<sup>116</sup> But Warner also held another living, Fleet Marston in Buckinghamshire, and Lichfield was the patron of that too.<sup>117</sup> Fleet Marston, a few miles from Aylesbury, was a tiny, decayed village. The living's value was small – a paltry £60 per annum.<sup>118</sup> But, for Williams, presentation to the benefice would constitute a step up the ladder of preferment. Warner therefore resigned, and induced Lichfield to appoint Williams in his stead. The new rector was inducted on 20 May 1776, though afterwards he continued to spend some

<sup>108</sup> Worcestershire RO, BA 2,337, Ref. 732.4, Parcel 47, No. 1,005a.

<sup>109</sup> Warwickshire CRO, DR 13/6, Entry, 20 October 1776.

<sup>110</sup> Mary Ransome, ed., *The State of the Bishopric of Worcester 1782–1808*, Worcestershire Historical Society, New Series, VI (Leeds, 1968), p. 167.

<sup>111</sup> Warwickshire CRO, DR 13/6, *passim*.

<sup>112</sup> Sir Bernard Burke, *A Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Landed Gentry of Great Britain and Ireland*, 9th edn, ed. Ashworth Peter Burke, I (1898), pp. 33–4.

<sup>113</sup> Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses 1715–1886*, IV, p. 1,502.

<sup>114</sup> *VCH Warwick*, V (1949), p. 41.

<sup>115</sup> Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses 1715–1886*, IV, p. 1,502.

<sup>116</sup> Ransome, ed., *Bishopric of Worcester*, p. 167.

<sup>117</sup> George Lipscomb, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Buckingham*, I (1847), p. 331.

<sup>118</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, SPE 7.



time in Cherington.<sup>119</sup> Soon, however, a Warwickshire vicarage became vacant – Wellesbourne, five miles east of Stratford-upon-Avon. The benefice of this pleasant place was a desirable one: Joseph Greene, the rector of nearby Welford-on-Avon, had long coveted it.<sup>120</sup> Its value was satisfactory, reputedly £190 a year, and the living was combined with the nearby chapel of Walton Deyville, with a certified value of £49.<sup>121</sup> Wellesbourne was a Crown benefice, and, in January 1778, Warner and two other senior clergymen, Marmaduke Mathews, vicar of St Nicholas, Warwick, and John Mills, rector of Barford, sent Brownlow North, now bishop of Worcester, a testimonial in support of Williams. Like his previous sponsors, they confirmed the usual particulars: Williams, they stated, ‘lived Piously soberly and honestly’; nor had he ‘at any Time (as far as . . . [they knew] and believe[d]) held written or Taught any thing contrary to the doctrines and Discipline of the Church of England’.<sup>122</sup> The presentation deed was issued on 28 January, on 1 April Williams was instituted to Wellesbourne and, on the tenth, he was inducted there.<sup>123</sup> The last date was the anniversary – again discounting the calendar change – of his baptism, and Williams deliberately chose it for the commencement of his ministry at Wellesbourne. He was vicar there until his death, over fifty years later, in 1829. He obtained a dispensation to retain the living at Fleet Marston, and kept the benefice until he died, employing curates.<sup>124</sup>

It might be asked why Warner chose to assist Williams’ career so signally, rather than the career of another of the curates that he employed. Plainly he was impressed by Williams’ character and pastoral diligence. But there was a further reason. Besides George, the child of his second marriage, Warner had two daughters from his first, Mary and Sarah; and Williams was Sarah’s suitor. For Williams, this was potentially an advantageous match. He and Mary were of the same age. The Warners were a respectable and well-connected family. And John Warner, besides wanting to ensure the preferment of Sarah’s admirer, was willing to make a satisfactory settlement ‘for Advancemt. of Dau. Sarah’.<sup>125</sup> Once Williams was vicar of Wellesbourne and financially secure, the couple were able to marry. Warner gave his consent and, on 19 December 1778, using a trust established at the time of his first marriage, he made over £176 for the couple’s use.<sup>126</sup> Two days later, the wedding of John Henry Williams and Sarah Warner took place in St Leonard’s church, Waterstock.<sup>127</sup> This was the Ashhurst family’s

<sup>119</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, PD 132/26; Lipscomb, *County of Buckingham*, I, p. 331; Warwickshire CRO, DR 13/6, Entry, 22 June 1777.

<sup>120</sup> Levi Fox, ed., *Correspondence of the Reverend Joseph Greene*, Historical Manuscripts Commission JP VIII (1965), p. 79.

<sup>121</sup> Ransome, ed., *Bishopric of Worcester*, pp. 184, 185.

<sup>122</sup> Worcestershire RO, BA 2,337, Ref. 732.4, Parcel 47, No. 1,005a.

<sup>123</sup> Worcestershire RO, BA 2,337, Ref. 732.4, Parcel 47, No. 1,005; Warwickshire CRO, DR 69/3, initial note.

<sup>124</sup> LPL, VBI/11, p. 188; Fiat, FII, 1778, 80a; FI/P, fol. 51r–v; Lincolnshire Archives, PD 185/36; LC 38, 50.

<sup>125</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 566/15.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> Oxfordshire RO, PAR/278/01/R1/2, Entry, 21 December 1778.

church – a family with a distinct puritan tradition – and, perhaps for its east light, John Warner had commissioned a painted-glass panel to commemorate his marriage to Elizabeth Ashhurst in 1755.<sup>128</sup> John Henry and Sarah Williams were married for over forty years.<sup>129</sup> The Ashhurst family seemingly took Williams to their bosom; although Elizabeth's brother, Sir William Henry Ashhurst, a distinguished judge whose politics differed markedly from Williams', perhaps wondered if they were nursing a viper.<sup>130</sup>

### The New Vicar

In the winter and early spring, 1778, the parishioners of Wellesbourne awaited the arrival of their new vicar and wondered what manner of man he was. It is worth considering here how Williams' early life had moulded his character and outlook.

In one of the most famous of eighteenth-century autobiographies, the historian Edward Gibbon maintained that when 'I contemplate the common lot of mortality, I must acknowledge that I have drawn a high prize in the lottery of life.'<sup>131</sup> Even in his early thirties, John Henry Williams might have said the same. Born into an honourable family and conscious of his lineage, he was able to mix confidently in polite society – he was an admirable conversationalist – and was able to evince an air of paternalistic authority to most of his parishioners. His schooling buttressed his social confidence, taught him a code of duty and honourable conduct, and gave him a resilience which proved invaluable in later years. His education, both in Gloucester and Oxford, imbued him with a love of knowledge, ideas, and debate which lasted throughout his life. It also fostered his religious sense which, as an adult, was deep and serious, manifesting itself in the conscientious discharge of his clerical duties and a consistent concern for others' spiritual well-being.

Gibbon sensibly linked his discussion of the advantages which he had fortunately enjoyed with an examination of his natural disposition, abilities, and weaknesses. Regarding such matters, John Henry Williams was plainly an intelligent and capable man. Clear-sighted and energetic, he might have pursued a successful career in many walks of life. Certainly he was no mousy scholar and it may be significant that he did not become a fellow of Pembroke College, Oxford, or Merton: one suspects that he wanted the challenges of a parish, not an institutional cocoon. As the 1774 and 1778 testimonials indicate, he lacked obvious vices – though he had a taste for gentlemanly living: in this, he was Dr Grantly, not Mr Harding (although he played the cello). But such a taste was not considered unbecoming in an Anglican clergyman of Williams' time; it was generally expected. Aside from the strict manners which education and rank prescribed, his

<sup>128</sup> *VCH Oxford*, VII (1962), pp. 226, 229.

<sup>129</sup> Warwickshire CRO, DR 69/6, Entry, 20 August 1820.

<sup>130</sup> Douglas Hay, 'Ashhurst, Sir William Henry (1725–1807)', *ODNB*, II, pp. 647–9; see below, p. 86.

<sup>131</sup> J. B. Bury, ed., *Autobiography of Edward Gibbon* (Oxford, 1907, repr. 1978), p. 217.

character appears naturally open, genial, and generous. Others warmed to Williams. He had one quirk of personality – a somewhat odd sense of humour. It was sometimes slightly tart but, more often, rather silly (and at variance with his clear intelligence).<sup>132</sup> It is notoriously difficult to judge humour in the past.<sup>133</sup> But Williams' was described by one of his acquaintances as 'tediously jocose . . . heavy & affected';<sup>134</sup> and it is frequently difficult to disagree with this verdict.

It is perhaps also possible to discern a certain determination in the young Williams – a determination sometimes tinged with forcefulness. He seized the opportunities that presented themselves to him – such as the link between the College School, Gloucester, and Pembroke College, Oxford. He used the opportunities for advancement offered by his friendship with Dr Warner and his subsequent courtship of Warner's daughter. But such behaviour was not unusual and blame-worthy, nor is it surprising: it is absurd to censure anachronistically the patronage networks of Hanoverian England, judging by modern meritocratic standards. Once settled at Wellesbourne, any hints of forcefulness in Williams' character apparently dissolved, but were replaced by a streak of self-assured obstinacy which opponents probably found profoundly irritating.

The man inducted as Wellesbourne's vicar in April 1778 was a man of character, upright, civilized, and deeply committed to teaching Christ's word. Of course, one would wish to know more about his formative years; but the sources' many lacunae do not permit this. Indeed, it is fortunate that sufficient evidence survives to allow the partial reconstruction of Williams' early life set out here.

<sup>132</sup> Greatehead, *Regent*, pp. v–vi; J. H. Williams, *War the Stumbling-block of a Christian; or, the Absurdity of Defending Religion by the Sword* (1795), pp. 30–1; Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/116, Entry, 14 August 1806; CR 1,707/118, Entry, 5 March 1808.

<sup>133</sup> Keith Thomas, 'The Place of Laughter in Tudor and Stuart England', *Times Literary Supplement*, 21 January 1977, pp. 77–8.

<sup>134</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/126, Entry, 7 November 1826.

## Chapter Three

### THE IVY-MANTLED TOW’R: PARISH AND PASTORALIA

#### The Setting

It is unclear whether, in 1778, Williams envisaged spending the rest of his life in south Warwickshire. It is possible that he developed reservations about resubscribing to the Thirty-Nine Articles and that, since resubscription would have been required had he obtained significant preferment, he became content to remain at Wellesbourne.<sup>1</sup> But there is evidence that, as late as 1807, he hoped for a more lucrative and more prestigious living.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, he doubtless found Wellesbourne and its locality congenial.

During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, south Warwickshire became increasingly sophisticated. Its towns prospered and developed leisure facilities; and Williams no doubt appreciated both the various urban amenities and meeting persons of quality in refined and attractive settings. Warwick was only eight miles from Wellesbourne, and had been rebuilt after its disastrous fire of 1694 in a ‘noble and . . . beautiful . . . manner’, with wide, well-paved, and well-lit streets.<sup>3</sup> Its surviving medieval buildings, notably the Castle and St Mary’s church, contrasted pleasantly with its fine eighteenth-century public buildings and the ‘modern and handsome’ private houses.<sup>4</sup> It further boasted its races, public library, good shops, pleasant inns, and a weekly newspaper; unsurprisingly, it attracted noble and gentry visitors.<sup>5</sup> Still nearer to Wellesbourne was Stratford-upon-Avon, a ‘neat and well-built’ town,<sup>6</sup> with its mixture of ‘curious’ old houses and handsome Georgian architecture, and several good inns, notably the White Lion, the Warwickshire hunt’s home in the late

<sup>1</sup> See below, p. 50.

<sup>2</sup> See below, pp. 96, 137–8.

<sup>3</sup> Daniel Defoe, *A Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain*, ed. G. D. H. Cole and D. C. Browning, II (1974), p. 84.

<sup>4</sup> W. Field, *An Historical and Descriptive Account of the Town & Castle of Warwick; and of the Neighbouring Spa of Leamington* (Warwick, 1815), p. 48.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 48, 50, 63–4.

<sup>6</sup> *A Brief Account of Stratford-upon-Avon* (Stratford-upon-Avon, n.d.), p. 8.

**Disclaimer:**

Some images in the printed version of this book  
are not available for inclusion in the eBook.

To view the image on this page please refer to  
the printed version of this book.

The Church of St Peter at Wellesbourne, Warwickshire

eighteenth century.<sup>7</sup> Leamington, adjacent to Warwick, developed rapidly as a spa from the 1790s. In ‘the course of little more than ten years, from an obscure and insignificant village’, it became ‘the crowded and fashionable resort of those . . . [who sought] health or pleasure, from all parts of *England, Scotland*, and even *Ireland*’.<sup>8</sup> By the early nineteenth century, the town contained, besides its Pump Room and baths, assembly rooms, a circulating library, and a reading room and picture gallery.<sup>9</sup> Road improvements around Wellesbourne facilitated travel: by 1815, the Warwickshire roads were ‘remarkably good; and those in the neighbourhood of *Warwick* . . . [were] some of the best in the kingdom’.<sup>10</sup> Williams could easily visit the intellectual centres of Oxford and Birmingham. Nor were visits to London difficult.

Williams presumably admired the countryside around Wellesbourne – a landscape of rolling hills, broad plains, and streams. Richard Jago, in his poem *Edge-hill* (1767), had famously celebrated it as viewed from above the battlefield:

... SUCH is the Scene! that, from the terrac’d Hill,  
Whose Sides the *Dryads*, and the *Wood Nymphs* dress  
With rich Embroidery, salutes the Eye,  
Ample, and various; Intermixture sweet  
Of Lawns, and Groves, of open, and retir’d.  
Vales, Farms, Towns, Villas, Castles, distant Spires,  
And Hills, on Hills, with ambient Clouds enrob’d,  
In long Succession court the lab’ring Sight,  
Lost in the bright Confusion.<sup>11</sup>

Later, in 1795, Samuel Ireland likewise praised the ‘rich and fertile scenery’ in his *Picturesque Views on the Upper, or Warwickshire Avon*.<sup>12</sup> So too did William Field, in 1815: the locality, he observed, ‘is naturally fertile, and highly cultivated; intersected every where with remarkably fine hedges, to which great attention is paid; richly embellished with flourishing trees and woods; and beautifully watered by the meanderings of the Avon, which is here a considerable stream, and its tributary river, the Leam’.<sup>13</sup> It was fine walking and fishing country, dotted with pretty villages, built of toffee-coloured Hornton or grey stone. As visitors discovered, south Warwickshire contained numerous historic sites and buildings, ranging from the battlefield at Edgehill to many ancient churches; these no doubt aroused Williams’ scholarly interests. Moreover, during Williams’ years at

<sup>7</sup> Roger Pringle, ‘The Rise of Stratford as Shakespeare’s Town’, *The History of an English Borough: Stratford-upon-Avon 1196–1996*, ed. Robert Bearman (Stroud, 1997), p. 167; Sir Charles Mordaunt, Bart and the Hon. and Rev. W. R. Verney, *Annals of the Warwickshire Hunt 1795–1895. From Authentic Documents I* (1896), pp. 14, 15.

<sup>8</sup> Field, *Warwick and Leamington*, p. 284.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 284, 326, 327.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>11</sup> Richard Jago, *Edge-hill, or, the Rural Prospect Delineated and Moralized* (1767), pp. 4–5.

<sup>12</sup> Samuel Ireland, *Picturesque Views on the Upper, or Warwickshire Avon* (1795), p. 167.

<sup>13</sup> Field, *Warwick and Leamington*, p. 46.

Wellesbourne, the country districts developed pockets of sophistication. In the 1790s, Kennilworth had a book club.<sup>14</sup> By 1815, visitors to Edgehill could enjoy the prospect from a ‘spacious and well-conducted Inn’,<sup>15</sup> and Halford’s pleasant inn and ‘delightful’ bowling green attracted the nearby gentry in the summer.<sup>16</sup>

Wellesbourne itself was an agreeable place. A decayed market town (by the early nineteenth century, it was deemed merely ‘a considerable village’),<sup>17</sup> it contained some ‘812 souls’ in 1781, though, two decades later, its population had risen to 1,096.<sup>18</sup> Near its southern extremity was the mansion of the Dewes family; while Williams was vicar, Court Dewes was a friend of Anna Seward, the poet and writer. The church of St Peter was ancient, mostly dating from the Norman period. In 1808, it was clear that the walls and roof needed substantial repairs, and Williams decided to organize the work.<sup>19</sup> The restoration was largely complete by the summer of 1810,<sup>20</sup> and, in a guide to Warwick and its locality published five years later, St Peter’s was described as ‘a handsome country church . . . in excellent repair’;<sup>21</sup> in particular, its tower, ‘clothed with ivy from its base to its summit . . . [was] beautifully picturesque’.<sup>22</sup> Williams continued to collect money to improve the chancel;<sup>23</sup> and, overall, one of his friends thought St Peter’s ‘the model of a Parish Church’;<sup>24</sup> ‘very handsome’, with good acoustics – essential for effective preaching – and only minor defects – the slightly dark gallery and the rather tawdry chancel window.<sup>25</sup> Besides Wellesbourne, Williams was responsible for worship at the chapel at Walton Deyville, a short distance away. Initially, he employed a curate to discharge the duties there.<sup>26</sup> Standing next to the mansion of the Mordaunt family, the little chapel was attractive, rebuilt in classical style by Sir Charles Mordaunt in 1750.<sup>27</sup> The contrast between the venerable medieval church, so very reminiscent of Gray’s *Elegy*, and the austere classical building probably pleased Williams. All told, he had been fortunate in securing so pleasant a living.

<sup>14</sup> Warwickshire CRO, MI 142, Entry, 23 September 1797.

<sup>15</sup> Field, *Warwick and Leamington*, p. 356.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 363.

<sup>17</sup> Francis Smith, *Warwickshire Delineated*, 2nd edn (Southam, n.d.), p. 297.

<sup>18</sup> Warwickshire CRO, DR 69/3, initial note; *Parliamentary Papers* [348] XVIII: *Comparative Account of the Population of Great Britain in the Years 1801, 1811, 1821, and 1831* (1831), p. 273.

<sup>19</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/118, Entry, 24 December 1808. During the repairs, two ostensibly Anglo-Saxon columns were found: *ibid.*, Entry, 24 May 1809.

<sup>20</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/119, Entry, 10 June 1810.

<sup>21</sup> Field, *Warwick and Leamington*, p. 359.

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

<sup>23</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/126, Entry, 4 December 1825.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, Entry, 28 December 1825.

<sup>25</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/119, Entry, 10 June 1810; CR 1,707/126, Entry, 28 December 1825.

<sup>26</sup> Mary Ransome, ed., *The State of the Bishopric of Worcester 1782–1808*, Worcestershire Historical Society, New Series, VI (Leeds, 1968), p. 184.

<sup>27</sup> *VCH Warwick*, V (1949), p. 197.

## Clerical Society

Wellesbourne was in the Kineton deanery of the diocese of Worcester. Between the 1730s and 1782, the primary visitation of Bishop Richard Hurd, the values of many of the deanery's parishes increased markedly; and they continued to rise in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. There was much enclosure, and parsons could gain from tithe commutation. Nonetheless, the values of livings varied enormously – a fact emphasized by a survey compiled from the answers to Hurd's first visitation enquiries. Judged by national standards, half the deanery's thirty-six livings were financially satisfactory in 1782, with reputed values of more than £120 per annum. But sixteen were worth less than £100, and, of these, the value of six was less than £50.<sup>28</sup>

Williams could afford to live well at Wellesbourne. In the 1730s, the glebe had gained 118 acres by enclosure Acts, and in 1782 Wellesbourne was worth £190 per annum.<sup>29</sup> The certified value of the chapel at Walton Deyville was £49.<sup>30</sup> In addition, the rectory at Fleet Marston was worth £60 per annum – though Williams had to pay the curate's stipend (£25 in 1797).<sup>31</sup> In total, then, his income from his benefices was a little under £300 per annum, after paying the Fleet Marston curate and, initially, the curate at Walton Deyville; and, in financial terms, he was among the deanery's clerical élite – though some of its clergymen were richer.<sup>32</sup> In the late eighteenth century, the mansions of Charlecote and Newbold Comyn passed to two clerics, respectively the Reverend John Hammond and the Reverend Edward Willes. John Mills, rector of Barford, worth £350, combined the living in 1760 with that of Oxhill, worth £170;<sup>33</sup> and Charles Willes, in 1783, when rector of Whichford, valued at £350, also became rector of Cherington, worth £170.<sup>34</sup> These clerics were decidedly men of rank. Hammond was a scion of the ancient Lucy family, assumed the name on inheriting the Charlecote estate, and thereafter was 'a good Deal amongst the richest & most powerful Inhabitants of' Warwickshire.<sup>35</sup> Edward Willes was the son of a highly distinguished judge.<sup>36</sup> John Mills was a member of the distinguished banking family, and his sons, Charles and William, became Warwickshire MPs in the early nineteenth century.<sup>37</sup> Williams felt much in common with the locality's

<sup>28</sup> In 1782, the reputed value of six livings in the Kineton deanery was less than £50; of ten, from £50 to £99; of six, from £100 to £149; of six, from £150 to £199; of three, from £200 to £249; of one, £250; of two, from £350 to £399; of one, £400; and of one, £450. Ransome, ed., *Bishopric of Worcester*, pp. 160–88.

<sup>29</sup> J. M. Martin, 'Warwickshire and the Parliamentary Enclosure Movement', University of Birmingham PhD thesis, II, 1965, Appendix X, unpaginated; Ransome, ed., *Bishopric of Worcester*, p. 185.

<sup>30</sup> Ransome, ed., *Bishopric of Worcester*, p. 184.

<sup>31</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, SPE 7; REG/39, p. 643.

<sup>32</sup> For further details of Williams' financial dealings, see below, pp. 63–5.

<sup>33</sup> Ransome, ed., *Bishopric of Worcester*, pp. 163, 177.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 167, 186.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 161, n. 6; Warwickshire CRO, MI 142, Entry, 19 June 1797.

<sup>36</sup> James Kelly, 'Willes, Edward (1704–1768)', *ODNB*, LIX, pp. 19–20.

<sup>37</sup> Youssef Cassis, 'Mills Family (per. 1773–1939)', *ODNB*, XXXVIII, pp. 257–8; R. G. Thorne, 'Mills,



wealthy clergymen, with the exception of John Lucy, too much the parvenu, who was wont to boast ‘of his 7000 Acres & £100000 cash’:<sup>38</sup> indeed, Williams thought him boorish and stupid.<sup>39</sup> In Warwickshire, some clergymen joined land-owning gentlemen as turnpike trustees in the later eighteenth century, and, of sixty-six Justices appointed for the county in 1831, two years after Williams’ death, twenty-four were clerics.<sup>40</sup> When he came to Wellesbourne, Williams perhaps aspired to such marks of standing. He probably felt remote from poorer parsons like John Harmer and Edward Rice, the vicars, respectively, of Butlers Marston and Pillerton Hersey, parishes to the south east of Wellesbourne. Butlers Marston was worth only £20 per annum in 1782, so Harmer combined it with Kineton, worth another £20.<sup>41</sup> Pillerton Hersey was worth a beggarly £12 per annum, and Rice was also vicar of Alderminster – though its value was just £50.<sup>42</sup>

The principal determinant of Williams’ clerical circle was, however, political allegiance. When settled in south Warwickshire, Williams cultivated the friendship of Whig gentlemen,<sup>43</sup> and also Whig clergymen, in the locality. Of the latter, the most famous was ‘the Whig Dr Johnson’, Dr Samuel Parr. Man of letters, author, classical scholar, literary combatant, pedagogue, conversationalist, and wit, Parr was perpetual curate of Hatton near Warwick from 1783 to 1792; and, although he exchanged his perpetual curacy for the rectory of Wadenhoe, Northamptonshire, in the latter year, he continued to perform the parochial duties at Hatton, and resided in the parsonage, until his death in 1825.<sup>44</sup> Parr came to like and respect Williams. ‘Of a man, who united in himself so much of the great and the good, of which cultivated and improved humanity is capable,’ one of Parr’s biographers noted, ‘Dr. Parr could not but entertain a high opinion.’<sup>45</sup> The two men corresponded about politics and sometimes dined together.<sup>46</sup> Parr had Williams’ first and second anti-war sermons in his splendid library at Hatton, and when Williams published the third, *War the Stumbling-block of a Christian*, in 1795, he presented Parr with a copy.<sup>47</sup>

John Morley was another of Williams’ clerical friends. Nearly twenty years Williams’ junior, Morley was the curate of Hampton Lucy and the master of the

Charles (1755–1826)’, *The House of Commons 1790–1820*, ed. Thorne, IV (1986), pp. 590–1; Thorne, ‘Mills, William (1750–1820)’, *ibid.*, IV, pp. 593–4.

<sup>38</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/117, Entry, 12 May 1807.

<sup>39</sup> See below, p. 75, n. 123.

<sup>40</sup> 10 Geo. III, c. 63; *Parliamentary Papers XXXV: Accounts and Papers VIII* (1831–32), p. 262.

<sup>41</sup> Ransome, ed., *Bishopric of Worcester*, pp. 165, 173.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 160, 177.

<sup>43</sup> See below, pp. 63–71.

<sup>44</sup> On Parr, see Warren Derry, *Dr Parr* (1966).

<sup>45</sup> William Field, *Memoirs of the Life, Writings, and Opinions of the Rev. Samuel Parr, LL.D.*, I (1828), p. 206.

<sup>46</sup> John Johnstone, ed., *The Works of Samuel Parr, LL.D.*, VIII (1828), p. 293; Bodleian L, Dep. e. 201, fol. 39v; Warwickshire CRO, MI 142, Entries, 10 June, 5 December 1797.

<sup>47</sup> *Bibliotheca Parriana. A Catalogue of the Library of the Late Reverend and Learned Samuel Parr, LL.D.* (1827), p. 568.

school there from 1786 to 1814(?) (though he was an absentee from 1810).<sup>48</sup> He was vicar of Kineton from 1789 to 1792, and vicar of Wasperton from 1791 to 1814, but continued to reside at Hampton Lucy, two miles from Wellesbourne, until 1810.<sup>49</sup> Morley and Williams were on very good terms. They called on each other uninvited, dined together, borrowed books.<sup>50</sup> Morley was an intelligent, capable man, and a sound classicist. Parr called him 'the Reverend and ingenious Mr Morley';<sup>51</sup> and Morley was greatly flattered by Parr's friendship, self-consciously calling him 'my Friend Dr. Parr' in his diary.<sup>52</sup> Morley was a committed Whig, with a tinge of radical sympathies: in 1797, he entertained William Godwin, who described him as 'a clever & amiable man'.<sup>53</sup> Another clerical Whig was Edward Willes, 'an ardent well-wisher to all reforms, directed to the great object of checking and restraining every tendency to arbitrary rule, and of securing and extending the popular rights and liberties'.<sup>54</sup> Later, in the era of the French Revolution, Williams, Morley, Parr, and Willes would hunt politically as a pack. Moreover, Willes was notably 'not only tolerant, but friendly towards those of other churches';<sup>55</sup> and this was true also of Williams and his other friends. Consequently, on the fringes of their circle were Dissenters: William Field, Unitarian minister at Warwick from 1790 to 1843, classicist, and one of Parr's biographers, and, illustriously, the great Joseph Priestley.<sup>56</sup> The Parkes family, important Unitarians of Warwick, were close friends of Williams.<sup>57</sup>

Morley and Parr were dedicated parsons, as was Williams (Willes did not have a benefice). As his 1797 diary reveals, Morley conscientiously read morning and evening prayers at both Hampton Lucy and Wasperton each week.<sup>58</sup> Hampton Lucy was prone to flooding, and, one Sunday in February 1798, he was obliged to boat 'over self and Horse[!] forward and backward to & from Wasperton', in both the morning and the afternoon, in order to conduct the services.<sup>59</sup> Morley took pride in performing the duties. 'Never so well satisfied with my whole Performance of Divine Service, as I was this Day', he noted in his diary on Whit Sunday 1797.<sup>60</sup> And when, later in the year, he forgot to publish some banns, he was

<sup>48</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/119, Entry, 15 May 1810.

<sup>49</sup> Ransome, ed., *Bishopric of Worcester*, pp. 171, 174, 184.

<sup>50</sup> Warwickshire CRO, MI 142, Entries, 10, 17 June, 24 July, 8 September, 22, 27 November, 5, 20, 26 December 1797, 4 January, 15 February 1798.

<sup>51</sup> TNA, Prob 11/1,704.

<sup>52</sup> Warwickshire CRO, MI 142, Entry, 2 May 1797.

<sup>53</sup> Bodleian L, Dep. b. 210/4, File 6, fol. 168r. For a hostile picture of Morley, see Alice Fairfax-Lucy, *Charlecote and the Lucys* (1958), pp. 244, 248.

<sup>54</sup> Field, *Parr*, I, p. 205.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> R. K. Webb, 'Field, William (1768–1851)', *ODNB*, XIX, pp. 489–90. Parr first met Priestley when he attended Field's ordination at Warwick in 1790: *ibid.*, p. 490. Parr wished Field to be a pallbearer at his funeral: Derry, *Parr*, p. 349.

<sup>57</sup> See, e.g., Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/118, Entry, 28 March 1808.

<sup>58</sup> Warwickshire CRO, MI 142, *passim*.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., Entry, 25 February 1798.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., Entry, 4 June 1797.

determined never to repeat the mistake, which ‘might prove very inconvenient to the Parties’.<sup>61</sup> Parr likewise did the duty conscientiously at Hatton. He was kind to his parishioners, and his final illness resulted from his insistence that he himself, though in his late seventies, should conduct a Hatton man’s funeral on a cold January day.<sup>62</sup> In his will, he left money for the parish poor.<sup>63</sup> And when one of the group was away from his parish, a friend covered for him:<sup>64</sup> Morley felt honoured to officiate at Hatton in ‘the Dr.[‘s]’ stead.<sup>65</sup> Nonetheless, Williams’ clerical associates were somewhat remote from their humble neighbours; and that was true of Williams too. Daniel Gaches, vicar of Wootton Wawen from 1766 to 1805, was a friend of Morley and Parr, whose love of classics – though not their politics – he shared. And he probably spoke for them when he lamented that, in a ‘retired village’, a parson was ‘amidst barbarians’.<sup>66</sup> The cultural gap was wide between the educated, refined gentlemen-clerics and the rural parishioners.<sup>67</sup> It was, for instance, highlighted in 1797 by the claim of some ‘common People’ to have seen a ghost, and Morley’s dismissal of this as ‘ridiculous and superstitious’.<sup>68</sup> It is likewise revealed by Williams’ contempt for superstition when preaching.<sup>69</sup> And by Parr’s loathing of cruelty to the brute creation – a sensibility which hardened farmers and their labourers rarely shared.<sup>70</sup> According to Parr’s latest biographer, the Doctor’s sermons ‘were often too academic for his rural hearers’.<sup>71</sup> Each year at Hatton, Parr organized a May Day fête, a revival of ‘a pleasant custom of olden times’.<sup>72</sup> These events, lacking only Sir Edward German’s music, emphasized the social gulf between Parr, his equals, and most of his parishioners. ‘The master of the rustic ceremonies’ greeted, ‘with smiles and merry jests, the rosy-faced girls he met . . . archly inquiring after their absent friends and favourites’; ‘pleasure brightly shone in many a rustic countenance; while those of higher grade seemed to throw off all reserve . . .’<sup>73</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., Entry, 3 December 1797.

<sup>62</sup> Derry, *Parr*, pp. 272, 349–50.

<sup>63</sup> TNA, Prob 11/1,704.

<sup>64</sup> Johnstone, ed., *Works of Parr*, VIII, p. 288.

<sup>65</sup> Warwickshire CRO, MI 142, Entries, 12 December 1797, 14 January 1798.

<sup>66</sup> Field, *Parr*, I, pp. 203–4.

<sup>67</sup> See Colin Haydon, ‘Rural Religion and the Politeness of Parsons: The Church of England in South Warwickshire c. 1689–c. 1820’, *Elite and Popular Religion*, ed. Kate Cooper and Jeremy Gregory, Studies in Church History XLII (Woodbridge, 2006), pp. 282–93.

<sup>68</sup> Warwickshire CRO, MI 142, Entry, 9 August 1797.

<sup>69</sup> J. H. Williams, *A Thanksgiving Sermon for the Peace, Preached June 1, 1802* (1802), p. 28.

<sup>70</sup> *Aphorisms, Opinions, and Reflections of the Late Dr. Parr* (1826), p. 37.

<sup>71</sup> Leonard W. Cowie, ‘Parr, Samuel (1747–1825)’, *ODNB*, XLII, p. 849.

<sup>72</sup> Field, *Parr*, II (1828), p. 322.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., pp. 323, 324.

Parr could inspire considerable dislike. One enemy, when it was observed that the Doctor had some good qualities, retorted ‘“Yes he has some; I wish he had not that one might intirely hate him”’ (Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/116, Entry, 25 April 1806). After he had died, revealingly malicious recollections of Parr and his pomposity surfaced. Once, it was recalled, he ‘had entered into an angry dispute with a Gentleman who defended himself with spirit’. ‘Parr astonished at his presumption said, “you don’t know Sir who I am” yes I do, replies his Antagonist, “you are an old schoolmaster run to seed”’ (CR 1,707/126, Entry, 15 March

Unsurprisingly, Williams and his clerical circle wanted to enjoy the lifestyle of gentlemen. James Wilmot, rector of Barton-on-the-Heath from 1783 until his death in 1807, whose benefice was worth slightly less than Wellesbourne,<sup>74</sup> lived *very agreeably*, according to his niece and biographer, the admittedly untrustworthy Olivia Wilmot Serres, who, as a girl, had resided with him in the parsonage.<sup>75</sup> In 1813, the more reliable *Gentleman's Magazine* recalled that Wilmot was 'well known at County and Convivial Meetings'.<sup>76</sup> Without a benefice, Edward Willes 'lived retired at his own beautiful villa . . . devoted to the improvement of his estate'.<sup>77</sup> John Morley led a pleasant social life. He enjoyed conversation over tea and dining with friends – notably Lord and Lady Dormer of Grove Park.<sup>78</sup> He patronized drama at Stratford-upon-Avon, and, when in London, went to Covent Garden.<sup>79</sup> Morley was also musical: he collected sheet music, and, it seems, played the violin.<sup>80</sup> He had some financial difficulties: his curacy and livings were satisfactory, but he had a large family; yet he was determined to live in a civilized manner.<sup>81</sup> The various clergymen met to dine at each other's homes, at inns in Warwick, and later, when its leisure facilities developed, at Leamington.<sup>82</sup>

Besides his estate, Edward Willes was devoted to 'the pleasures of literature',<sup>83</sup> and Parr corresponded with him about Greek texts.<sup>84</sup> Reading, and discussion of books, certainly provided an intellectual life-line for Williams and his clerical friends, residing for most of the year in their rural parishes. Classics was only one of Morley's and Parr's interests. They eagerly kept abreast of current politics and ideas, Morley and Parr taking *The Gentleman's Magazine* and Parr also taking *The Edinburgh Review*.<sup>85</sup> Morley read history, political works, plays, and tracts, and was proud of his library (he had a range of works bound or half-bound).<sup>86</sup>

1826). The distinguished Baptist minister Robert Hall maintained that Parr's 'reported charities in his parish . . . are much exaggerated, & . . . his successor is much preferred to him' (*ibid.*).

<sup>74</sup> In 1782/83, Barton-on-the-Heath's reputed value was £180 per annum: Ransome, ed., *Bishopric of Worcester*, p. 163.

<sup>75</sup> Olivia Wilmot Serres, *The Life of the Author of the Letters of Junius, the Rev. James Wilmot, D.D.* (1813), *passim*. On Serres, see K. D. Reynolds, 'Serres [*née* Wilmot], Olivia [*alias* Princess Olive of Cumberland] (1772–1835)', *ODNB*, XLIX, pp. 786–7.

<sup>76</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine* lxxxiii, Part ii (1813), p. 546. Regarding expenditure, it is worth noting that Wilmot, unlike Williams, was a bachelor.

<sup>77</sup> Field, *Parr*, I, p. 205.

<sup>78</sup> Warwickshire CRO, MI 142, Entries, 24 May, 6, 9 June, 10 July, 20, 27, 30 August, 10, 14 September, 15, 23 November, 8, 11 December 1797, 8 January, 5, 7 February 1798.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, Entries, 6 July 1797, 27 February 1798.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, Entries, 6, 22 September, 18 October, 10 November 1797, 10, 28 February 1798.

<sup>81</sup> Ransome, ed., *Bishopric of Worcester*, pp. 171, 173–4, 184. The Hampton Lucy stipend, £100 per annum, was the highest curate's stipend in the diocese of Worcester (*ibid.*, p. 11).

<sup>82</sup> Warwickshire CRO, MI 142, Entries, 10, 17 June, 14 August, 26 December 1797.

<sup>83</sup> Field, *Parr*, I, p. 205.

<sup>84</sup> Johnstone, ed., *Works of Parr*, VIII, pp. 288–92.

<sup>85</sup> Warwickshire CRO, MI 142, Entries, 10 August, 12 September 1797; *Bibliotheca Parriana*, pp. 278, 279.

<sup>86</sup> Warwickshire CRO, MI 142, Entries, 10 August, 12, 13 September, 18, 31 October 1797, 10 February 1798.

Parr's voluminous writings and correspondence absorbed much of his time. The clergy around Warwick swapped books.<sup>87</sup> Moreover, a book club was established at Wellesbourne – probably at Williams' instigation – comprising 'the principal clergy and gentry of the place and its neighbourhood'.<sup>88</sup> At it, the members could discuss recent publications and the ideas which they advanced.

John Henry Williams was anxious to maintain his intellectual interests at Wellesbourne. Until 1791, he was the president of the Wellesbourne book club.<sup>89</sup> In the orderly parsonage, serious works were kept in his study and recreational reading in the drawing room.<sup>90</sup> Williams continued to read theological studies.<sup>91</sup> Unsurprisingly, given his Whig politics, he read *The Edinburgh Review*.<sup>92</sup> He read history and political books.<sup>93</sup> And, in one of his anti-war sermons, he maintained that peace 'is as necessary to virtue, as air is to sound, or space to motion', and this suggests, at least, a superficial interest in the natural sciences.<sup>94</sup> Together, 'science, literature, [and] industry', he declared, were all hallmarks of a civilized society.<sup>95</sup> When Williams came to the parish, he decided, unlike Morley, that he would not demean his intellect by undertaking, in the phrase of the nearby rector of Welford-on-Avon, 'the wretched occupation of a Country Schoolmaster'.<sup>96</sup> He therefore employed a master for Wellesbourne's school.<sup>97</sup>

For, at Wellesbourne, Williams was determined to live as a gentleman. He naturally enjoyed mixing with the locality's 'principal clergy and gentry', at their houses or his, at the Wellesbourne book club's meetings, and at convivial dinners in Warwick. He had sources of income besides his livings: he had land in Wales;<sup>98</sup> and Sarah received an annuity of £50 per annum after her father's death in 1780.<sup>99</sup> He was therefore able to improve the Wellesbourne vicarage considerably. The parsonage, a square brick house of two storeys and an attic, was built in the early eighteenth century; and, by 1778, it was in 'indifferent repair'.<sup>100</sup> Williams spent £100 on essential repairs to it. He also made many other alterations and additions to it which, 'tho' useful & convenient, were not strictly necessary':<sup>101</sup> he intended it to be a very comfortable home for himself and his family. A coal house and

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., Entries, 24 July 1797, 10 February 1798.

<sup>88</sup> Field, *Parr*, I, p. 207.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> TNA, Prob 11/1,759.

<sup>91</sup> E.g., Paley's *Evidences of Christianity* (3 vols, 1794): Williams, *Thanksgiving Sermon*, p. 5.

<sup>92</sup> Johnstone, ed., *Works of Parr*, VIII, p. 293.

<sup>93</sup> Warwickshire CRO, MI 142, Entries, 24 July, 10 November 1797, 10 February 1798.

<sup>94</sup> Williams, *Thanksgiving Sermon*, p. 8.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Levi Fox, ed., *Correspondence of the Reverend Joseph Greene*, Historical Manuscripts Commission JP VIII (1965), p. 106. Greene had been the master of Stratford-upon-Avon's grammar school from 1735 to 1772.

<sup>97</sup> Warwickshire CRO, DR 69A/7, 18 June 1788.

<sup>98</sup> See below, p. 63.

<sup>99</sup> TNA, Prob 11/1,068. She received a second annuity of the same amount after Elizabeth Warner's death – though that did not occur until 1817 (Oxfordshire RO, PAR/278/01/R5/1, p. 1).

<sup>100</sup> Warwickshire CRO, DR 69/3, initial note.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

‘other conveniences’ were added.<sup>102</sup> The old stable was in great decay, and Williams demolished it and built a new one.<sup>103</sup> He wanted a carriage – and the chaise he acquired in 1808 impressed gentry friends<sup>104</sup> – and so he built a new coach house.<sup>105</sup> The garden was carefully remodelled too.<sup>106</sup> The vicarage became a very attractive one. William Field described it (rather affectedly) in 1815: ‘Near the church, most rurally situated, is the *Parsonage-House*, pleasingly overhung with clustering ivy, and delightfully sheltered beneath the umbrageous arms of lofty elms.’<sup>107</sup> Inside, it was impressively decorated and furnished: a sketch, drawn around 1800, apparently shows a seventeenth-century family portrait.<sup>108</sup> In due course, the Williams family acquired property in fashionable Leamington.<sup>109</sup> It was at Leamington, not Wellesbourne, that John Henry Williams was to die.<sup>110</sup>

Soon, John Henry and Sarah Williams had children. Their son Henry, always known as Harry, was born in 1780.<sup>111</sup> A daughter, Grace, was born the following year, and another daughter, Sarah, always known as Sally, was born in 1785.<sup>112</sup> For the children, the pleasant vicarage, in an agreeable village surrounded by attractive countryside, was a happy home. Servants attended to their needs and there was, it seems, a family dog.<sup>113</sup> Harry grew to be a tall, good-looking young man, and Sally became a beautiful girl.<sup>114</sup> Williams had clear ambitions for his children,<sup>115</sup> but he also wanted them to be balanced, happy people. He enjoyed bowls and walking, and encouraged the children’s recreations.<sup>116</sup> They were taught to mix easily in polite society.<sup>117</sup> It was a musical family too. Williams played the cello, but he also borrowed sheet music from Morley for keyboard instruments, which suggests that there was at least a spinet in the house.<sup>118</sup> Harry played the violin, and Grace the piano and the organ.<sup>119</sup> Harry, Grace, and Sally

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/118, Entry, 30 April 1808.

<sup>105</sup> Warwickshire CRO, DR 69/3, initial note.

<sup>106</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/119, Entries, 17 April, 20 October 1811.

<sup>107</sup> Field, *Warwick and Leamington*, p. 359.

<sup>108</sup> Members of the Williams family were sketched by Bertie Greatehead Jr, and these sketches are now in the possession of Mr Michael Heber-Percy. I am very grateful to Mr Heber-Percy for allowing me to see them. The seventeenth-century portrait is shown in the sketch of Harry Williams.

<sup>109</sup> See below, p. 64.

<sup>110</sup> Worcestershire RO, BA 2,245/24, Ref. S132–8, p. 41, No. 326.

<sup>111</sup> Warwickshire CRO, DR 69/3, Entry, 7 February 1780.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., Entries, 15 October 1781, 15 April 1785.

<sup>113</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/116, Entry, 25 September 1806. Bertie Greatehead Jr’s sketch of Harry Williams shows a dog.

<sup>114</sup> There is one sketch of Harry and several of Sally by Bertie Greatehead Jr.

<sup>115</sup> See below, pp. 70–1, 139–40, 142.

<sup>116</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/116, Entry, 29 May 1806; CR 1,707/117, Entry, 4 July 1807; CR 1,707/119, Entries, 9, 11 May 1811; CR 1,707/120, Entry, 10 February 1814.

<sup>117</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/117, Entry, 20 January 1807; CR 1,707/119, Entry, 7 June 1810.

<sup>118</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/116, Entry, 5 May 1806; MI 142, Entries, 10 November 1797, 10 February 1798. I am grateful to Dr Susan Wollenberg for advice about this.

<sup>119</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/116, Entry, 5 May 1806; CR 1,707/117, Entry, 7 January 1807; CR 1,707/120, Poem, 3 December 1813.



attended the music meetings at Warwick.<sup>120</sup> Others would warm to Williams' children when older. Harry was considerate and obliging; he sometimes rowed friends on the Avon, to Warwick Castle.<sup>121</sup> One well-wisher wrote a poem about Grace 'to shew how universal is the feeling of admiration towards Miss W.'<sup>122</sup> Sally was very good with young children.<sup>123</sup> All told, the children were a credit to their parents and, what was more important, the Williamses were a pattern of a Christian family to their neighbours and the parishioners of Wellesbourne.

### *Ce qu'il croyait: The Pedigree of Williams' Theology*

John Henry Williams' theological opinions were both intelligent and coherent. Throughout his adult life, he adhered to fundamental principles derived from the Whig, 'Latitudinarian' tradition. But his outlook was not a rigid one; and he was also influenced by evangelical thinking. Given the length of his life and ministry, the troubled times in which he lived, and his clear intellect, some shifts of emphasis were only natural.

The essential Latitudinarian tenets to which Williams adhered had a long, impressive pedigree. The theology of William Chillingworth (1602–44) emphasized that the Bible alone was the basis of Protestantism, and John Locke (1632–1704) sharply differentiated between scriptural fundamentals and 'things indifferent' in worship, mere man-made formulations. Archbishop Tillotson (1630–94) and Bishop Burnet (1643–1715) argued similarly, with Burnet proclaiming that 'the whole Doctrines of the Christian Religion are contained in the Scripture, and that therefore we are to admit no Article as part of it till it is proved from Scripture'.<sup>124</sup> These premises underpinned further Latitudinarian convictions. From the principle of *sola scriptura* followed the right of private judgment on doctrine and the need for 'free enquiry'. When free enquiry uncovered corruptions of doctrine, doubtful creeds, or dogmas unwarranted by Scripture, these should be jettisoned. Surviving superstition should be banished. There should be generous treatment of Protestants outside the Church of England's compass and, preferably, reconciliation with them. Theological bickering should be minimized, and practical, serious-minded Christianity vigorously encouraged. Churchmen who were sympathetic to Latitudinarian theology prided themselves on their rationality, seeking to merge Christian precepts with Enlightenment thought, methods of enquiry, and social ideals.<sup>125</sup> This was true of Williams, who saw himself as a member of an enlightened, forward-looking clerical intelligentsia. His thinking strongly resembled that of countless clerics educated at

<sup>120</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/119, Entries, 26, 27 September 1810.

<sup>121</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/118, Entry, 1 August 1808; CR 1,707/120, Entry, 5 September 1812.

<sup>122</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/120, Poem, 3 December 1813.

<sup>123</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/117, Entries, 8 December 1806, 9 January 1807.

<sup>124</sup> B. W. Young, *Religion and Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1998), p. 29.

<sup>125</sup> For a concise survey of the anti-dogmatic tradition, see *ibid.*, pp. 19–44.

eighteenth-century Cambridge, with its fusion of liberal apologetics and Newtonian science.<sup>126</sup> Intellectually, he owed much less to his own university, with its High-Church tradition.

A letter which Williams wrote in old age succinctly illustrates his steadfast commitment to Latitudinarian principles (their influence, by then, had waned). Above all, it highlights his anti-dogmatism and his firm support for the private judgment of those who wrestled seriously with religious problems; but it also shows his rationality and the (unusual) breadth of his tolerance. It shows, too, his inflexibility respecting matters about which the Scriptures were, in his judgment, plain.

In 1816, two friends, the Bracebridges, who had lived at Wellesbourne, were residing on the Continent, and Mrs Bracebridge wrote to Williams, asking about correct behaviour when receiving the Sacrament in foreign churches. Williams firmly observed that he would not presume to dictate to her conscience, but stated that, for himself,

I should look upon it as a Christian duty, & as a right observance of Christian charity, to conform with fellow Christians in all such exterior things, as either are in *their own nature indifferent*, or which *can be made so to me* by the powers of my own mind.<sup>127</sup>

Accordingly, he would not, he maintained, scruple to partake publicly of the Lord's Supper in any Protestant form, but – and this was an instance of remarkable tolerance – he did not entirely discourage the Bracebridges from communicating in a Roman Catholic church. During the Eucharist, he felt – laying heavy stress on an individual's judgment – it was justified to kneel if that produced a sense of penitence and reverence: in itself, posture was a thing indifferent, only important inasmuch as it affected the mind.<sup>128</sup> However, kneeling would become an act of idolatry were it to produce an '*absolute & unqualified adoration*' of the host elevated by the priest.<sup>129</sup> That emotion would be tantamount to embracing the doctrine of transubstantiation, and, employing a brutal rationality and Protestant theology, he dismissed transubstantiation as both an 'absurdity' and 'stupid opposition to that positive commandment, which directs us to . . . [communicate] in *remembrance*'.<sup>130</sup> If he felt he risked such idolatrous enthusiasm, he would prefer to receive the Sacrament 'on horseback, at the door of an inn', he added sharply.<sup>131</sup>

Anti-dogmatism could be carried to extremes, as when Benjamin Hoadly (1676–1761), in his notorious 1717 sermon, pugnaciously elevated private judgment above any church authority. There was deep alarm when the principle of

<sup>126</sup> John Gascoigne, *Cambridge in the Age of the Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1989).

<sup>127</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/122, John Henry Williams to \_\_\_\_ Bracebridge, 12 May 1816.

<sup>128</sup> The devout publican, in Luke XVIII:13, had stood when praying, Williams noted.

<sup>129</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/122, John Henry Williams to \_\_\_\_ Bracebridge, 12 May 1816.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.



*sola scriptura* was applied, notably by Samuel Clarke (1675–1729), to Trinitarianism, a doctrine without explicit biblical foundations, since this risked fostering heresies: either Arianism (the belief that Christ was only partly divine and not of one being with God, who had created Him) or Socinianism (the outright denial of Christ's divinity). Other Latitudinarians, however, did not wish to arouse over-much theological controversy, fearing a backlash which would retard the growth of enlightened moderation in the Church. For them, progress was to be achieved cautiously and gradually. This was, it seems, Williams' view. As a young man, Williams witnessed the next major Latitudinarian battle – the subscription controversy over the requirement that the clergy should subscribe to the Trinitarian Thirty-Nine Articles, human formularies which seemed antiquated and sometimes theologically suspect.<sup>132</sup> Some two hundred clergymen and some fifty laymen signed the 'Feathers Tavern petition', proposing the abolition of compulsory subscription: it was debated by Parliament in 1772, and rejected.<sup>133</sup> If his anti-dogmatism produced doubts about the Thirty-Nine Articles, Williams prudently kept them to himself – like many other Latitudinarian clergymen – and he (almost certainly) did not sign the petition.<sup>134</sup> He was no Arian or Socinian: in one sermon, he spoke of 'the holy Son of God, who took upon him a nature which did not belong to him'.<sup>135</sup>

The rejection of the Feathers Tavern petition weakened Latitudinarianism's standing in the Church (though only a few signatories seceded to Unitarianism). It, of course, strengthened links between Latitudinarians and Dissenters, both prizing freedom of conscience; and in the matter of free enquiry, Latitudinarians and Rational Dissenters/Unitarians were at one. Unsurprisingly, therefore, Williams' relations with Dissenters during his ministry were consistently good. Perhaps, too, the shock to Latitudinarians of the subscription *débâcle* served to increase Williams' evangelical sympathies, as evinced by a range of remarks about 'vital' Christians and 'real' and nominal Christians and his stress on the Atonement:<sup>136</sup> some adjustment of emphasis would be natural as the stocks of Latitudinarianism declined and those of evangelicalism rose. Latitudinarianism and evangelicalism seemed theologically irreconcilable, glaringly so, given the importance the former attached to reason and the latter to emotion. Yet regarding practical Christianity and socio-political needs, Latitudinarian and evangelical demands, with their pronounced moral seriousness, neatly dovetailed, and here Williams' reconciling was not unnatural. Nor was he alone in this. Peter Peckard,

<sup>132</sup> Subscription was required at matriculation at Oxford and at graduation at Cambridge; at ordination; and on taking new livings.

<sup>133</sup> Martin Fitzpatrick, 'Latitudinarianism at the Parting of the Ways: A Suggestion', *The Church of England c. 1689–c. 1833: From Toleration to Tractarianism*, ed. John Walsh, Colin Haydon, and Stephen Taylor (Cambridge, 1993), p. 220. The petition was reintroduced into the Commons in 1774, but rejected without a division.

<sup>134</sup> *The Monthly Repository* xiii (1818), pp. 15–18. Unfortunately, the petition itself does not survive and *The Monthly Repository*'s list includes only four-fifths of the signatories.

<sup>135</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/34, Sermon on John XVIII:4, unfoliated.

<sup>136</sup> See above, p. 24; and below, pp. 149–50.

whose theological and political views were akin to Williams' (and he too did not sign the Feathers Tavern petition), became master of Magdalene College, Cambridge, in 1781, and thereafter fostered the growth of evangelicalism there.<sup>137</sup>

As a Whig and Latitudinarian, Williams was the avowed enemy of 'priestcraft' and sacerdotalism.<sup>138</sup> He rejoiced in the defeat of priestcraft and the ending of prelates' age-old, overweening, political ambitions. He believed that the clergy should always adopt 'a posture of moderation and humility'.<sup>139</sup> But, if priestcraft was Scylla, Charybdis, for Williams, was Erastianism.<sup>140</sup> Williams came to have the strongest reservations about the power which the state wielded over the Hanoverian Church. Ordination had conferred a distinct dignity on him. He was fully apprised of the duties which he needed to perform at Wellesbourne. And he expected to discharge these with minimal external interference. Clergymen should, he believed, be 'suffered to do . . . [their] own business in . . . [their] own way'.<sup>141</sup> Given the clergy's increased 'professionalization' in the eighteenth century, such thinking is scarcely surprising.<sup>142</sup> Possibly, it was the subscription controversy which fully alerted Williams to the dangers posed by the state's authority over the Church. Could it be right that a Parliament, overwhelmingly composed of laymen, should make decisions about doctrine and confirm man-made tests of Orthodoxy? In the 1790s, he would vehemently denounce the one-sided 'Church-state alliance'.

In his country church, Williams did not expect to dissect particular religious traditions or theological controversies, still less anatomize politics. He expected to lead his largely ill-educated parishioners to salvation by preaching the essentials of Christianity. But one further facet of his world-view stiffened his resolve here: his belief in a rationally ordered society and his rôle in it. Williams naturally believed that the social hierarchy was ordained by God. Our creator, he reminded his congregation, 'placed us in this present state'.<sup>143</sup> And he maintained that social inequality was both spiritually and practically useful. '[H]ow wisely & wonderfully', he declared,

the unequal conditions & sudden reversions of human life seem adapted to produce the infinite variety of the human character; & to give birth &

<sup>137</sup> John Walsh, 'Peckard, Peter (*bap.* 1717, *d.* 1797)', *ODNB*, XLIII, pp. 374–5; Young, *Religion and Enlightenment*, pp. 59–62.

<sup>138</sup> On the campaigns against priestcraft, see Mark Goldie, 'Priestcraft and the Birth of Whiggism', *Political Discourse in Early Modern Britain*, ed. Nicholas Phillipson and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 209–31 and J. A. I. Champion, *The Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken* (Cambridge, 1992).

<sup>139</sup> J. H. Williams, *Two Sermons Preached on the Public Fasts of April 1793, and February 1794* (1794), p. v.

<sup>140</sup> See below, p. 104.

<sup>141</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. vi.

<sup>142</sup> Penelope J. Corfield, *Power and the Professions in Britain 1700–1850* (1995), pp. 102–36; Geoffrey Holmes, *Augustan England: Professions, State, and Society 1680–1730* (1982), pp. 83–114; Rosemary O'Day, *The Professions in Early Modern England 1450–1800* (Harlow, 2000), pp. 47–110.

<sup>143</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/34, Sermon on John XIII:1, unfoliated.

life to many virtues wh. otherwise wd. never have existed; how impossible it wd. have been, had men lived under a perfect & unvaried equality of endowments & circumstances, for Gratitude, or constancy, or humility, or contentment, or even charity to have had a name.<sup>144</sup>

This doctrine, at first sight, perhaps seems all too comfortable, indeed complacent, given Williams' rank, wealth, and lifestyle. But it enjoined clear obligations too: it was not an excuse for ease. God expected much of those to whom He had entrusted many talents. Williams was sure that God had called him to the ministry and set him in his station: it was therefore his duty to provide unflinching spiritual leadership; and rank facilitated leadership. He had to be, as far as possible, a model of holy living and the shepherd of his flock at Wellesbourne and Walton. What, then, were his pastoral strategies?

### ***Ce qu'il croyait: Pastoral Strategies***

Underpinning Williams' parochial ministry – and his later political publications – was his absolute belief in the soul's immortality, the last judgment, and an eternal reward or punishment in the afterlife for earthly conduct. Thus, he told his congregation that 'we are at present under a course of training and discipline, to prepare us for a better state',<sup>145</sup> and he stressed that '*Trial* & not *Enjoyment* is the end of life.'<sup>146</sup> At 'the dreadful day of judgment',<sup>147</sup> all men would give an account of their lives from the moment of baptism until the moment of death.<sup>148</sup> Those who had taken up the cross, the good and virtuous, would, in their future state, enjoy everlasting rest, and be partaker's in Christ's glory.<sup>149</sup> The redeemed would be separated from the wicked who had died impenitent and the irresponsible and worldly whose lives had rendered them 'unfit for heavenly society'.<sup>150</sup> Between the saved and the damned, God would set 'a great gulf . . . wh. no power can pass, & at a distance, perhaps, wh. no numbers can compute! – so *mournful*, – so *pernicious*, – & so *lasting* is the power of Sin'.<sup>151</sup> For the latter, the 'Terrors of the Lord' awaited;<sup>152</sup> and, if Williams never described these, he probably thought it most effective to leave them to his hearers' imaginations. Williams was therefore intent on showing his parishioners that 'the path of life [is] surrounded by snares and ambushes on every side': doing so made him their 'truest friend' and

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. 16.

<sup>146</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/34, Sermon on John XIII:1, unfoliated.

<sup>147</sup> Williams, *Thanksgiving Sermon*, p. 14.

<sup>148</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. 58.

<sup>149</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/34, Sermon on John XVIII:4, unfoliated; Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. 48.

<sup>150</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/34, Sermon on John XVIII:4, unfoliated.

<sup>151</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/34, Sermon on John XIII:1, unfoliated.

<sup>152</sup> Williams, *Thanksgiving Sermon*, p. 30.

‘safest guide’.<sup>153</sup> If he neglected the souls of others, he believed, following the ordinal, that he imperilled his own.

Williams aimed to foster a thoughtful spirituality in his congregation. A ‘small spark of reverence for the Supreme Being . . . is latent in every breast’, he declared, and ‘that *candle of the Lord* . . . become[s] piety and christianity by the gradual working of grace upon faith’.<sup>154</sup> True Christians had to obey God’s laws, pray, and always – he put evangelical stress on this – remember Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross. Thus, their piety – ‘the most pure, the most simple, and the most sublime emotion of the human soul’ – would deepen.<sup>155</sup> But, as all men were sinful and ‘each of us [is] groaning under the burden of his own particular impieties’,<sup>156</sup> it was, Williams told his hearers, essential to effect a ‘reformation of yourselves . . . a deep and thorough reformation of . . . hearts and minds’.<sup>157</sup> Individual penitence and a contrite heart would ‘prepare a quiet conscience’, especially when awaiting death.<sup>158</sup> Williams detested the ‘carnalizing’ of religion.<sup>159</sup> He aimed to teach only ‘the simplicity of . . . [the] Gospel’ containing ‘the purity and spirituality of that Faith by which . . . [a Christian] is to be saved’.<sup>160</sup>

If Williams hoped to instil an introspective, literally soul-searching, Christianity in his parishioners, he also promoted practical expressions of faith. True Christians had to follow “‘the blessed steps of’” Christ, who ‘died to reconcile . . . [man] to his God’ and ‘lived to reconcile man to his neighbour’.<sup>161</sup> Proper Christian conduct, Williams insisted, fostered social harmony;<sup>162</sup> and, in a striking comment, he decried intolerant Christians who, ‘though their own sincerity may save their own souls, yet . . . have much to *unlearn* before their principles can benefit society’.<sup>163</sup> For Williams, ‘Christianity, when simply taught and duly practiced [*sic*] . . . [was] the greatest of all social blessings, or rather . . . the consummation of all social bliss’.<sup>164</sup> He thought that religion should guide national policies.<sup>165</sup> In truly Christian parishes, the inhabitants would dwell ‘together in sanctity, and probity, and charity . . . on all sides reproving, exhorting, excusing, and assisting one another’.<sup>166</sup> Christ’s example ‘has also,’ Williams

<sup>153</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/34, Sermon on John XVIII:4, unfoliated.

<sup>154</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. 4.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5. A favourite metaphor, from Proverbs XX:27, in traditional Latitudinarian preaching: Isabel Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment: A Study of the Language of Religion and Ethics in England 1660–1780, Volume I: Whichcote to Wesley* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 60, 63–4.

<sup>156</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, pp. 40–1.

<sup>157</sup> J. H. Williams, *War the Stumbling-block of a Christian; or, the Absurdity of Defending Religion by the Sword* (1795), p. 31.

<sup>158</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/34, Sermon on John XVIII:4, unfoliated.

<sup>159</sup> Williams, *War the Stumbling-block*, p. 5.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>161</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. 37.

<sup>162</sup> Cf. Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment I*, pp. 81–4.

<sup>163</sup> Williams, *Thanksgiving Sermon*, p. 26.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>165</sup> See below, p. 106.

<sup>166</sup> Williams, *Thanksgiving Sermon*, p. 31.

observed, ‘with great propriety, been taken into domestic life; & his decent submission to his Parents, & his earnest attention to his mother’s welfare at the time of his last suffering have been the frequent subjects of devout notice & admiration’.<sup>167</sup> Williams repeatedly listed a Christian’s social virtues: benevolence, charity, gentleness, and patience. In their day-to-day lives, Christians had to display their ‘sincere & practical Xtianity’, he maintained;<sup>168</sup> and, in their public and private stations, they needed to use their different gifts effectively.<sup>169</sup> ‘Have you zeal? Employ it, expend it, exhaust it, on virtue and charity . . . Have you knowledge? Use it . . . for the purpose of assisting, instructing, and enlightening mankind . . .’<sup>170</sup> There was, too, the daily struggle to eschew the corruptions of the world. Humans were afflicted by their ‘*selfish passions – changeable humours, – & worldly minds*’.<sup>171</sup> They were a prey to ‘hatred, rancour, pride, insolence, revenge, [and] ambitious rivalry’.<sup>172</sup> His congregation’s ‘*internal enemies*’ were, Williams forcefully declared,

[a] spirit of intolerant and misguided zeal – a wilful blindness to the deformities of corruption – a profligacy of morals, and a contempt of manly principles – a bare-faced display of vice, and a servile imitation of luxury – [and] . . . a vile desertion from all the sacred duties of private life.<sup>173</sup>

Although these were essentially private vices, they were, of course, for Williams, easily transmuted into social cankers. In 1794, he condemned ‘the defacing inroads which pride, and envy, and malice, and jealousy are perpetually making on the smooth and pleasant walks of social life’.<sup>174</sup> He indeed feared that private vices could so multiply as to become a social solvent. ‘[S]ober and practical Christians’ therefore had not only to cultivate kindness and charity but also to actively subdue weaknesses, passions, vice, and sin.<sup>175</sup>

Williams was convinced that late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century England was witnessing a ‘general defection of religious sentiment’.<sup>176</sup> In 1793, he deplored the ‘very low and frigid point to which the spirit of devotion has descended amongst us . . . [and] that carnal temper with which it is accompanied’.<sup>177</sup> Uneasy, corrupting compromises were made between the demands of the Gospel and worldly considerations. The faith, ‘which is in the mouths of

<sup>167</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/34, Sermon on John XIII:1, unfoliated.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Williams, *Thanksgiving Sermon*, pp. 27–8.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>171</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/34, Sermon on John XIII:1, unfoliated.

<sup>172</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. 44.

<sup>173</sup> Williams, *War the Stumbling-block*, pp. 30–1.

<sup>174</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. 36.

<sup>175</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/34, Sermon on John XVIII:4, unfoliated.

<sup>176</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. 8.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

many,' Williams gloomily maintained, 'is in the hearts of few'.<sup>178</sup> He consistently drew the evangelical distinction between nominal and 'real' Christians. About the former, he could be scathing. 'Possessed of the empty name of christians, without the temper or the mind of Christ,' he declared in 1793,

we lay claim to all its benefits, without submitting to any of its conditions; and professing a religion, to whose influence we are insensible, and of whose sanctions we are unmindful, our worship is as much below the worship of the heathens in fervour, in persuasion, and in public effect, as our religion exceeds theirs in purity, in dignity, and in truth.<sup>179</sup>

Christ himself, Williams reminded his hearers, explicitly differentiated between nominal and 'vital' Christians: ' "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord! Lord! . . . shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that *doeth the will* of my Father who is in heaven." ' <sup>180</sup> Following this passage and the preceding verse, you 'shall know it by its fruits', Williams naturally maintained that 'true Christianity' was easily identified.<sup>181</sup> Furthermore, nations, as well as individuals, had to show that 'they are Christians in *deed*, and not in *word* only; and that they *believe* that faith which they affect to *support* and to *defend*'.<sup>182</sup> As his anti-war arguments made clear, Williams was concerned not only with the souls of his parishioners but also with the souls of the nation at large. Accordingly, it was right, in his eyes, for clergymen to castigate not only individuals' vices but also government policies which might multiply sins.

Williams strongly advocated moderation in religion. He deplored 'the insanity of fanaticism',<sup>183</sup> those who raved 'in wanton extasies',<sup>184</sup> and those who sought to '*impassionate* the word of God'.<sup>185</sup> For a man of his rank and education, the vulgar character of, in particular, early Methodist worship, with its emotional excesses and rabid preaching, was unpalatable, a repellent contrast to the orderly, staid, and decorous services of conventional Anglicanism.<sup>186</sup> 'Enthusiasm', a term which Williams always used pejoratively, had to be checked by the exercise of reason – and Williams unfailingly used the words 'reason' and 'rational' approvingly. For him, like other liberal clerics anxious to christianize Enlightenment thinking, religion and reason were complementary. For centuries, Williams admitted, religious authority and reason had conflicted, with Christians 'crouching supinely to that authority which their reason inclined them to suspect,

<sup>178</sup> Williams, *Thanksgiving Sermon*, p. 3.

<sup>179</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, pp. 3–4.

<sup>180</sup> Williams, *Thanksgiving Sermon*, p. 29; Matthew VII:21.

<sup>181</sup> Williams, *Thanksgiving Sermon*, p. 25; Matthew VII:20.

<sup>182</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. 63.

<sup>183</sup> Williams, *Thanksgiving Sermon*, p. 28.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>185</sup> Williams, *War the Stumbling-block*, p. 24.

<sup>186</sup> John Walsh, 'Methodism and the Mob in the Eighteenth Century', *Popular Belief and Practice*, ed. G. J. Cuming and Derek Baker, *Studies in Church History VIII* (Cambridge, 1972), p. 225; and see below, pp. 68, 154.

and clinging surreptitiously to that reason which the authority commanded them to discard'.<sup>187</sup> 'But now', he confidently maintained, 'the darkness is dispersed; *authority* and *reason* are united in the person and the words of *Christ*; those words are piously dispensed to every hand, and open to every understanding.'<sup>188</sup> A rational appreciation of society's needs engendered individuals' recognition of their civic duties and fostered responsible conduct, while Christian teaching likewise enjoined considerate, unselfish social behaviour. Our 'VIRTUE is the *fruit* of REASON, and our RELIGION is the *gift* of GOD', Williams argued;<sup>189</sup> 'a real christian and a good man can never make a bad citizen'.<sup>190</sup>

Williams believed that superstition could be banished from a rational, Christian society and Church (thereby strengthening the latter against attacks by infidels and sceptics). He loathed 'the deformity of superstition'.<sup>191</sup> He thought, too, that, in his own time, mankind generally was 'disgusted at the darkness of *superstition*'.<sup>192</sup> Nonetheless, despite such optimistic pronouncements, Williams thought that there were clear limits to the wisdom and impact of Enlightenment thought – especially when he witnessed the horrors of the Terror in France. These are 'days of general information and of boasted light', he told his congregation in 1794.<sup>193</sup> 'Yet', he continued, 'still this light is not the light of Heaven . . . The improvement of *morals* in the world has not kept pace with the progress of *intellect* . . . [Men] are grown too wise for *Machiavel*, but too sinful for CHRIST.'<sup>194</sup> It is revealing that he thought true piety, without the aid of reason, could dispel superstitious beliefs.<sup>195</sup> Moreover, excessive reliance on human reason was itself unreasonable and engendered first 'a *false and sceptical philosophy*' and then a 'profligacy and atheism [which] are as inconsistent with civil liberty as they are with reason and with truth'.<sup>196</sup> Just as true Christians were, in Williams' eyes, dutiful citizens, atheists were the state's enemies. Unrestrained by hopes of reward, or fear of punishment, after death, they were selfish, immoral, and destructive:

In every infidel [i.e. atheist] or vicious man, whatever specious garb he may assume, there lurks a foe to his native land, a practical and effective enemy to its liberty and peace; who, whilst he is pursuing his own pleasure, or interest, or fame, is tearing up the roots of public confidence, and private happiness, and scattering the seeds of discord, malignity, and oppression, through every rank of life.<sup>197</sup>

<sup>187</sup> Williams, *War the Stumbling-block*, p. 7.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>190</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. vii.

<sup>191</sup> Williams, *Thanksgiving Sermon*, p. 28.

<sup>192</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. 60.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>195</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/34, Sermon on John XVIII:4, unfoliated.

<sup>196</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, pp. 30, 48.

<sup>197</sup> Williams, *Thanksgiving Sermon*, p. 24.



In his sermons, Williams conventionally described the Church of England as the *via media* between Roman Catholicism and emphatically Protestant churches. Thus, in 1802, he decried ‘Roman pomp’ and ‘Genevan fervency’.<sup>198</sup> Notwithstanding this, his views respecting Catholics and Protestant Dissenters were, in fact, more complex than such shorthand would initially suggest.

Regarding Catholics, Williams drew the increasingly conventional – if sometimes unrealistic – distinction between ‘Popery’ and Roman Catholicism. According to this scheme, Popery constituted ecclesiastical tyranny, the overriding of conscience, and potential intervention in politics by the Vatican. In contra-distinction, Roman Catholicism was a spiritual creed: its adherents were to be treated with respect and kindness and their beliefs, though flawed, tolerated. Williams’ ‘rooted . . . hatred of Popery’ sometimes showed in his sermons.<sup>199</sup> Many events in ‘popish’ history, such as the Council of Clermont and the Crusades,<sup>200</sup> were derided, and Williams observed that ‘the shedders of . . . blood [in the church’s past] . . . might be Popes, Monks, Princes, or Demagogues, *but they were not Christians*’.<sup>201</sup> Yet, in the 1790s, he worked with Catholic gentlemen who opposed Pitt’s policies;<sup>202</sup> and, by the early nineteenth century, following the Whig politicians, he favoured Catholic emancipation. In 1807, after the Talents ministry had fallen over the issue,<sup>203</sup> Williams wrote to Parr, commenting on a long article on it in *The Edinburgh Review*,<sup>204</sup> and taking a liberal and pragmatic view. ‘I could not help thinking’, he stated, that the author

wasted too much labour upon the Coronation Oath [to uphold the Protestant constitution] and the royal conscience. If the K[ing] . . . wills the preservation of the Protestant establishment, he must consult the preservation of the State, on which it hangs. He did not swear to give up his understanding, and by adhering to the letter, to neglect the whole spirit and essence of the obligation.<sup>205</sup>

Williams’ views on Protestant Dissenters are clear, although sometimes he could be slightly guarded about them in public. In 1793, he told his congregation that he had been pleased to state, when answering Hurd’s first visitation enquiry, that there were no Dissenters at Wellesbourne;<sup>206</sup> but this conventional remark did not denote uncharitable opposition. The Unitarian Field thought that Williams was an Anglican cleric remarkably sympathetic to Dissent and, indeed, ‘among the most enlightened and liberal clergymen of his time’.<sup>207</sup> Field is perhaps an

<sup>198</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>199</sup> Johnstone, ed., *Works of Parr*, VIII, p. 293.

<sup>200</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, pp. 23–6.

<sup>201</sup> Williams, *Thanksgiving Sermon*, p. 4.

<sup>202</sup> See below, pp. 125–6.

<sup>203</sup> Or, more precisely, the issue of whether Catholics should be given commissions in the military.

<sup>204</sup> *The Edinburgh Review* xi, No. xxi (1807), pp. 116–44.

<sup>205</sup> Johnstone, ed., *Works of Parr*, VIII, p. 293.

<sup>206</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. 2; cf. Ransome, ed., *Bishopric of Worcester*, p. 185.

<sup>207</sup> Field, *Parr*, I, p. 206.



unreliable witness: his biography of Parr was criticized for its undue stress on its subject's 'liberality' towards Unitarians;<sup>208</sup> and Williams was no crypto-Unitarian. But Williams, a man steeped in Whig-Latitudinarian thinking, always respected the Dissenting tradition; probably he favoured a measure of comprehension within the Church for some Dissenters. Above all, his adherence to the principles of *sola scriptura* led Williams to distrust some of Orthodox Anglican theology's rigidities, while his commitment to the right of private judgment inclined him to prize toleration and to examine the thought of Dissenters fair-mindedly.<sup>209</sup> He deplored the revival of anti-Dissenter persecution in the 1790s, and indeed denounced it openly.<sup>210</sup> When he decided to publish his 1793 anti-war sermon, he initially – and rather pointedly – chose a printer who was a Dissenter.<sup>211</sup>

### Pastoralia

'“Feed my Sheep”', was, Williams reminded his congregation, Christ's 'grand commission' to the clergy.<sup>212</sup> Williams had a clear, practical view of his rôle as a parson. The 'whole and sole business of a parish-priest', he stated, is, 'by the influence of his example, and the frequency and soundness of his instruction, to promote the general cause of virtue and religion, and to increase the number of real christians and good men'.<sup>213</sup> He was his parishioners' 'teacher and . . . neighbour';<sup>214</sup> though schoolmaster, or indeed headmaster, sometimes appears more apt. The obverse of his pride in his social standing and his conception of the priesthood was his sense of leadership and an expectation of deference from his flock. On occasions, he reproved his congregation sharply – he once described conduct 'deserving of the loudest and most severe rebuke'.<sup>215</sup> But this forcefulness was tempered by Williams' sense of humour – a slightly acid one with his congregation – and his manifest underlying gentleness: he once observed that, although his hearers should separate themselves from the perennially wicked, they should do so with '[r]egret, mingled with tender compassion'.<sup>216</sup>

Williams regarded preaching as central to his ministry at Wellesbourne and Walton; and it seems that he delivered a sermon every week.<sup>217</sup> Both his

<sup>208</sup> E. H. Barker, *Parriana: or Notices of the Rev. Samuel Parr, LL.D.*, I (1828), pp. 281–3.

<sup>209</sup> Cf. Mark Philp, 'Rational Religion and Political Radicalism in the 1790s', *Enlightenment and Dissent* iv (1985), p. 36.

<sup>210</sup> See below, pp. 80–2.

<sup>211</sup> See below, pp. 96–7.

<sup>212</sup> Williams, *War the Stumbling-block*, p. 8.

<sup>213</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, pp. vi–vii.

<sup>214</sup> Williams, *War the Stumbling-block*, p. 10.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>216</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/34, Sermon on John XIII:1, unfoliated.

<sup>217</sup> This seems very likely since Bertie Greatheed attended Sunday services at Wellesbourne from time to time, and afterwards almost invariably commented in his diary on Williams' preaching. Unless Greatheed deliberately eschewed services without sermons, the sample must indicate Williams' usual practice.

For a valuable discussion of the importance of sermons, see Tony Claydon, 'The Sermon, the "Public

published and manuscript sermons are effectively constructed and in much the same fashion. Williams chose his texts carefully. He expounded his arguments clearly and reinforced them with numerous quotations from the Scriptures – as one would expect, given the importance which he attached to the Word. Key points or words are italicized in the printed sermons and underlined in the manuscripts, revealing Williams' careful preparation for preaching and offering some clues to his delivery. Williams sought to engage his congregation from the pulpit. He addressed his hearers directly – 'Oh ye disciples of Christ!', 'Brethren', 'My Christian brethren!', 'Christians!' 'my dear Xtians', and, repeatedly, 'you'. Sometimes, he anticipated the congregation's mental objections to his reasoning, and then countered these.<sup>218</sup> Presuming that the anti-war sermons were largely delivered as published (and this seems likely given the similarity of their and the manuscript sermons' styles and lay-outs), the sophistication of some of their arguments – though not the overall conclusion – doubtless bemused a humble audience. And, likewise, the range of examples and allusions. But Williams was aware of the dangers of pitching his arguments too high: 'Take heed then, Oh! ye preachers of the sublimer doctrines . . . how ye burden the consciences, and bewilder the imaginations of the unwary with subjects beyond the reach of their honest understandings.'<sup>219</sup> He sometimes explained quotations about which misunderstandings might arise: '“He that hateth his brother” (that is, in scripture language, his fellow creature) “is a murderer.”'<sup>220</sup> Moreover, his sermons not only appealed to the intellect but were also calculated to stir the emotions and thereby affect even the least educated in the church.<sup>221</sup> Some of Williams' imagery also elucidated his arguments very effectively. When discussing how far humans fell short when following Christ's example, he observed 'let us always bear in mind, brethren, that to imitate is not to equal'. 'The Mariner, who dreams not of reaching the Polar Star,' he continued, 'must steer his course by it; and the Christian who would pass with safety the Waves of this troublesome world, must do it by looking continually (altho' at an immeasurable distance) “to the mark of the prize of his high calling – the author and finisher of his faith”.'<sup>222</sup> As for the sermons' content, Williams maintained that, before the French Revolution, he spoke only of '*righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come*'.<sup>223</sup>

Williams' friend Bertie Greatheed heard many of the sermons at Wellesbourne. He consistently praised them in his journal and, although this raises the suspicion that he was over-generous, an eye-witness's opinion

Sphere", and the Political Culture of Late Seventeenth-Century England', *The English Sermon Revised*, ed. Lori Anne Ferrell and Peter McCullough (Manchester and New York, 2000), pp. 208–34.

<sup>218</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. 10.

<sup>219</sup> Williams, *Thanksgiving Sermon*, p. 29; cf. Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. 1.

<sup>220</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. 49.

<sup>221</sup> On calls for preaching that was emotionally affecting, see Paul Goring, *The Rhetoric of Sensibility in Eighteenth-Century Culture* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 38–9, 79, 81.

<sup>222</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/34, Sermon on John XVIII:4, unfoliated.

<sup>223</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. viii.

nevertheless adds valuably to the impression of Williams' delivery and impact derived from the manuscript and published texts. On 21 February 1808, Greatheed wrote,

Williams preached as he never fails to do most admirably. His sermons are not only the best, but by very far the best I ever heard. His manner, earnest, impressive, varied, to the greatest degree. You forget he has a book before him, and he often forgets it too. His christianity is pure, humble, sublime. His doctrine sound; his discriminations clear and accurate: & his views extended far beyond the beggarly elements of this life into eternity.<sup>224</sup>

If Greatheed did not exaggerate, Wellesbourne, an unexceptional country parish, was very fortunate in having a preacher of such calibre. Greatheed also noted the texts or the subjects on which Williams preached. Some lent themselves to imaginative treatment. In 1817, Williams preached on hypocrisy, arguing, with a fashionable gothic flourish, that it transformed a man into a '*human monster with one body & two minds*'.<sup>225</sup> Some of the subjects or texts seem calculated to inspire fear in the congregation: God's omnipresence;<sup>226</sup> on conscience;<sup>227</sup> "Stand in awe & sin not";<sup>228</sup> the burning of tares and the harvesting of wheat.<sup>229</sup> Some sermons were topical: that of 8 September 1816, 'on the rainy season', was presumably a discourse on the year's appalling weather and God's providence.<sup>230</sup>

Williams' replies to Bishop Hurd's 1782 enquiries show that he was an extremely conscientious parson. The Church of England's canons of 1603/04 enjoined the holding of two services in each parish church on Sundays, the celebration of the Eucharist at least three times a year, and proper catechizing. Each Sunday, Williams conducted matins and evensong at Wellesbourne – each was a 'model & pattern', thought Greatheed<sup>231</sup> – and arranged for the curate to hold one morning service in the chapel at Walton Deyville. Williams celebrated the Eucharist five times a year at Wellesbourne, and four Eucharists were celebrated at Walton Deyville. He aimed to convince his parishioners of the need for regular Communion. In 1782, he noted that, at Wellesbourne, a hundred out of '813 souls' received the Sacrament – a high proportion when compared with the figures for most parishes in the Kineton deanery, and a creditable one, given the prevalent popular fear, grounded on the Book of Common Prayer's admonition,

<sup>224</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/117, Entry, 21 February 1808.

<sup>225</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/122, Entry, 1 June 1817.

<sup>226</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/119, Entry, 3 November 1811.

<sup>227</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/122, Entry, 23 June 1816.

<sup>228</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/117, Entry, 2 August 1807; Psalm IV:4.

<sup>229</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/118, Entry, 21 August 1808. 'Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn': Matthew XIII:30.

<sup>230</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/122, Entry, 8 September 1816. The dreadful weather was the result of the eruption of Mount Tambora in Indonesia in 1815: it enshrouded the earth in dust. Despite this, the crops were abundant in Warwickshire (ibid.).

<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

that unworthy reception did ‘nothing else but increase . . . damnation’.<sup>232</sup> Williams catechized in Lent, anxious to instil sound doctrine into the rising generation. And besides providing Sunday services, celebrating Communion, and catechizing, he said prayers ‘on all holydays, and Wed. and Fri. in Lent, at 11’.<sup>233</sup> He wanted attendance at weekday services – which was naturally inconvenient to most parishioners. In 1793, he roundly rebuked his congregation for ‘the excuses which hindered . . . [most members] from attending . . . [the] public devotion . . . [on] *Ash-Wednesday last*, one of the most solemn days of christian humiliation . . . [when] there were not within these walls *six persons of riper years*’.<sup>234</sup> He deplored ‘the indolence, the indifference, or the occupation, which then kept back . . . [most] feet from the House of God’, and, the following year, he caustically anticipated reading the Ash Wednesday service to ‘empty seats, and irresponsible pews’.<sup>235</sup> It is impossible to know how Williams’ hearers took such strictures. Only one churchwardens’ presentment survives from his period at Wellesbourne, and this, from 1790, ventures no criticism; though the words on the printed form, ‘know of nothing presentable’, were, for the churchwardens, more an invitation to sign than to comment.<sup>236</sup> Another oblique commendation of Williams’ ministry is the failure of Dissent to develop at Wellesbourne during his years there. There were apparently no Dissenters in the parish in 1782, and, although Dissent proliferated elsewhere in south Warwickshire in the early nineteenth century, it prospered at Wellesbourne only after Williams’ death.<sup>237</sup> It is probable that his pastoral endeavours, manifest commitment, and winning personality prevented Nonconformist encroachment. And that his Churchmanship appealed strongly to the spiritually engaged.

Other evidence bears witness to Williams’ dedication to his ministry. Williams organized his day rigidly, always remaining at the vicarage until noon, so that he could receive parishioners or study.<sup>238</sup> In 1806, Greatheed noted that it was ‘an unusual thing’ for him to stay overnight with friends – Williams was presumably reluctant to be absent from Wellesbourne in case of some emergency (though he

<sup>232</sup> Ransome, ed., *Bishopric of Worcester*, pp. 184, 185; Colin Haydon, ‘The Church in the Kineton Deanery of the Diocese of Worcester c. 1660–c. 1800’, *The National Church in Local Perspective: The Church of England and the Regions 1660–1800*, ed. Jeremy Gregory and Jeffrey S. Chamberlain (Woodbridge, 2003), pp. 155–6. Cf. Donald A. Spaeth, ‘Common Prayer? Popular Observance of the Anglican Liturgy in Restoration Wiltshire’, *Parish, Church, and People*, ed. S. J. Wright (1988), pp. 125–51. At nearby Milverton, there were only six or seven communicants in October 1812: Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/120, Entry, 4 October 1812.

<sup>233</sup> Ransome, ed., *Bishopric of Worcester*, p. 185.

<sup>234</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. 10.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 11, 34.

<sup>236</sup> Worcestershire RO, BA 2,289/21 (viii), Ref. 807.

<sup>237</sup> Ransome, ed., *Bishopric of Worcester*, p. 185; John Sibree and M. Caston, *Independency in Warwickshire* (Coventry and London, 1855), *passim*; Pamela Horn, *Joseph Arch* (Kineton, 1971), p. 8. One wonders if the gallery in St Peter’s church was added during Williams’ incumbency, and reflected his ability to attract the villagers to services.

<sup>238</sup> Warwickshire CRO, L6/1,076.

later relaxed this rule).<sup>239</sup> In addition to his Sunday sermons, Williams sometimes gave evening lectures – as in the summer of 1806, on St Matthew’s gospel.<sup>240</sup> He crafted fine epitaphs (and performed funeral services very impressively).<sup>241</sup> His commitment is reflected in his meticulous keeping of the Wellesbourne parish registers, in his precise, elegant hand, year on year.<sup>242</sup> It is shown by his responsible management of his living at Fleet Marston, with his appointment of curates to act in his stead.<sup>243</sup> It is further highlighted by his determination to perform the services at Wellesbourne and Walton Deyville in his old age. Williams was seventy in 1817, but it was 1822 before he appointed a curate to work with him – though Harry sometimes assisted with the services.<sup>244</sup> Williams conducted his last funeral at Wellesbourne in July 1824, his final marriage ceremony in May 1826, and his last baptism in July.<sup>245</sup> His final funeral at Walton was in May 1826.<sup>246</sup> When he died in 1829, Williams had been the vicar of Wellesbourne for nearly two-thirds of his life.

<sup>239</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/116, Entry, 26 May 1806.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*, Entry, 12 July 1806.

<sup>241</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/117, Entry, 31 October 1807; CR 1,707/122, Entry, 25 August 1816.

<sup>242</sup> Warwickshire CRO, DR 69/3, 4, 5, 6; DR 159/2, 5, 11.

<sup>243</sup> See above, pp. 34, 41.

<sup>244</sup> Warwickshire CRO, DR 159/2, Entry, 7 June 1824; DR 159/5, Entries, 24 August 1817, 5 December 1822; DR 159/11, Entry, 4 January 1818.

<sup>245</sup> Warwickshire CRO, DR 159/2, Entry, 18 July 1826; DR 159/5, 18 May 1826; DR 159/11, Entry, 17 July 1824.

<sup>246</sup> Warwickshire CRO, DR 159/11, Entry, 19 May 1826.

## Chapter Four

### THE GATHERING STORM

#### High Society

Besides his clerical circle, Williams had friends in Warwickshire's landed society. He was, it seems, always conscious that he himself was a gentleman, with an honourable pedigree. When his mother died in 1800, he conducted the funeral and noted, slightly unnecessarily, in the Wellesbourne parish register 'Widow of John Williams Esq.'<sup>1</sup> Williams' education, both at school and university, gave him poise in polite society. He displayed the social graces, sense of honour, and masculine virtues of the landed gentlemen with whom he mixed, and shared their cultural interests, if not all their social and cultural presumptions. Williams might easily socialize with the quality at Warwick or Leamington; and he was comfortable in the drawing or dining rooms of country houses.

Williams understood the concerns of wealthy families partly because he himself owned property and had streams of private income which were independent of the income he derived from his benefices. He seems to have been financially adroit. He inherited lands in Wales, and conveyed these to the Earl of Warwick in exchange for land at Fleet Marston, so that, thereafter, his rectory's glebe constituted one of the largest landholdings in the parish.<sup>2</sup> In 1801, he secured an annuity of £250.<sup>3</sup> Williams gradually acquired a knowledge and the skills of estate management, and sometimes acted as an amateur steward for his friend Bertie Greatheed at Guy's Cliffe.<sup>4</sup> He advised about the rents which could be expected from estate farmers – and Greatheed largely accepted his recommendations.<sup>5</sup> Williams could advise on the condition of cattle, and measure fields.<sup>6</sup> He made valuations of timber on land owned by Wellesbourne school.<sup>7</sup> Regarding the Wellesbourne glebe, he moved, rebuilt, and repaired the barn and, from 1806

<sup>1</sup> Warwickshire CRO, DR 69/5, Entry, 7 March 1800. My italics.

<sup>2</sup> George Lipscomb, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Buckingham*, I (1847), p. 329; Buckinghamshire RO, Q/RPL/1/45.

<sup>3</sup> Cheshire RO, DCR 36/1/3.

<sup>4</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/119, Entry, 9 November 1811.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, Entries, 24 January, 17 February 1812.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, Entries, 9, 11 May 1811.

<sup>7</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/118, Entry, 29 April 1808.

(and possibly before), let the vicarage farm.<sup>8</sup> Williams was, furthermore, pugnacious about the tithes due to him. John Lucy purchased lands, subject to grass and hay tithes, at Wellesbourne and incorporated them into the Charlecote park, so that they were ‘depastured promiscuously by Deer, black Cattle, & sheep’.<sup>9</sup> Having obtained legal advice in 1808,<sup>10</sup> Williams wrote Lucy a scrupulously polite letter (‘I am perfectly willing to settle . . . [the matter] in a[n] amicable manner as friends & neighbours shd. do’), but was utterly resolute:

The Tithe of Grass & Hay are mine, & I suppose you wd. not imagine that if you were to purchase the whole Hamlet of Wellsbourn Mountford, & convert it into a *deer-park only*, the Law wd. allow you by such an Act to annul & destroy my *previous Right*.<sup>11</sup>

In another letter, he noted some further claims and observed that Lucy’s statement of ‘the number of acres in . . . [the] park does not exactly tally with the best information I can obtain from others on the subject’.<sup>12</sup> He helpfully added that Lucy’s subscription to Wellesbourne school was unpaid.<sup>13</sup>

The Williamses were also lucky in financial matters. In 1808, a well-wisher left legacies totalling £2,120 to different members of the family.<sup>14</sup> It was fortuitous too that Williams was vicar of Wellesbourne when Leamington was developing as a spa town; and that his friends Bertie Greatheed and Edward Willes owned most of the land on which the New Town was built.<sup>15</sup> Greatheed kept him apprised of the developments planned; and, in 1808, when an initial subscription was raised for building a terrace, Harry Williams (by then a fellow of Merton College, Oxford) was among the subscribers.<sup>16</sup> When built, Harry let his house – between May 1813 and March 1814, he made £140 clear of taxes – and, in old age, Williams moved to Leamington.<sup>17</sup> The 1825 Leamington rates book indicates that Williams himself invested in property in the expanding town, though one cannot be sure from the bald entries since the proprietor of the Regent Hotel there was also a John Williams.<sup>18</sup> That John Henry Williams did so is, however, very likely: he was shrewd, and Greatheed was confident that great profits were to be made at Leamington.<sup>19</sup> Given the growth of Bath, Brighton, Cheltenham, and

<sup>8</sup> Warwickshire CRO, DR 69/3, initial note; CR 1,707/116, Entry, 12 July 1806.

<sup>9</sup> Warwickshire CRO, L6/1,077.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Warwickshire CRO, L6/1,076.

<sup>12</sup> Warwickshire CRO, L6/1,075.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. Since Lucy was wont to boast about his ‘7000 Acres & £100000 cash’, Williams’ exasperation about these matters was understandable: Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/117, Entry, 12 May 1807.

<sup>14</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/118, Entry, 29 December 1808.

<sup>15</sup> Lyndon F. Cave, *Royal Leamington Spa* (Chichester, 1988), p. 46.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., pp. 34–5.

<sup>17</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/120, Entry, 5 May 1813; see below, p. 145.

<sup>18</sup> Warwickshire CRO, DR 514/86, pp. 20, 21, 22, 41; Cave, *Leamington*, pp. 63–5. By this time, Harry appears to have made over his house to his father: Worcestershire RO, BA 2,245/24, Ref. S132–8, p. 41, No. 326.

<sup>19</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/116, Entry, 5 June 1806.



Weymouth as spa or resort towns in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, some speculation seemed justified.

One landed family with whom Williams naturally had regular contact was the Mordaunts of Walton Hall as he regularly conducted services in the little chapel beside the mansion. The seventh baronet, Sir John Mordaunt (1734–1806), was MP for Warwickshire from 1793 to 1802 and a Pittite.<sup>20</sup> Yet Sir John's and Williams' political differences – even when heightened following the French Revolution's outbreak – did not, apparently, rupture the two men's relations. Gentlemen could beg to differ over politics and Williams hated 'overbearing . . . political enthusiasm'.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, Sir John was not a reactionary crustacean. He was, Bertie Greatheed thought, a 'just man':<sup>22</sup> notably, he voted for the slave trade's abolition in 1796.<sup>23</sup> When Sir John died, Williams performed his funeral service.<sup>24</sup> Sir John's heir, Sir Charles (1771–1823), MP for Warwickshire from 1804 to 1820, tended to vote independently.<sup>25</sup> He was an intensely amiable man: Greatheed likened him to a young Sir Roger de Coverley, and even voted for him in the 1812 general election – 'a great sacrifice [*sic*] of [Whig] principle to old intimacy & friendship'.<sup>26</sup> His relations with Williams were cordial. Sir Charles sometimes attended church at Wellesbourne.<sup>27</sup> He dined at the parsonage.<sup>28</sup> His son, John, was born and baptized at Farnborough, Warwickshire,<sup>29</sup> but, subsequently, Williams 'received [him] into' the chapel at Walton.<sup>30</sup>

An aristocratic family who shared Williams' politics was the Dormers of Grove Park. The eighth Lord Dormer (1725–1804) was a convinced Whig, and Williams sometimes socialized with members of the family.<sup>31</sup> This friendship highlights Williams' 'enlightened and liberal' cast of mind,<sup>32</sup> for the Dormers were Roman Catholics. The fourteenth Lord Willoughby de Broke (1738–1816) also occasionally entertained the Williams family at Compton Verney, a jewel among Warwickshire's estates, boasting a mansion splendidly remodelled by Robert Adams and grounds landscaped by Capability Brown.<sup>33</sup> The Williamses also had a number of less exalted, but rich, friends, whom they entertained or

<sup>20</sup> R. G. Thorne, 'Mordaunt, Sir John, 7th Bt (1734–1806)', *The House of Commons 1790–1820*, ed. Thorne, IV (1986), p. 632. On the Mordaunt family, see Elizabeth Hamilton, *The Mordaunts* (1965).

<sup>21</sup> J. H. Williams, *War the Stumbling-block of a Christian; or, the Absurdity of Defending Religion by the Sword* (1795), p. 5.

<sup>22</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/117, Entry, 17 November 1806.

<sup>23</sup> Thorne, 'Mordaunt, Sir John', IV, p. 632.

<sup>24</sup> Warwickshire CRO, DR 69/5, Entry, 25 November 1806.

<sup>25</sup> R. G. Thorne, 'Mordaunt, Charles (1771–1823)', *House of Commons 1790–1820*, ed. Thorne, IV, pp. 631–2.

<sup>26</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/119, Entry, 3 November 1811; CR 1,707/120, Entry, 6 October 1812.

<sup>27</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/119, Entry, 10 June 1810.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, Entry, 20 October 1811.

<sup>29</sup> The family seat of Sir Charles' wife.

<sup>30</sup> Warwickshire CRO, DR 69/3, Entry, 28 November 1808.

<sup>31</sup> Warwickshire CRO, MI 142, Entry, 5 December 1797.

<sup>32</sup> William Field, *Memoirs of the Life, Writings, and Opinions of the Rev. Samuel Parr, LL.D.*, I (1828), p. 206.

<sup>33</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/116, Entry, 21 August 1806.



visited very frequently: the Dewes family, who owned land at Wellesbourne, the Mills family, clerics, bankers, and MPs, and the Parkes family, Warwick entrepreneurs who were Whigs in politics and Unitarians in religion.<sup>34</sup> It is clear from the diary of Bertie Greatheed, himself a great friend of the Dewes, Mills, and Parkes families, that they and the Williamses formed a very close-knit social circle.<sup>35</sup>

Bertie Greatheed (1759–1826) was the landowner whom Williams knew best by far: indeed, he was unquestionably Williams' greatest friend. Greatheed was the son of Samuel Greatheed, a wealthy merchant and West Indies plantation owner, and a daughter of the Duke of Ancaster. His house at Guy's Cliffe, standing on the banks of the Avon and eight miles from Wellesbourne, was immensely beautiful, and Greatheed improved it considerably.<sup>36</sup> It is unclear precisely when Williams and Greatheed first met, but they corresponded when, from 1775, Greatheed was studying at the fine University of Göttingen,<sup>37</sup> while Williams attended his friend's marriage to Ann Bertie in 1780.<sup>38</sup> The friendship lasted until Greatheed's death in January 1826. Day after day, year after year, the two men met, walked together, conversed, or exchanged letters. They and their families dined at each other's houses, often staying overnight or for days. Greatheed unceasingly praised his friend in his detailed journals, scarcely offering a word of criticism. Plainly, he never tired of Williams' company.<sup>39</sup>

Greatheed was a cultivated man and a voracious reader. He had an extensive knowledge of classical literature and history (and he systematically studied the New Testament in Greek),<sup>40</sup> and was well read in English, French, and German literature too. Between 1782 and 1786, he and his wife visited France, Switzerland, and Italy; and, in 1802–04, they, with their son, also Bertie, a talented artist, visited France, Germany, and Italy. Greatheed loved the Warwickshire countryside, in which he took long walks. He was fascinated by nature, scrupulously recorded the weather in his diary, and had an amateur interest in astronomy.<sup>41</sup> In his politics, Greatheed was a Foxite Whig (he regarded the death, in September 1806, of Charles James Fox, with whom his elder brother had been at Eton, as 'a national calamity').<sup>42</sup> His loathing of the Younger Pitt and his policies was correspondingly intense.<sup>43</sup> He was an assiduous reader of *The Edinburgh Review*. He

<sup>34</sup> Jessie K. Buckley, *Joseph Parkes of Birmingham* (1926), pp. 2–4.

<sup>35</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/116–26, *passim*.

<sup>36</sup> Corinna Russell, 'Greatheed, Bertie (1759–1826)', *ODNB*, XXIII, p. 478; Geoffrey Tyack, *Warwickshire Country Houses* (Chichester, 1994), pp. 102–4.

<sup>37</sup> George III was keenly interested in Göttingen's development, and, in 1786, three of his sons were sent to the University: Jeremy Black, *George III: America's Last King* (New Haven and London, 2006), p. 318.

<sup>38</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/117, Entry, 10 December 1807; CR 1,707/118, Entry, 31 July 1808.

<sup>39</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/116–26, *passim*.

<sup>40</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/119, Entry, 12 February 1810.

<sup>41</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/110–26, *passim*.

<sup>42</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/116, Entry, 10 September 1806; CR 1,707/120, Entry, 15 December 1813. Greatheed inherited Guy's Cliffe because Peregrine, his elder brother, died young.

<sup>43</sup> In his diary, Greatheed described Pitt, on learning of his death, as that 'arrogant spirit which has so long influenced the powers of Europe to their ruin; and domineered at home with intolerant authority': Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/116, Entry, 23 January 1806.

supported the abolition of the slave trade,<sup>44</sup> calling his West Indies plantation ‘my odious property’.<sup>45</sup> He also supported Catholic emancipation and moderate parliamentary reform – although, in later life, his enthusiasm for the latter measure cooled.<sup>46</sup> In short, his politics dovetailed with Williams’.

Aside from his intellectual pursuits, Greateed was an exceptionally kind, gentle, and considerate person. His marriage appears wonderfully happy. He adored his son (‘my darling boy’),<sup>47</sup> and adopted, and delighted in, the younger Bertie’s daughter, Ann Caroline. He loved Williams’ three children (‘our Sally’, ‘the Girls’, ‘[m]y . . . Harry’).<sup>48</sup> When his son died, quite unexpectedly, at Vicenza, in 1804, he was utterly devastated, movingly commemorating each anniversary in his journal thereafter. Friends constantly visited Guy’s Cliffe, and guests might stay for lengthy periods. Greateed was a generous host, forever entertaining friends at dinner, and, as his diary shows, relishing their conversation.<sup>49</sup> He consistently showed sympathy for the poor,<sup>50</sup> and those who experienced misfortune or were ill. He was also kind to animals. When one of the family’s dogs died, he felt sure that she had a soul;<sup>51</sup> and it was four years before he killed his vicious, pecking peacock, ‘the terror of the maids; the dragon of the cliff’.<sup>52</sup> Perhaps Greateed was slightly too kind. After her marriage, Williams’ younger daughter seemingly wanted to reduce the incessant invitations to Guy’s Cliffe.<sup>53</sup>

Greateed was strongly religious, believing firmly in a ‘great pervading and preserving God’.<sup>54</sup> He read, and carefully weighed, theological works, and each Sunday, if the family did not attend church at nearby Milverton, he himself conducted family prayers, always reading a sermon: favoured preachers included Isaac Barrow, Hugh Blair, John Jortin, Thomas Sherlock, John Tillotson – and John Henry Williams.<sup>55</sup> Though he praised Williams’ sermons consistently, he was normally far from uncritical, and sometimes rather sharply noted a preacher’s failings in his journal.<sup>56</sup> Greateed wanted the lower orders’ evangelization: he sometimes visited Thames Ditton in Surrey and once disgustingly observed that he

<sup>44</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/117, Entries, 8, 24 February 1807; CR 1,707/121, Entries, 2, 8, 11 July 1814.

<sup>45</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/121, Entry, 2 July 1814.

<sup>46</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/118, Entry, 25 July 1808; CR 1,707/120, Entry, 26 May 1813; CR 1,707/121, Entry, 21 March 1815; see below, p. 137.

<sup>47</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/116, Entry, 25 October 1805.

<sup>48</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/119, Entries, 19 September 1810, 13 January 1812; CR 1,707/120, Entry, 19 April 1814.

<sup>49</sup> E.g., Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/119, Entries, 11, 16 July 1811.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., Entry, 25 January 1812; CR 1,707/126, Entry, 18 December 1825.

<sup>51</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/116, Entry, 9 January 1806.

<sup>52</sup> This was the ‘only shot I have fired at any living thing . . . I believe since the Century began’: Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/121, Entry, 16 March 1815.

<sup>53</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/120, Sally Fellowes to Bertie Greateed, 30 April 1812.

<sup>54</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/121, Entry, 26 February 1816.

<sup>55</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/119, Entry, 12 May 1811; CR 1,707/120, Entry, 10 October 1813.

<sup>56</sup> E.g., Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/117, Entry, 30 November 1806.

had ‘never seen one single poor person’ in its church, whose interior was wholly ‘converted into private property, according to our vile custom’.<sup>57</sup> He despised superstition,<sup>58</sup> and, like most Whigs, ‘the pernicious doctrines of methodism’ and its vulgar enthusiasm.<sup>59</sup> But, generally, like Williams, Greatheed had a generous, enlarged religious outlook. The Catholic Dormers were friends.<sup>60</sup> Greatheed was likewise sympathetic to Protestant Dissenters: the Church of England, he felt, ‘cuts off above three Million . . . good Englishmen’.<sup>61</sup> He was interested in Arian and Socinian arguments;<sup>62</sup> thought the Arian Samuel Clarke’s 1704–05 Boyle Lectures constituted a ‘most exalted and divine work’;<sup>63</sup> and, when visiting London in 1807, twice worshipped at Theophilus Lindsey’s fashionable Unitarian chapel in Essex Street.<sup>64</sup> Greatheed derived great comfort from his faith. ‘What a thing is life!’, he wrote pensively in his journal on 5 October 1805, just before the first anniversary of his son’s death.<sup>65</sup> ‘Without religion’, he continued, ‘how terrible! But with it; with a mind lifted in firm confidence to a kind & merciful Creator, though beat down for a time we still rise superior to the evils . . .’<sup>66</sup> ‘What immense misery! How was it endured! [*sic*]’, he wrote a year later.<sup>67</sup> His answer: ‘By the assistance of the Almighty!’<sup>68</sup> He hoped that he would meet the young Bertie ‘in a state of exaltation among the angels of Heaven’.<sup>69</sup> Given the intensity of his faith, it is unsurprising that Greatheed valued Williams’ friendship so highly.<sup>70</sup>

Greatheed wished to be a writer, as well as a reader. In his twenties, when residing in Italy, he consorted with two groups of literary dilettanti, *gli Oziosi* (‘the Idlers’) and the Della Crusicans, to whose miscellanies he contributed poetry.<sup>71</sup> When he returned to England, he wrote a play entitled *The Regent*. But, for all his erudition and sensibility, writing was far from Greatheed’s forte. Marred by laboured blank verse and a clumsy plot (about an evil regent in

<sup>57</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/121, Entry, 2 October 1814.

<sup>58</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/116, Entry, 29 July 1806.

<sup>59</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/119, Entry, 4 September 1811. On the Whigs’ detestation of Methodism, see Leslie Mitchell, *The Whig World 1760–1837* (London and New York, 2005), pp. 127–9.

<sup>60</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/118, Entry, 9 April 1808; CR 1,707/119, Entry, 17 January 1810.

<sup>61</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/116, Entry, 19 December 1805.

<sup>62</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/117, Entry, 21 December 1806.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, Entry, 28 May 1807; Samuel Clarke, *A Discourse concerning the Being and Attributes of God*, 6th edn (1725).

<sup>64</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/117, Entries, 8, 22 March 1807.

<sup>65</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/116, Entry, 5 October 1805.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/117, Entry, 6 October 1806.

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

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, Entry, 26 October 1806.

<sup>70</sup> Greatheed’s friendship with Williams poses questions about E. P. Thompson’s acid caricature of gentry–clerical relations: ‘the majority [of clergymen] fawned for preferment, dined and joked (upon suffrance) at the tables of their patrons, and . . . were not above accepting a tip from the squire at a wedding or a christening’. E. P. Thompson, *Customs in Common* (1991), p. 32.

<sup>71</sup> Russell, ‘Greatheed’, XXIII, p. 478.

pre-unification Spain), *The Regent* was but ‘an indifferent tragedy’.<sup>72</sup> Later, it was ‘assailed by all the outrageous and rancorous wantonness of criticism’,<sup>73</sup> though a few writers treated it more generously.<sup>74</sup> Nevertheless, as a friendly critic observed judiciously in 1834: ‘I knew Mr. Greatheed very well. He was a courageous Liberal, at a time when Liberalism was not so safe as at present; a practical philanthropist, and in every respect an estimable man. *Bonum virum facile dixeris*. But he was not a man of genius.’<sup>75</sup>

Greatheed prevailed upon Williams to write a prologue to *The Regent* (he also persuaded Mrs Piozzi to write the epilogue).<sup>76</sup> Williams perhaps helped more generally. The play contains the line ‘As those enroll’d at the supernal bar’,<sup>77</sup> reminiscent of a phrase in one of Williams’ later sermons, ‘a whole generation of mortals . . . arraigned together at the bar of Heaven’.<sup>78</sup> Was this image one which Williams commonly used when preaching and which he gave Greatheed? The prologue itself is slightly odd, however. It is as if, in *A Midsummer-Night’s Dream*, the Master of the Revels has trained his wit, albeit gently, on a play written, not by the rude mechanicals, but by Theseus. Since Greatheed took his drama seriously, this is surprising. But Williams was confident that he could rib his friend, and the prologue, written in trotting rhyming couplets, is an example of his rather forced, cumbersome humour. It addresses the audience:

*If you’re displeas’d, first ask yourselves this question –  
Am I quite free from spleen and indigestion?  
If chance you’re pleas’d, then lift not up your head,  
To think – if Sophocles wou’d thus have said.  
Shall Sophocles, or any other Soph,  
Shall sage Longinus, bid you cry, Off, off?  
Trust your own hearts; to their free pulse appeal;  
Claim liberty in sense, and dare to feel.*<sup>79</sup>

Perhaps Williams wished to distance himself from *The Regent*. More probably, he saw the play’s weaknesses, but was too kind to tell Greatheed; and hoped that, by introducing *The Regent* as a burlesque, he might moderate possible criticism or ridicule. And here, and not only here, one imagines, indeed suspects, that Williams’ and Greatheed’s relationship rather resembled that of Jeeves and Wooster when Greatheed was a young man (Williams was a dozen years his senior). The prologue concludes:

<sup>72</sup> Thomas Campbell, *Life of Mrs. Siddons*, I (1834), p. 52.

<sup>73</sup> James Boaden, *Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons*, II (1827), p. 241.

<sup>74</sup> Campbell, *Siddons*, II (1834), p. 124.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> Bertie Greatheed, *The Regent: A Tragedy* (1788), pp. 74–5.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>78</sup> J. H. Williams, *Two Sermons Preached on the Public Fasts of April 1793, and February 1794* (1794), p. 40.

<sup>79</sup> Greatheed, *Regent*, p. vi.

*Let who will censure, or let who will write,  
Nature and Novelty must still delight;  
Throughout the drama, then, be this your cue; –  
If mov'd, 'tis nature; if surpriz'd, 'tis new.*<sup>80</sup>

Greatheed wanted *The Regent* to play in London, with John Kemble and Sarah Siddons in the leading rôles. In fact, Mrs Siddons strongly disliked the play. 'It certainly has some beautiful poetry,' she declared, 'but it strikes me that the plot is very lame, and the characters very, very ill-sustained in general . . .'<sup>81</sup> (She was right.) In particular, she detested her character, the heroine Dianora – 'this milksop lady'.<sup>82</sup> She could not, however, decline the part, since she had been, when young, the companion of Greatheed's mother at Guy's Cliffe, and would not wound Greatheed – this 'poor young man'.<sup>83</sup> *The Regent* was first performed in March 1788 at Drury Lane; but it was soon dogged by misfortune. On the second night, Mrs Siddons fell ill, and then miscarried. The Williams family, who had come to London for the third performance, found it deferred and had to return, disappointed (or perhaps relieved), to Warwickshire.<sup>84</sup> Then, the onset of the King's 'madness', and the resulting regency crisis, spelt doom for a play about a wicked regent. In all, there were only eight performances in 1788, one in 1789, and another in 1792.<sup>85</sup>

Despite the unfortunate, if sometimes comic, circumstances of *The Regent*'s production, Williams' involvement in them highlights his cordial relations with the Greatheeds in the later 1780s, following their return from the Continent. Another occurrence in 1788 also highlights Williams' niche in élite Warwickshire society: the admission of the eight-year-old Harry to Rugby School.

Rugby underwent a transformation in the late eighteenth century. This was the achievement of the gifted and capable Thomas James, headmaster from 1778 to 1794. Taking Eton as his model, James improved both teaching methods and the maintenance of discipline. The number of pupils swelled: in 1778, there were 52 boys; in 1790, 240. Able masters joined the School. New schoolrooms were built and, with the rising number of boarders, dame houses established.<sup>86</sup> Under James, Rugby became a leading public school, one of the 'Great Seven'.

Williams could be confident that Rugby would instil into Harry the attributes of a gentleman – to an even greater degree, indeed, than his own schooling in Gloucester had into him. In addition to the classical curriculum, fostering a manly and élitist outlook, James introduced the teaching of geography, history, and

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Roger Manvell, *Sarah Siddons* (1970), p. 127.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 128.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p. 141; J. P. T. Bury and J. C. Barry, eds, *An Englishman in Paris: 1803. The Journal of Bertie Greatheed* (1953), p. xii.

<sup>85</sup> Charles Beecher Hogan, ed., *The London Stage 1660–1800. Part 5: 1776–1800*, II (Carbondale, Illinois, 1968), pp. 1,050, 1,051, 1,059, 1,062, 1,065, 1,066, 1,067, 1,068, 1,137, 1,437–8.

<sup>86</sup> Gordon Goodwin, rev. S. J. Skedd, 'James, Thomas (1748–1804)', *ODNB*, XXIX, p. 741.

mathematics in order to broaden the boys' horizons and sharpen their intellects. Religion was crucial to the School's life: Scripture was taught and, when the parish church's gallery could no longer accommodate the increased number of pupils, Sunday services were held in the School. School sports – chiefly cricket, boxing, and swimming – nurtured physical prowess. Weekly half-holidays permitted private tuition in gentlemanly accomplishments – notably fencing, drawing, and dancing.<sup>87</sup> Significantly, boys at Rugby wore the dress of a gentleman of the day, not a uniform.<sup>88</sup> When Harry left for Rugby, he was, in his own person, a symbol of his father's social standing.

The extent to which Williams was part of the provincial élite is further emphasized by the bills – one pupil's surviving bill totals £35 at the 1793 midsummer recess<sup>89</sup> – and by the Rugby school roll. The list of admissions records not only a pupil's name but also the status of his father. In Harry's time, many boys were the sons of landed gentlemen, and some the sons of peers. Others were the sons of clergymen or professional men (for example, an attorney and a surgeon).<sup>90</sup> Two other pupils entered Rugby in the same month as Harry: the son of a clergyman and the son of a baronet.<sup>91</sup> Other boys at Rugby with Harry were John Mordaunt, Sir John Mordaunt's second son,<sup>92</sup> and Henry Townsend, the son of Gore Townsend, the squire of Honington Hall, near Shipston on Stour.<sup>93</sup> If, after services at Walton, Williams and Sir John conversed about their sons' progress, or mishaps, at Rugby, they were, in this context, almost equals.

In 1788, Williams had been at Wellesbourne for a decade. During those years, he had shown himself an able and conscientious clergyman. He had an agreeable place in south Warwickshire's polite society. His family life appears happy, and his financial circumstances were comfortable. He could keep the noiseless tenor of his way, but might, realistically, hope to advance his career. But in 1789, revolution erupted in France; soon, its impact on England was profound; and the ignoble strife that resulted quickly engulfed even the parsonage at Wellesbourne.

### The French Revolution's Outbreak

The outbreak of revolution in France, the most civilized country in Europe, was a bolt from the blue for the educated élite in England. In May 1789, the Estates-General assembled at Versailles to advise Louis XVI and his ministers. By the end of June, it was a National Assembly, determined to create a constitution

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.; W. H. D. Rouse, *A History of Rugby School* (1898), p. 137.

<sup>88</sup> Rouse, *Rugby School*, p. 158.

<sup>89</sup> I am very grateful to Mr Rusty MacLean, the archivist of Rugby School, who supplied me with a copy of the bill. (In the 1780s and early 1790s, the most prosperous cotton weavers earned a maximum of £1 10s. per week.)

<sup>90</sup> *The Rugby Register from the Year 1675 to the Present Time* (Rugby, 1836), pp. 63–83.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p. 68.

<sup>92</sup> Charles Mordaunt was educated at Eton.

<sup>93</sup> *Rugby Register*, pp. 64, 81.



which would split power between the Crown and an assembly of the nation's representatives. July and August witnessed the revolt of the lower orders, with, first, the storming of the Bastille in Paris and, then, the revolt of the peasantry in rural France. In October, a Parisian mob removed the royal family from Versailles and installed them, effectively prisoners of the Revolution, in the dilapidated Tuileries palace in Paris.

John Henry Williams later claimed that he was 'so ignorant or so unfortunate, as to want sufficient information' to judge European politics properly.<sup>94</sup> This was a disingenuous comment. He kept abreast of events in Europe,<sup>95</sup> and his reading of periodicals gave him a basis for broad interpretations of the Revolution's course. Williams naturally viewed the Revolution from a Whig perspective and he followed, almost slavishly, Charles James Fox's judgments of it. 'How much the greatest event it is that ever happened in the world, & how much the best' was Fox's famous verdict on the Bastille's fall.<sup>96</sup> Fox believed that the Revolution was safe in the hands of men like Lafayette, with whom he enjoyed a close friendship, the Vicomte de Noailles, the Duc d'Orléans, and Talleyrand: for him, they approximated to the Whig grandes, and he thought that they would ensure, following the British model, the sharing of government in France between the aristocrats and the monarchy, shorn of its despotic powers. In short, 1789 was France's 1688.<sup>97</sup> Such thinking accorded easily with Williams' Whig outlook. Fox even explained optimistically, if indirectly, the early violence of the Revolution: 'The reason why France had been so long settling her constitution, and why we had so soon adjusted ours in 1688, was owing to there being so much despotism to destroy in France, and so little which called for destruction when the revolution in our government took place.'<sup>98</sup> James Mackintosh argued the same case in *Vindiciae Gallicae* (1791). Williams accepted such reasoning: the revolutionaries' problems largely resulted, he maintained, from the *ancien régime*'s legacy, a state 'corrupted to its centre by generations of iniquity'.<sup>99</sup>

If Fox and his followers could welcome political events early in the Revolution, the revolutionaries' reforms of the French church had some alarming reverberations for clergymen – and especially wealthy clergymen – in England. Tithes were abolished on the Night of the Fourth of August 1789. Given England's increasing population and rising food prices, and the consequent growth in tithes' values and mounting hostility to tithe payments,<sup>100</sup> this was disconcerting to parsons like John Henry Williams, now enjoying enhanced incomes and keen to

<sup>94</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. 22.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29, note.

<sup>96</sup> L. G. Mitchell, *Charles James Fox and the Disintegration of the Whig Party 1782–1794* (1971), pp. 154–5.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 154–6, 164.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 156.

<sup>99</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. 46.

<sup>100</sup> Eric J. Evans, 'Some Reasons for the Growth of English Rural Anti-Clericalism c. 1750–c. 1830', *Past and Present* No. lxvi (1975), pp. 84–109.

enforce their rights. On 2 November, the French church's property was nationalized. On 12 July 1790, the Constituent Assembly promulgated the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, entirely reorganizing the church in France. The rationalization of *curés*' and *vicaires*' salaries pointed the way to a similar reform in England, where inequalities of benefices' values and widespread clerical poverty were so baneful. Yet a reduction of those inequalities, or an equalization of the lower clergy's incomes, was unlikely to find favour with richer parsons. The Civil Constitution abolished cathedral chapters; should they be abolished in England? Certainly later, Williams hoped for a prebend.<sup>101</sup> Above all, there was the overarching issue of principle raised by the revolutionaries' policies: how far should a state regulate a church? Of course, regarding matters of authority, church lands, and priests' stipends, Joseph II had recently decreed reforms in the Habsburg empire comparable to those of the French Assembly. But events in France, when reported in the press, seemed much more immediate to English clerics than policies implemented in far-away countries like Austria, Bohemia, or Hungary.

Nonetheless, for liberal Churchmen like Williams, some of the revolutionaries' ecclesiastical reforms were certainly praiseworthy. In 1791, Bishop Watson of Llandaff, whose theology Williams' somewhat resembled,<sup>102</sup> delivered a charge to his clergy.<sup>103</sup> In it, he expressed his approval of the revolutionaries' redistribution of clerical wealth and their suppression of religious houses (bulwarks of superstition, in his opinion), and the Declaration of the Rights of Man's promulgation of civil equality and religious freedom.<sup>104</sup> Watson further contended that a more equitable distribution of the Church of England's revenues would eliminate the need for pluralism, and argued that civil equality should be granted to English Dissenters.<sup>105</sup> Broadly, John Henry Williams likewise welcomed the church reforms in France. He believed that, collectively, they constituted a blow to overweening and obscurantist 'Popery'. In the past, Williams maintained, 'the Church . . . by its awful power, or . . . its subtle influence . . . [had made] Courts and Cabinets the instruments of its ambitions'.<sup>106</sup> Now the Vatican's power in France, weakened under successive kings, was diminished yet further by the Civil Constitution. Laws against heresy, choking 'free enquiry', and laws against witchcraft, rubble from superstitious ages, were rightly swept away. Williams naturally applauded the Constituent Assembly's resolution of December 1789 to henceforth permit Protestants to hold public office. Indeed, to those favouring relief for religious minorities at home, this seemed distinctly enlightened when compared to the British Parliament's rejection of the Dissenters' demands for civil equality and the Test and Corporation Acts' repeal in 1787, 1789, and 1790. Overall, Williams judged the early part of the Revolution

<sup>101</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/116, Bertie Greatheed to Thomas, Baron Erskine, 27 March 1806.

<sup>102</sup> See above, pp. 6–7.

<sup>103</sup> Richard Watson, *A Charge Delivered to the Clergy of the Diocese of Landaff* [sic], June, 1791 (1792).

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., pp. 6–9.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., pp. 6–7, 9–16.

<sup>106</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. v.



favourably: the French nation, he maintained, rather naïvely, ‘intended well: – for it intended to be free’.<sup>107</sup> He was disgusted when Burke broke with Fox, first by publishing, in November 1790, his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* – soon lampooned by the maverick Parson Stone<sup>108</sup> – and then by attacking Fox’s analysis of the Revolution in the Commons on 6 May 1792. Williams also despised the turncoat Whigs who, in 1792, began to distance themselves from Fox and later deserted their leader. They were, he said sharply, ‘the very men who once avowed themselves the *friends of the people* and the promoters of *regulation* and *reform*, [and] are now persecuting those who hold their *own language*’.<sup>109</sup>

Williams’ clerical friends largely accepted the Foxite view of the Revolution. Samuel Parr, in particular, greatly admired Fox: later, he was one of the few clergymen who followed the bier at Fox’s funeral,<sup>110</sup> and, in 1809, he published his two-volume *Characters of the Late Charles James Fox*. When news of the Bastille’s capture reached England, Parr was in Norwich and was seen dancing around a liberty tree (doubtless a singularly repulsive sight, given his squatness).<sup>111</sup> He remained convinced of the necessity of the Revolution and hostile to Burke’s opinions.<sup>112</sup> Parr’s acolyte John Morley adopted the same stance.<sup>113</sup> Edward Willes, ever desirous ‘of securing and extending the popular rights and liberties’, was likewise sympathetic to the Revolution’s ideals.<sup>114</sup> A charismatic support of the grouping was Dr Martin Routh, president of Magdalen College, Oxford, and, at this time, mildly inclined to some reforming principles.<sup>115</sup>

During the American Revolution a decade earlier, however, the politics of most Anglican clergymen were, in Paul Langford’s words, ‘conformist, conservative, [and] conventional’;<sup>116</sup> and so they remained in the era of the French Revolution. In Warwickshire, Williams and the other Whig clerics soon faced the hostility of conservative-minded Churchmen. The most important of these was Bishop Hurd himself. Hurd, George III’s favourite bishop, was politically cautious. Dr Hole notes that, in a fast sermon of 1776, he anticipated Burke’s *Reflections* in maintaining the folly of applying abstract theories ‘directly to the correction of established governments’.<sup>117</sup> Hurd came to loathe revolutionary

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>108</sup> Francis Stone, *An Examination of the Right Hon. Edmund Burke’s Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1792).

<sup>109</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. 28.

<sup>110</sup> Warren Derry, *Dr Parr* (1966), pp. 242–3.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., p. 128.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., p. 145.

<sup>113</sup> Alice Fairfax-Lucy, *Charlecote and the Lucys* (1958), p. 248.

<sup>114</sup> Field, *Parr*, I, p. 205.

<sup>115</sup> Vivian H. H. Green, ‘Routh, Martin Joseph (1755–1854)’, *ODNB*, XLVII, p. 971.

<sup>116</sup> Paul Langford, ‘The English Clergy and the American Revolution’, *The Transformation of Political Culture: England and Germany in the Late Eighteenth Century*, ed. Eckhart Hellmuth (Oxford, 1990), p. 307.

<sup>117</sup> Robert Hole, *Pulpits, Politics, and Public Order in England 1760–1832* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 49, n. 46.

France – ‘the most malignant enemy that has appeared in the world’.<sup>118</sup> Though John Morley generally held Hurd in high regard,<sup>119</sup> it is questionable whether Parr or Williams did. In 1789, Parr and Hurd had been engaged in a literary dispute about William Warburton’s works.<sup>120</sup> Parr thought himself Hurd’s intellectual superior.<sup>121</sup> Williams possibly did not see Hurd as a gentleman: the Bishop was the son of a yeoman farmer from Staffordshire who had rented, rather than owned, land.<sup>122</sup> John Morley’s political *bête noire* was the Reverend John Lucy, the squire and vicar of Charlecote and rector of Hampton Lucy, and a man that Williams thought a dolt, sometimes mocking his West-Country speech and accent.<sup>123</sup> Lucy was a belligerent (and sometimes physically violent) Tory,<sup>124</sup> who detested Whig and radical politics, and who, of course, had a hold over Morley, since he could dismiss him from the Hampton Lucy curacy and schoolmastership.<sup>125</sup> At Warwick, a group of clergymen was firmly conservative in outlook: its leader, the Reverend William Daniel, the Reverend Marmaduke Mathews, vicar of St Mary’s, his curate, the Reverend James Howell, the Reverend Robert Miller, vicar of St Nicholas’, and his curate, the Reverend Hugh Laughton.<sup>126</sup> Equally conservative was William Mavor, vicar of Tysoe from 1790 to 1795, vicar of Hurley, Berkshire, and master of the grammar school at Woodstock.<sup>127</sup> Stratford-upon-Avon’s vicar, the Reverend James Davenport, was vehemently reactionary, and always remained so: forty years later, he was the only man in the town to sign a county petition against the 1832 Reform bill.<sup>128</sup> Given his dislike of ‘political enthusiasm’, Williams probably hated these fractures in clerical society. Marmaduke Mathews had, for instance, been one of his sponsors for the Wellesbourne living.<sup>129</sup> Williams was always concerned about clerical dignity: there would be ‘something . . . very unseemly to the World in two

<sup>118</sup> A. Aspinall, ed., *The Later Correspondence of George III*, III (Cambridge, 1967), p. 158.

<sup>119</sup> Warwickshire CRO, MI 142, Entry, 17 June 1800.

<sup>120</sup> Derry, *Parr*, pp. 81–6.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84. Nonetheless, at a dinner in 1803, Parr warmly praised Hurd to the Prince of Wales: *ibid.*, pp. 231–3.

<sup>122</sup> Sarah Brewer, ed., *The Early Letters of Bishop Richard Hurd 1739–1762*, Church of England Record Society III (Woodbridge, 1995), p. x.

<sup>123</sup> On one occasion,

Williams on his road . . . met Lucy and observed that he was late in paying Frank Mills his wedding visit; to which Lucy replied – Will! I think you be in good time, for Cause, Mr. Charles Mills an said, as um didn’t wish for being visited till um had been at Church . . .

‘A pretty good specimen of English this’, Greatheed observed. Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/119, Entry, 28 November 1811. Lucy originated from Somerset: Fairfax-Lucy, *Charlecote and the Lucys*, p. 233.

<sup>124</sup> Fairfax-Lucy, *Charlecote and the Lucys*, p. 249.

<sup>125</sup> See below, p. 128.

<sup>126</sup> William Field, *A Letter Addressed to the Inhabitants of Warwick* (Birmingham, 1791), pp. 33, 35.

<sup>127</sup> Elizabeth Mavor, ‘Mavor, William Fordyce [pseuds. W. F. Martyn, Numa] (1758–1837)’, *ODNB*, XXXVII, pp. 470–1. For his outlook, see William Mavor, *The Duty of Thanksgiving, for National Blessings* (Oxford, 1798) and David Eastwood, *Governing Rural England: Tradition and Transformation in Local Government 1780–1840* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 16, 19, 20.

<sup>128</sup> Nicholas Fogg, *Stratford-upon-Avon* (Chichester, 1986), p. 135.

<sup>129</sup> See above, p. 34.

neighbouring Clergymen going to Law’, he told Lucy when they quarrelled about tithes.<sup>130</sup> Nor did he wish to disagree openly with Bishop Hurd. Morley and Parr remained on good terms with the Pittite Daniel Gaches; and when Gaches died in 1805, Parr composed his epitaph.<sup>131</sup> The Tory clergyman with whom Parr publicly quarrelled was the Reverend Charles Curtis, the rector of St Martin’s, Birmingham.<sup>132</sup> Indeed, Parr attacked him very sharply in print.<sup>133</sup>

Political divisions were likewise deepened among the gentry. Bertie Greatheed adopted a Foxite stance on the Revolution. Indeed, Frederick Leigh Colville described Greatheed as an ‘ardent admirer of the French revolution in its earlier stages’;<sup>134</sup> and later, while there was a bust of the exiled Napoleon by Canova in the gardens of Holland House, the Whigs’ ‘headquarters’ in Kensington, Greatheed had a portrait of Bonaparte at Guy’s Cliffe.<sup>135</sup> The Catholic Lord Dormer remained a faithful Foxite – unsurprisingly, given Fox’s steadfast championing of Catholic emancipation. Warwickshire was traditionally a Tory county, however, and the Revolution buttressed the hostility of most gentlemen there to political reform. The shire’s Tories were headed by the Earl of Warwick, who deplored the Revolution in France and feared insurrection at home: ‘There was a French party in this country,’ he later declared in the House of Lords, ‘and it was possible that there might be a French party in parliament.’<sup>136</sup> Parr wrote an attack on the Earl and his politics for the 1790 general election, but it was so brutal that he decided not to publish it.<sup>137</sup> Sir John Mordaunt held Pitt in high esteem and, during the years of the Revolution, was likely to support his administration.<sup>138</sup> The Whigs were unlikely to muster much support in the shire and Fox once wrote to Parr about the likely futility of trying in ‘a county so little disposed to Whig modes of thinking as Warwickshire is supposed to be’.<sup>139</sup> No doubt, on occasions, John Henry Williams felt the same.

<sup>130</sup> Warwickshire CRO, L6/1,076.

<sup>131</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 2,486, Entry, 1 May 1801; Field, *Parr*, I, p. 204; Frederick Leigh Colville, *The Worthies of Warwickshire who Lived between 1500 and 1800* (Warwick and London, [1870]), p. 301.

<sup>132</sup> Derry, *Parr*, pp. 139–44.

<sup>133</sup> Samuel Parr, *A Sequel to the Printed Paper Lately Circulated in Warwickshire by the Rev. Charles Curtis*, 2nd edn, corrected (1792).

<sup>134</sup> Colville, *Worthies of Warwickshire*, p. 321.

<sup>135</sup> Leslie Mitchell, *Holland House* (1980), p. 251; William Field, *An Historical and Descriptive Account of the Town & Castle of Warwick; and of the Neighbouring Spa of Leamington* (Warwick, 1815), p. 264. Later, Greatheed naturally became disillusioned with Bonaparte, though he remained awestruck by his staggering career: see below, p. 138.

<sup>136</sup> William Cobbett, ed., *The Parliamentary History of England, from the Earliest Period to the Year 1803*, XXXIII (1818), col. 188.

<sup>137</sup> Derry, *Parr*, p. 133.

<sup>138</sup> Thorne, ‘Mordaunt, Sir John’, IV, p. 632.

<sup>139</sup> John Johnstone, ed., *The Works of Samuel Parr, LL.D.*, I (1828), p. 506.

### Dr Priestley's Infallible Test

On 12 July 1790, Dr Joseph Priestley came to Warwick for the installation of William Field as the town's Presbyterian/Unitarian minister. In the High Street chapel, he delivered a bracing sermon, *A View of Revealed Religion*. Inevitably, it sometimes challenged Orthodox Anglicanism, in both its phrasing ('... the example of Christ, like that of other good men . . .') and its arguments. 'That Christ was himself,' Priestley insisted, 'by his death and sufferings, the means of reconciling men to God, and of making it to be consistent with his justice to pardon the truly penitent, is a doctrine for which there is no countenance either in the discourses of our Lord, or the writings of the apostles'.<sup>140</sup> Let 'us exert ourselves', he continued,

to purify . . . [the Gospel] from those corruptions which both defeat the great design of it, and prevent its reception among Jews, Mahometans, and heathens. This fatal tendency has every thing that, in any degree, renders it less amiable, or less credible; and nothing does this more than any infringement of the great doctrine of the *unity of God*, and the equity of his government.<sup>141</sup>

No doctrine or tradition was exempt from rational scrutiny; and Anglican Trinitarianism was a corruption of religious truth.

The Reverend Thomas Belsham, who had taught Field at the Daventry Academy, delivered the charge at the ordination. Some of his advice was general. Field needed to study the Scriptures carefully and diligently. He had to follow his conscience. He had to teach boldly, honestly, and sincerely.<sup>142</sup> He should never temporize, and had to shun worldly considerations;<sup>143</sup> 'as you will answer for your sacred trust another day, suffer no consideration of ease, reputation, or interest, to move you to betray the high cause in which you are embarked'.<sup>144</sup> Field must not disguise unpopular opinions – though this might court hostility and he might risk harassment, even in 'the present age of comparative toleration'.<sup>145</sup> Regarding teaching, Belsham stressed, more specifically, that a 'christian minister is to be very careful that he doth not, as many do, corrupt the word of God'.<sup>146</sup> The 'christian religion . . . [had] been sullied by grievous corruptions', he observed.<sup>147</sup> But it was now necessary to counter 'the force of inveterate prejudice

<sup>140</sup> *A View of Revealed Religion; A Sermon, Preached at the Ordination of the Rev. William Field of Warwick, July 12, 1790. By Joseph Priestley, LL.D. F.R.S. With a Charge, Delivered at the Same Time, by the Rev. Thomas Belsham* (Birmingham, 1790), pp. 20, 21.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 54, 60, 64.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

... [and teach] the pure, unadulterated doctrine of Christ'.<sup>148</sup> '[Y]ou cannot', he warned Field, 'but regard other systems of opinions as corruptions of christianity, and cannot but think it your duty to warn your hearers against them, so far as they appear to have a pernicious tendency.'<sup>149</sup> In addition, Belsham emphasized that 'a minister should be particularly attentive to the rising generation'.<sup>150</sup> The idea of God might be impressed on the understanding at an early age, and, he maintained, the sooner a religious spirit was infused the better.<sup>151</sup> It was, Belsham said, 'an object of unspeakable importance not only that young people should be trained up to the practice of religion, but that their religious principles should be rightly formed'.<sup>152</sup> It was therefore Field's duty to inculcate in the young 'the most rational and beneficial, views of the supreme Being',<sup>153</sup> through both public addresses and private instruction.<sup>154</sup>

While still shunning their rejection of Trinitarianism, a truly liberal Anglican like Williams could at least applaud the centrality of Scripture for Priestley and Belsham, and their zealous quest for theological truth. As a public affirmation of this, Dr Parr attended Field's ordination service and dinner; and there met Priestley for the first time.<sup>155</sup> Parr greatly admired Priestley: when preaching a sermon in Birmingham's parish church, he described the Unitarian as 'a profound philosopher, a philanthropic citizen, and a pious Christian', despite his 'dangerous tenets upon a few controversial subjects'.<sup>156</sup> Some of the congregation were shocked by these 'rank Presbyterian' remarks;<sup>157</sup> and there were High Churchmen in Warwick who similarly detested the High Street chapel, seeing it as a – still illegal<sup>158</sup> – fount of heresy. Moreover, Field's combative personality and actions quickly enraged them. Knowing his former student, Belsham, in his charge, had urged Field to be prudent and not to give unnecessary offence;<sup>159</sup> but Field ignored the warning. What he heeded was Belsham's insistence on the need to teach religion effectively to the young. In 1791, he started a Sunday school in Warwick. As he admitted poor children whose parents did not attend any church, the High-Church clergy feared that he intended to teach them not only reading, writing, and the first principles of religion, but also distinctively Dissenting or Unitarian tenets. Moreover, the Reverend Robert Miller claimed that Field 'bribed' poor children to attend – with money, clothing, or food.<sup>160</sup> In High-

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., p. 55.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., pp. 55–6.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., pp. 47–8.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>155</sup> R. K. Webb, 'Field, William (1768–1851)', *ODNB*, XIX, p. 490.

<sup>156</sup> Johnstone, ed., *Works of Parr*, VI (1828), pp. 574, 575.

<sup>157</sup> Derry, *Parr*, p. 131.

<sup>158</sup> Unitarian worship was not legalized until 1813, by 53 Geo. III, c. 160.

<sup>159</sup> *View of Revealed Religion*, p. 64.

<sup>160</sup> Field, *Letter*, *passim*.

Church eyes, then, children of ‘the meaner sort’ would soon learn to despise the established Church and its doctrines. But if the High Street chapel was a red rag to the High-Church bull, it was, for Tories and High Churchmen, an affront to John Bull too. They viewed Dr Priestley not only as a heresiarch but also as a very dangerous political radical who encouraged the undermining and overturning of Britain’s ‘happy constitution’. Priestley praised the French Revolution and saw the 1790s as ‘a totally new, a most wonderful, and important era in the history of mankind’.<sup>161</sup> Regarding British politics, besides championing civil equality for Dissenters (and Roman Catholics), he advocated significant changes to Parliament and also changes regarding the monarchy’s authority. Priestley’s political thought, Jonathan Clark observes, presented ‘[p]arliamentary inadequacies . . . not so much [as] an object of constructive reform as an occasion for revolt’, while justifying campaigning that fell ‘little short of calls for rebellion’.<sup>162</sup> Since the conservative-minded of Warwick viewed Field’s chapel and Sunday school as outposts of Priestley’s all-too-close Birmingham citadel (in 1790, a group of teachers influenced by Priestley had started a new Sunday school in Birmingham),<sup>163</sup> they did not doubt that Field shared the political opinions, as well as the theological beliefs, of the Doctor.

Such thinking was amply confirmed by William Field’s decision to attend the fatal Birmingham dinner that, on 14 July 1791, commemorated the second anniversary of the Bastille’s fall. ‘[Y]oung as I am,’<sup>164</sup> Field pompously declared later, ‘it is no great crime, I hope, that I know enough of the value of liberty, and feel sufficient interest in the happiness of all people, to rejoice . . . that a great nation “wills to be free”’.<sup>165</sup> ‘Church and King’ mobs in Birmingham thought otherwise. An intimidating crowd assembled outside the Royal Hotel when the diners arrived, and, after they had left, another mob looted it. That night the Unitarian Old Meeting House and New Meeting House were destroyed, and Priestley’s house and laboratory at Fair Hill burnt. The riots continued for three more days, with mobs looting and destroying other Dissenting chapels and the homes of more Dissenters and reformers.<sup>166</sup> And it was feared that the disturbances would spread across the country. In Warwick, the Dissenters, many of whom were related to, or had connections with, some of the leading Birmingham Dissenters, were alarmed, and when Field returned from the dinner, it was apparently thought that his life was in danger.<sup>167</sup>

<sup>161</sup> Albert Goodwin, *The Friends of Liberty: The English Democratic Movement in the Age of the French Revolution* (1979), p. 173.

<sup>162</sup> J. C. D. Clark, *English Society 1660–1832* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 403.

<sup>163</sup> John Money, *Experience and Identity: Birmingham and the West Midlands 1760–1800* (Manchester, 1977), pp. 142–3.

<sup>164</sup> Field was twenty-three at the time.

<sup>165</sup> William Field, *A Second Letter Addressed to the Inhabitants of Warwick* (Birmingham, 1791), p. 17.

<sup>166</sup> R. B. Rose, ‘The Priestley Riots of 1791’, *Past and Present* No. xviii (1960), pp. 68–88; Adrian Randall, *Riotous Assemblies: Popular Protest in Hanoverian England* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 315–17.

<sup>167</sup> Field, *Letter*, p. 21; Field, *Second Letter*, p. 35, note.

Samuel Parr was alarmed too. Some of the rioters wanted to march to Hatton – twenty miles from Birmingham – and destroy the home of the parson who had so warmly praised Priestley. Parr himself was in Oxford when the riots occurred; his wife and daughters hid his books in Hatton's barns – cartloads of them were later taken to Oxford – and fled the parsonage.<sup>168</sup> Parr subsequently claimed that Charles Curtis, who was a magistrate as well as a clergyman, had deemed him seditious; and that the allegation had risked exposing 'my house, my property, and perhaps my life, to the fury of a mob'.<sup>169</sup> Sympathy, or otherwise, for the Dissenters was now an obvious litmus test of liberal or High Churchmanship. In 1790, Parr had opposed the Test and Corporation Acts' repeal, but thereafter he advocated the measure.<sup>170</sup> At a public dinner in Birmingham shortly after the riots, having been compelled to drink the toast 'Church and King', he bravely observed 'Church and King! Once it was the toast of Jacobites; now it is the toast of incendiaries. It means a Church without the gospel and a King above the law.'<sup>171</sup> Williams was naturally disgusted by the riots; though he privately deplored the folly of Priestley's friend William Russell, a powerful Birmingham merchant and leading Unitarian, who, when seeking redress for the rioters' victims, 'unboomed himself to his mortal foe', Pitt, and 'refused to open his mouth to' Fox, 'his steady friend'.<sup>172</sup> However, the High Churchmen of Warwick scented blood. Parliament's successive refusals to repeal the Test and Corporation Acts in 1787, 1789, and 1790 had encouraged them to move against the Dissenters; and France's darkening politics, following the Flight to Varennes, and the Priestley riots bolstered their resolve. Indeed, according to Field, Robert Miller ominously declared, on learning of the Birmingham disturbances, that the Warwick Dissenters' 'Meeting-house and dwellings . . . [might] possibly in their turn be destroyed'.<sup>173</sup> On 10 August 1791, a meeting of Anglicans was held at Warwick's court house.<sup>174</sup> Those present resolved that the Dissenters' conduct in Warwick constituted 'an evident Encroachment upon the Church of *England*', vowed to resist such encroachments by 'every legal and honourable' means,<sup>175</sup> and created a committee to organize appropriate action.<sup>176</sup> One of Field's supporters described those at the meeting as '*high church bigots*';<sup>177</sup> and few described by Field himself as 'moderate Churchmen' attended it.<sup>178</sup> Field supposed that the latter were ashamed of the proceedings, and could 'see very

<sup>168</sup> Derry, *Parr*, p. 137.

<sup>169</sup> Parr, *Sequel*, p. 45.

<sup>170</sup> Derry, *Parr*, pp. 132–3.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137.

<sup>172</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/117, Entry, 3 October 1807.

<sup>173</sup> Field, *Letter*, p. 22.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>177</sup> Field, *Second Letter*, p. 5.

<sup>178</sup> Field, *Letter*, p. 37. It is not known whether Williams attended.



little of the spirit of christianity' in the Dissenters' hounding.<sup>179</sup> He was further incensed when Miller and Hugh Laughton issued a pamphlet accusing him of dishonesty and of publishing 'the most notorious Untruths' about the Sunday school dispute.<sup>180</sup> He produced a loud-sounding and sarcastic response in which he accused the two clerics of procuring false witnesses to aid their cause, and other disgraceful conduct, while casting himself as an honourable and moderate defender of liberty and law.<sup>181</sup>

For the gentlemen, clerics, and other educated persons who lived in Wellesbourne or the surrounding neighbourhood, the Wellesbourne book club was a forum for intellectual, moral, and topical debate. As Peter Clark has demonstrated, such clubs performed an important rôle in disseminating information to the élite and middle classes of eighteenth-century England and in producing a well-informed, plural 'public sphere'.<sup>182</sup> Clubs bought political tracts and periodicals containing reports of, and commentaries on, British and European politics in order to facilitate balanced discussion of current affairs. As the French Revolution and events like the Priestley riots exacerbated old political divisions, or created new ones, the Wellesbourne club was likely to become an arena for sharp political wrangling in which the members might find themselves obliged to reveal their sympathies more publicly or unequivocally than perhaps they would have wished.<sup>183</sup> Certainly, this was virtually inescapable for Williams as the club's president. Writing almost forty years later, William Field recalled the occasion when Williams fully and steadfastly showed his colours to the other members who predominantly took a Tory stance.

At the time when the fiery zeal of Birmingham-bigotry was raging in all its fury, spreading, like an epidemical disease, throughout the whole body of churchmen, Mr. Williams happened to be dining with the Wellsbourn [sic] book-club . . . After dinner, the standing toast . . . was given, — 'Church and King;' which, however innocent in itself, was then the well-known watch-word of a party, supposed to look with complacency on the firing of houses, and the burning of property — not to say the destruction of life — as a just expression of holy indignation against obstinate non-conformists. Mr. Williams, who sat as chairman, on receiving the toast, not only declined it for himself, but openly and urgently stated his objection to it; powerfully appealing to the good sense and the right feeling of all present. Finding, however, his remonstrances unavailing, from that time he resigned his presidency; and withdrew from an association, which had suffered the virulence of party-spirit to prevail over the sentiments of common justice and common humanity.<sup>184</sup>

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> R. Miller and H. Laughton, *Remarks upon a Letter to the Printer of the Birmingham Gazette . . . and also upon a Letter Addressed to the Inhabitants of Warwick . . . by William Field* (Warwick, [1791]), p. 24.

<sup>181</sup> Field, *Second Letter*.

<sup>182</sup> Peter Clark, *British Clubs and Societies 1580–1800* (Oxford, 2000), *passim*.

<sup>183</sup> Cf. Paul Langford, *Public Life and the Propertied Englishman 1689–1798* (Oxford, 1991), p. 125.

<sup>184</sup> Field, *Parr*, I, pp. 206–7.



Of course, Williams' sympathies were hardly in doubt before the dinner: a man is known by the company he keeps, and Williams' closest friends were unswerving Whigs. Nonetheless, Williams, a sociable man who valued highly his wider circle of acquaintance, had been reluctant to trumpet his political opinions and risk antagonizing acquaintances who disagreed strongly with them. He valued civilized, open discussion,<sup>185</sup> and esteemed fair-minded men: significantly, the Pittite he knew best, Sir John Mordaunt, conscientiously supported plans for compensating the Birmingham Dissenters.<sup>186</sup> For Williams, the clergy's essential unity, grounded on a common commitment to effective pastoralia, should not be unnecessarily compromised by political rancour and unseemly, public party strife. His impassioned rebuke to the book club's members, his resignation from the club's presidency, his decision not to attend the club's future meetings, and the consequent breach with some friends all pained him considerably. Despite its exaggerated tone, Field's verdict on Williams' behaviour contains a kernel of validity:

He, who has ever known and felt what it is to be opposed to the sense of a whole company, with all of whom he is connected by the ties of near neighbourhood or long acquaintance, and with many of whom he is united by the still stronger ties of friendly regard, will appreciate the true greatness of such an act, as it deserves.<sup>187</sup>

### Self-Constituted Dictatorial and Inquisitorial Associations

In 1792, the course of the French Revolution became increasingly sombre, alarming, and blood-soaked. On 20 April, France declared war on Austria, and the Prussians soon allied with the Emperor. On 20 June, a mob invaded the Tuileries Palace, obliging the King to wear the *bonnet rouge* and to drink the Nation's health. Then, on 10 August, the monarchy was overthrown: the Tuileries was stormed by National Guards, Parisian *sans-culottes*, and provincial soldiers, the *fédérés*, and the royal family's Swiss Guardsmen were massacred. The Legislative Assembly suspended the King's governmental functions and the royal family were incarcerated in the grim, medieval Temple prison. Further, horrific violence followed in Paris. In August, Austrian and Prussian armies entered France. The probability was that the Prussians would quickly reach the capital – 'To arms, citizens, the enemy is at our gates!' declared army recruitment posters. The consequent panic, and rumours that incarcerated counter-revolutionaries and common-law prisoners were plotting to break out of the gaols and seize the city, resulted in terrible prison massacres from 2 to 6 September. Some 1,200 prisoners – mostly common criminals – were butchered, and the scale of the killings, and the sadism exhibited by the *septembriseurs*, appalled all Europe. In fact, the Prussian advance was halted at Valmy, to the west of Verdun, on 20 September, and

<sup>185</sup> See below, p. 85.

<sup>186</sup> Thorne, 'Mordaunt, Sir John', IV, p. 632.

<sup>187</sup> Field, *Parr*, I, p. 207.

the enemy soon retreated over the frontier. The Revolution was – at least temporarily – secured. On 20 September, a newly-elected assembly, the National Convention, met; the next day, it abolished the monarchy; and, on the 22nd, the first year of the Republic was proclaimed.

English revulsion at the French monarchy's overthrow is neatly expressed in a letter which Edmund Burke wrote to the Foreign Secretary, Lord Grenville, on 18 August 1792. Horror followed horror:

an Attack upon the King of France's Palace; the murder of all who were found in it – the imprisonment of the King – His Suspension, stated by . . . [the revolutionaries themselves] as a Deposition – [further] Acts of violence . . . the intention, not in the least ambiguous, of bringing the King and Queen to a Trial, [and] the resolution expressed by many, of putting them to death with or without that formality.<sup>188</sup>

'This last Revolution', Burke continued, was 'the Act only of some desperate Persons, Inhabitants of one City only, instigating and hiring at an enormous Expence, the lowest of the people, to destroy the Monarch and Monarchy, with whatever else is respectable in Society.'<sup>189</sup> And for him, the danger to the British state was manifest: the 'friendship of France . . . is truly terrible. Her intercourse, her example, the spread of her doctrines, are the most dreadful of her Arms.'<sup>190</sup> Moreover, he thought that 'the English Jacobins' – 'the Priestleys, the Coopers and the Watts', the Deputies of the Body of the Dissenters and others at Manchester' – were planning the state's subversion.<sup>191</sup> *'So sure as we have an existence,'* he concluded, *'if these things should go on in France, as go on they may, so sure it is that in the ripeness of their time, the same Tragedies will be acted in England.'*<sup>192</sup> Many were soon organizing to prevent such occurrences and counter radicalism. Opponents of religious and political change formed Church and King clubs in provincial towns. On 20 November 1792, John Reeves, lawyer and committed Churchman, founded the Association for the Preservation of Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers. It was publicized in the London press and soon Reeves and the Association's secretary, John Moore, were receiving letters from countless correspondents offering to establish provincial branches and distribute loyalist propaganda among the lower orders.<sup>193</sup> Possibly two thousand local societies were created. Hundreds of loyal addresses were sent to the Crown.<sup>194</sup>

John Henry Williams soon saw the creation of a number of loyalist

<sup>188</sup> P. J. Marshall and John A. Woods, eds, *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke*, VII (Cambridge and Chicago, 1968), p. 174.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 176.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 177.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>193</sup> H. T. Dickinson, 'Popular Conservatism and Militant Loyalism 1789–1815', *Britain and the French Revolution 1789–1815*, ed. Dickinson (Basingstoke, 1989), p. 114.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 113, 115.

associations at no great distance from his home. On 11 December 1792, the Friends of the Constitution was established for Warwick and its vicinity – including, presumably, Wellesbourne. Its committee was headed by the Earl of Warwick, and contained, unsurprisingly, the Reverend William Daniel, the Reverend Marmaduke Mathews, and the Reverend Robert Miller, besides, interestingly, the Reverend Edward Willes.<sup>195</sup> It wanted to distribute loyalist propaganda ‘to Compose the Minds of the lower Order of people in this Neighbourhood’;<sup>196</sup> and, pursuant to royal and government instructions, aimed to ‘suppress all seditious Publications’.<sup>197</sup> It also resolved ‘to disclose and make known any Treasonable or seditious Expressions, which may come to our knowledge; in order that the guilty persons may receive due Punishment’.<sup>198</sup> Williams’ views were at best an irritant and at worst suspect. One of John Moore’s correspondents wanted loyalist tracts placed ‘at the Church Door of every Church in the Kingdom’;<sup>199</sup> and Reeves was reminded that ‘sedition from the pulpit may have more effect upon the vulgar than common conversation’.<sup>200</sup> Besides the Warwick Friends, associations were established at Banbury, Blockley (Worcestershire), Henley-in-Arden, and Woodstock – all near enough for accounts of their proceedings to reach Wellesbourne.<sup>201</sup> At Stratford-upon-Avon, a meeting of magistrates and gentlemen denounced ‘ill disposed Persons of this Kingdom, [plotting] in Conjunction with Foreign Emissaries’; abhorrent schemes ‘to plunge this much envied Nation . . . into Misrule, Confusion, and Anarchy’; and ‘all seditious and republican’ publications.<sup>202</sup> Those present declared that they would, following government commands, suppress seditious meetings and clubs; and exert their ‘utmost Energy, to preserve inviolate the present Constitution of this Kingdom’.<sup>203</sup> The resolutions were signed by a number of Williams’ friends – Sir John Mordaunt, Court Dewes, and two members of the Mills family.<sup>204</sup> As at Warwick, clergymen paraded their loyalist convictions in these places. At Banbury, the association’s committee included clerics.<sup>205</sup> At Blockley, the Reverend Charles Jasper Selwyn chaired the association’s meetings.<sup>206</sup> The Reverend Daniel Gaches chaired the meetings at Henley-in-Arden, and there the associators resolved to ‘suppress as far as we can, all . . . seditious Publications,

<sup>195</sup> BL, Add. MS 16,922, fol. 87r; Add. MS 16,931, fol. 156r. Possibly referring to this, Willes wrote to Parr in an undated letter: ‘What mischief the associations may produce I cannot say, but a present, and in my mind a just purpose has been answered by them . . .’ Johnstone, ed., *Works of Parr*, VIII (1828), p. 287.

<sup>196</sup> BL, Add. MS 16,922, fol. 87r–v.

<sup>197</sup> BL, Add. MS 16,931, fol. 156r.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>199</sup> BL, Add. MS 16,919, fol. 25r.

<sup>200</sup> BL, Add. MS 16,921, fol. 131v.

<sup>201</sup> BL, Add. MS 16,923, fol. 31r–v; Add. MS 16,931, fols 5v–6r, 23r, 70r.

<sup>202</sup> *Aris’s Birmingham Gazette*, 17 December 1792.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>205</sup> BL, Add. MS 16,931, fols 5v–6r.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 23r.

and discover and bring the Authors of them to Justice'.<sup>207</sup> The body's watchword was 'Religion and Loyalty'.<sup>208</sup> Stratford's resolutions were signed by James Davenport and nine other clergymen.<sup>209</sup> From Woodstock, the Reverend William Mavor corresponded enthusiastically with Reeves.<sup>210</sup> The Woodstock committee contained four clergymen besides Mavor, and other powerful locals, and it determined to 'counteract . . . [the] Poison [of seditious writings] by . . . putting into Execution the good Laws of this Country against . . . [the] Authors, Publishers and Abettors'.<sup>211</sup> Mavor's own loathing of the Revolution was displayed in a sonnet – 'Written on Reading the Horrid Acts of the Paris Mob' – 'To Rational Liberty'.<sup>212</sup>

The various loyalist societies both perturbed and angered John Henry Williams; and, in 1793, he gave his opinion of them in print. They were, he said, 'self-constituted dictatorial and inquisitorial associations'.<sup>213</sup> He hated the stifling of the free exchange of ideas. A very small particle of the 'leaven of *malice* . . . intolerance and rancour', employed by the loyalist bodies, 'if blended with civil or religious maxims, and then accidentally thrown, or *artfully infused* into the mass of society, soon leaveneth the whole lump', he maintained.<sup>214</sup> Malice 'alters or destroys every form and circumstance of social life. It contracts the smile of innocent hilarity, with which a man was wont to meet his neighbour, into the scowl of dark suspicion, with which he is to encounter an insidious spy.'<sup>215</sup> Freedom of speech within the law and debate in the 'public sphere' were endangered. The freedom to dissent from mainstream opinion was curtailed.

That friendly and open difference of opinion, which was often productive of innocent cheerfulness and humorous raillery, becomes a proud opposition of principle, ever fearful of giving, and ever jealous of receiving offence. The candid enquirer after truth is silenced by the supercilious sneer of prejudice, the calm preacher of moderation is answered by bigotry, 'he that is not with us is against us,' and a man that would partake of the benefits or enjoy the comforts of society, must either join his *voice* to a clamour, to which his *reason* does not assent, or endure the continual mortification of *keeping silence, yea even from good words*.<sup>216</sup>

One-sided Church and King opinions, propagated by the loyalist societies, and the calumnies voiced against those who did not share such opinions were, Williams believed, surreptitiously but rapidly eroding long-prized English liberties. He deplored this on both political and religious grounds. 'Against the

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., fol. 70r; *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 21 January 1793.

<sup>208</sup> BL, Add. MS 16, 931, fol. 70r.

<sup>209</sup> *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 17 December 1792.

<sup>210</sup> BL, Add. MS 16,922, fols 17r–18v; Add. MS 16,923, fols 32r, 99r; Add. MS 16,924, fol. 148r–v; Add. MS 16,925, fol. 7r–v.

<sup>211</sup> BL, Add. MS 16,923, fol. 31v.

<sup>212</sup> William Mavor, *Miscellanies* (Oxford, [1829]), p. 483.

<sup>213</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. 30.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

introduction of this secret spirit of inveteracy and intolerance into the community', he declared, 'as a *citizen* I object, because it is *unsocial*; [and] as a *minister* of the Gospel of Peace and Charity I protest, because it is *unchristian* . . .'<sup>217</sup> Of course, besides the muzzling of opinion, there were other expressions of 'inveteracy and intolerance' close at hand. In February 1793, 'the effigies of *Citizens Paine, Robespierre, and Priestley*, after parading the streets of Stratford-upon-Avon, attended by javelin men and a band of music, were hanged and burnt'.<sup>218</sup> Clearly the demonstration's organizers, linking English republicanism, French Jacobinism, and Dissent, felt no remorse for the Priestley riots. At Birmingham, an effigy of Paine – attended by a hangman who 'carried the painting of a Fox with a halter round his neck' – was hanged on a twenty-foot-high gallows and burnt.<sup>219</sup>

Given his views, Williams naturally refused to become an associator.<sup>220</sup> John Barrell has recently emphasized how, as fears of radicalism and subversion grew in the 1790s, the privacy of individuals was increasingly invaded;<sup>221</sup> and such day-to-day intrusions were grindingly irritating or worse. One private vexation for Williams was the politics of his wife's uncle, Sir William Henry Ashhurst, and Ashhurst's disapproval of his conduct. Ashhurst was a resolute Pittite, and, in November 1792, he delivered a charge to the Grand Jury of Middlesex, praising Britain's constitution and laws and maintaining that her system of government was the most perfect in existence. He denounced 'seditious and unconstitutional doctrines', and their proponents who wished 'to overturn the venerable fabric of . . . [the] Constitution' and substitute 'universal Anarchy and Confusion'.<sup>222</sup> John Reeves' Association for the Preservation of Liberty and Property printed and widely distributed the charge. It 'breathes so much the SPIRIT of the ENGLISH LAW, and is so well suited to CURB the LICENTIOUS SPIRIT of the TIMES', Ashhurst's admirers maintained, 'that it must be read with Heart-felt Satisfaction by every true ENGLISHMAN'.<sup>223</sup> Williams was doubtless distressed that his kinsman's opinions were so warmly praised by the very bodies which he refused to join; and by the family division. But worse was the buzzing criticism of his stance in Warwickshire during this period of suspicion and surveillance. As a 'non-associator', he was 'continually assailed' with 'calumnious misrepresentations', portraying him as disloyal;<sup>224</sup> and he felt uncomfortably isolated at Wellesbourne.<sup>225</sup> Greatheed later wrote of his friend's 'patient endurance of calumny

<sup>217</sup> Ibid., pp. 18–19.

<sup>218</sup> *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 18 February 1793.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

<sup>220</sup> This refusal enraged an Anglican, Tory reviewer of Williams' 1793 and 1794 sermons: see below, pp. 112–13.

<sup>221</sup> John Barrell, *The Spirit of Despotism: Invasions of Privacy in the 1790s* (Oxford, 2006).

<sup>222</sup> *Mr. Justice Ashhurst's Charge to the Grand Jury for the County of Middlesex* [London, 1792].

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.; Douglas Hay, 'Ashhurst, Sir William Henry (1725–1807)', *ODNB*, II, pp. 648–9.

<sup>224</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. viii.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

and persecution';<sup>226</sup> but Williams was not entirely patient. He felt obliged to justify his stance publicly and was therefore, reluctantly and resentfully, 'compelled to take refuge in the notoriety of the press'.<sup>227</sup> As a gentleman, he plainly felt that this was to stoop.

### The Coming of War

When, in 1792, war loomed between France and both Austria and Prussia, Britain had determined to remain neutral. The government had maintained this policy when the war began, issuing a formal declaration of neutrality, and continued to adhere to it after the overthrow of the French monarchy and the September massacres.

However, the military successes of the French in the autumn of 1792 made British neutrality unviable. French forces advanced to the left bank of the Rhine and also conquered Nice and Savoy. Following his victory at Jemappes (6 November), General Dumouriez occupied the Austrian Netherlands; and ten days later, the French opened the Scheldt for navigation, a defiant and provocative renunciation of former treaty obligations. It seemed impossible that France would not invade the United Provinces, but, if this occurred, British intervention was certain (the government told the Dutch this, following Jemappes).<sup>228</sup> A French occupation of Holland would threaten Britain's security and could disrupt not only her shipping in home waters but also her trade with India, given the Dutch possessions in the Cape of Good Hope and Ceylon. British hostility was further stoked by the Convention's 'Decree of Fraternity' (19 November), promising French aid to all oppressed people wishing to recover their liberty; by the conviction that French agents were fomenting sedition in Britain; by the revolutionaries' 'godless' attacks on the French church; and by Louis XVI's trial and, on 21 January 1793, his execution. Both governments thought that they discerned the adversary's mortal weakness, and so, with unwise confidence, forecast a short, successful war. The French believed the lower orders in England, Scotland, and Ireland would shortly revolt. The British believed that internal dissent and counter-revolution would soon paralyse the French war effort. By January 1793, Pitt, according to Lord Loughborough, thought that war 'was inevitable, and that the sooner it was begun the better'.<sup>229</sup>

Williams' circle fervently hoped that war could be avoided. In 1792, before the autumn triumphs of the French, Dr Parr thought it possible. 'The people of England', he maintained, 'are too gallant to engage in a war against such a nation

<sup>226</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/116, Bertie Greatheed to Thomas, Baron Erskine, 27 March 1806.

<sup>227</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. viii.

<sup>228</sup> As Lord Grenville stated in December 1792, the British government, 'adhering to the maxims which it has followed for more than a century, will . . . never see with indifference, that France shall make herself, either directly or indirectly, sovereign of the Low Countries, or general arbitress of the rights and liberties of Europe': T. C. W. Blanning, *The Origins of the French Revolutionary Wars* (Harlow, 1986), p. 157.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 154.

... [seeking freedom]. The parliament of England is too enlightened to approve of a war. The king of England is far too wise, too humane, too magnanimous, to propose a war.'<sup>230</sup> Such hopes were not foolish, given the government's earlier wish to preserve Britain's neutrality. George III, moreover, had kept Hanover neutral, and had worked to prevent other German states' involvement in the conflict.<sup>231</sup> Yet, in December 1792 and January 1793, it was clear that Pitt had a majority for war in Parliament, as, despite Fox's eloquent opposition, too many former Foxites accepted the government's new reasoning. Following the loyalist upsurge, Pitt also believed that 'the nation now was disposed for war'.<sup>232</sup> But, on 1 February 1793, it was the French who declared war.<sup>233</sup> This was a day when Fox again denounced the Pitt's foreign policy in the Commons,<sup>234</sup> though, since the Convention simultaneously declared war on Britain and the United Provinces, the government's earlier fears for continued Dutch independence were vindicated. However, for the war's opponents, other issues predominated. They saw the Austrians and Prussians as brutal aggressors and thought that France was fighting a defensive war. They maintained that it was the absolute right of the French nation – now a 'free' nation – to order its internal affairs without foreign interference. For them, the malignity of the Prussians was amply revealed by the 1793 partition of Poland.<sup>235</sup> For Britain to ally with such despots was deplorable.

On 1 March 1793, George III proclaimed a fast day,<sup>236</sup> and, shortly afterwards, Williams received instructions about the church services – morning prayer, the ante-Communion, and evening prayer – which he was required to conduct at Wellesbourne. The fast, the form of prayer stated, was

For obtaining Pardon of our Sins, and for averting those heavy Judgements which our manifold Provocations have most justly deserved; and imploring . . . [God's] Blessing and Assistance on the Arms of His Majesty by Sea and Land, and for restoring and perpetuating Peace, Safety, and Prosperity to Himself, and to His Kingdoms.<sup>237</sup>

The services, composed by the archbishops and bishops,<sup>238</sup> comprised appropriate psalms and lessons, selected sentences of Scripture, and specially-written prayers. Parts of the services were uncontroversial. There were exhortations to national and personal repentance – two lessons were John the Baptist's and

<sup>230</sup> Parr, *Sequel*, p. 74.

<sup>231</sup> Blanning, *Origins*, p. 134.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 154.

<sup>233</sup> There is a detailed discussion of the war's origins in Jeremy Black, *British Foreign Policy in an Age of Revolutions 1783–1793* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 377–471.

<sup>234</sup> Cobbett, ed., *Parliamentary History*, XXX (1817), cols 301–14.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, cols 303–4, 307.

<sup>236</sup> *The London Gazette*, 26 February–2 March 1793.

<sup>237</sup> *A Form of Prayer, to be Used . . . upon Friday the Nineteenth of April Next [1793]* (1793), title page.

<sup>238</sup> *London Gazette*, 26 February–2 March 1793.



Christ's calls to repent (Matthew III:1–11; Luke XIII:1–6).<sup>239</sup> There were comfortable words: 'Thou, O Lord God, art full of compassion and mercy, long suffering, plenteous in goodness and truth' (Psalm LXXXVI:15);<sup>240</sup> 'A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee' (Psalm XCI:7).<sup>241</sup> There were, too, prayers for the restoration of peace. However, much of the services seemed calculated to excite both a bellicose patriotism and xenophobia. The revolutionaries in France, one prayer declared, had 'cast off their faith in Thee, the Living God, and . . . plunged themselves into those horrible iniquities, and cruelties, which astonish the Christian World'.<sup>242</sup> A collect described the adversary as 'an enemy to all Christian Kings, Princes, and States; who . . . trusteth in Violence, and delighteth in Blood'.<sup>243</sup> Our 'unprovoked Enemies', it continued, 'are labouring to overthrow the Religion, Laws, and Government of the World'.<sup>244</sup> And, at home, there were the dangers of 'secret conspiracy and open violence'.<sup>245</sup> Parsons conducting the services were therefore expected to display their wholehearted support for the war with France. They were to read the sentences of Scripture '*with a loud Voice*'.<sup>246</sup> Moreover, the form of service for the ante-Communion stipulated that, after the Nicene Creed, a sermon would be preached: the clergy could not evade composing or delivering this *pièce d'occasion*.<sup>247</sup> The government and the Church hierarchy naturally wanted the sermons to conform to the services' general tenor. Parsons were to justify the war and the government's policies in their own words, and denounce the French and the politics of the Revolution. If they had reservations – and it was largely presumed that this was improbable – compliance was still required. Indeed, the fast day was to be observed, the royal proclamation warned, 'upon Pain of such Punishment as We may justly inflict on all such as contemn and neglect the Performance of so religious and necessary a Duty'.<sup>248</sup>

The crisis was now upon Williams. He knew that, in a few weeks, he had, from the pulpit, either to justify a war of which he disapproved or to denounce it, in defiance of both the government and the Church. He was beset by a 'painful dilemma, either of promoting the thirst of bloodshed by the readiness of his conviction, or by the sullenness of his doubts incurring the imputation of disloyalty'.<sup>249</sup> His mind writhed 'under the torture of this galling alternative'.<sup>250</sup> While

<sup>239</sup> *Form of Prayer, to be Used upon Nineteenth of April* [1793], pp. 5, 12.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 13, 21.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6, 17.

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 9, 20.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>248</sup> *London Gazette*, 26 February–2 March 1793.

<sup>249</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. viii.

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*



deciding how to proceed, he was guided, he later maintained, by the principle that ‘we are bound to speak what we believe to be the truth, neither more nor less, as ministers of the God of truth’<sup>251</sup> – one of the injunctions which he had promised to follow when ordained.<sup>252</sup> Could he be berated for adhering to that fundamental tenet?<sup>253</sup> No doubt, principle was also reinforced by pride. Did Williams wish to recant publicly views which his friends knew him to hold? Did he wish to gratify those who had attacked him as a non-associator, knowing that they would interpret such a recantation as cowardice? Both as a cleric and an honourable man, he recoiled from an abject compliance with the fast day’s requirements.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid., pp. vii–viii.

<sup>252</sup> See above, pp. 29–30.

<sup>253</sup> Cf. Francis Stone, *A Letter to the Right Rev. Dr. Beilby Porteus, Lord Bishop of London, on the Subject of his Citation of the Writer before the Spiritual Court* (1807), pp. 5–6.

## Chapter Five

### BY FAR THE HEAVIEST OF ALL EARTHLY CALAMITIES: WILLIAMS' ANTI-WAR SERMONS

#### Fast and Thanksgiving Days

When he received the instructions for the 1793 fast day, Williams no doubt wondered whether he would be asked to bow the knee to Baal on just that one occasion. Despite the Younger Pitt's sanguine prediction that the war would be short, it is likely that Williams was pessimistic about the conflict's duration. The century after the Glorious Revolution had been punctuated by lengthy wars: the War of the League of Augsburg (1689–97); the War of the Spanish Succession (1702–13); the War with Spain/of the Austrian Succession (1739–48); the Seven Years' War (1756–63); and the War of American Independence (1775–83). The wars with revolutionary and Napoleonic France were to last from 1793 to 1802 and from 1803 to 1815, and although, in 1793, Williams could not have foreseen how titanic the struggle would prove, he probably anticipated successive calls to justify government policy from the pulpit. The alliance of the Church of England and the state was firm; and the Church's Thirty-Seventh Article – 'Of the Civil Magistrates' – explicitly stated, *inter alia*, that it was 'lawful for Christian men, at the commandment of the Magistrate, to wear weapons, and serve in the wars'.

During the earlier wars of the eighteenth century, and at the time of the Jacobite risings of 1715 and 1745, the Church of England had held special services, like that decreed in 1793. At them, the clergy emphasized that God intervened directly in the world: He not only shaped the lives of individuals but also raised and pulled down nations at His pleasure. Britain was portrayed as a state specially favoured by God, a latter-day Israel, and God's blessing was invoked on the state's arms. But as war was simultaneously viewed as one of Providence's scourges, the clergy and their congregations also implored God's mercy and protection from peril. From their pulpits, parsons delivered Jeremiads, fast sermons, and, following victories or peace treaties, thanksgiving sermons. David Naphtine and W. A. Speck have delineated the themes of such preaching. Jeremiads exhorted the people to renounce vice and embrace virtue, to repent of past sins, and to seek God's forgiveness. In fast sermons, preachers also

emphasized the nation's sinfulness and the possibility that continuing disobedience to God's will might forfeit His protection. But, additionally, they often stressed God's special care of Britain, instanced His many blessings, and sought to justify the state's engagement in war. Thanksgiving sermons proclaimed victories, or a war's conclusion, as God's work, and the preachers again implored congregations to renounce sin and lead godly lives.<sup>1</sup>

If, in 1793, Williams feared repeated orders for fast-day services, he was right to do so. Each year, for nearly a decade, a fast day was decreed and instructions issued for services following the form for those of 1793. Days of thanksgiving were decreed too in 1797 for the naval victories at Cape St Vincent and Camperdown and the navy's 'many signal and important Victories . . . in the Course of the present War';<sup>2</sup> and, in 1798, for Nelson's victory at the Nile and the 'Deliverance of these Kingdoms from Foreign Invasion'.<sup>3</sup> In 1802, a thanksgiving service was held for the peace, but, once war recommenced the next year, the annual fast days were resumed.

The 1794 services' denunciation of the revolutionaries in France was even stronger than that of 1793. The French were 'the declared Enemies to all Christian Kings, Princes, and States, the impious and avowed Blasphemers of . . . [God's] Holy Name and Word'.<sup>4</sup> They, 'in the very Center of Christendom, threaten[ed] destruction to Christianity, and desolation to every Country where they . . . [could] erect their bloody Standard'.<sup>5</sup> In 1795, they were 'Apostates from . . . [God's] Truth and Despisers of . . . [His] Holy Name'.<sup>6</sup> Although the services' readings largely stressed the need for repentance while imploring God's mercy, some were more confident, notably when the comparison between Britain and Old-Testament Israel was indirectly made. In 1795, the first lesson at morning prayer, II Chronicles XX, described the conflict of the Israelites with the Moabites and Ammonites and ended with Jahaziel's inspired words: 'Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the LORD unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle *is* not yours, but God's.'<sup>7</sup> That God aided the British, as He had done the Israelites, was revealed by the victory at Cape St Vincent, when 'with far inferior strength and numbers . . . [the fleet] fought and . . . overpowered a mighty host, and

<sup>1</sup> D. Napthine and W. A. Speck, 'Clergymen and Conflict 1660–1763', *The Church and War*, ed. W. J. Sheils, Studies in Church History XX (Oxford, 1983), pp. 231–51.

<sup>2</sup> *A Form of Prayer and Thanksgiving . . . to be Used . . . on Tuesday the Nineteenth Day of December 1797* (1797), title page.

<sup>3</sup> *A Form of Prayer and Thanksgiving . . . to be Used . . . on Thursday the Twenty-ninth Day of November 1798* (1798), title page.

<sup>4</sup> *A Form of Prayer, to be Used . . . upon Friday the Twenty-eighth of February Next* [1794] (1794), pp. 6, 17.

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

<sup>6</sup> *A Form of Prayer, to be Used . . . upon Wednesday the Twenty-fifth of February Next* [1795] (1795), pp. 6, 15.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5; II Chronicles XX:15.

disconcerted the Counsels of our Enemies'.<sup>8</sup> And, likewise, by the inability of the French to invade: 'Thy Arm, stretched out in time of Danger, hath wrought Deliverance for this Land.'<sup>9</sup> The 1797 service that celebrated the conflict's naval victories was triumphalist in tone, almost a glorification of war. The 'Most merciful Lord God', congregations were to be told at morning prayer, 'hast enabled us repeatedly to prevail over our Enemies in the dreadful day of Battle'.<sup>10</sup> The struggle, it was unequivocally stated, was a 'just and necessary War';<sup>11</sup> and a neat, if extravagant, formula justifying it was employed: 'the Battle is for more than Gain or Glory – for Religion and for Public Liberty, for the Independence of . . . [our] Country, for the Rights of Civil Society, for the Maintenance of every Ordinance, Divine and Human, essential to the well-being of Man'.<sup>12</sup>

As will be seen, Williams had doubts about, or objected to, most of the thinking contained in these services' forms. Furthermore, as in 1793, there was on the fast days in 1794 and the succeeding years the requirement of a sermon – which, it was presumed, would support the war and the government's justifications of it. Williams had probably heard such sermons in Gloucester cathedral when he was a schoolboy, during the Seven Years' War. Moreover, from 1778 at Wellesbourne, he had presumably preached on the fast days proclaimed during the War of American Independence.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps he had willingly supported the war against the rebel colonists; the Anglican clergy overwhelmingly did.<sup>14</sup> More generally, despite fierce Whig, radical, or Dissenting criticisms of Lord North's American policies, there was no 'sustained anti-war movement' in the 1770s and early 1780s.<sup>15</sup> That was to come in the 1790s.

George III's proclamation of the fast day in 1793 and the Church of England's endorsement of it seemed to trumpet the Church–state alliance's utter commitment to a war against republican, godless France. Bishop Samuel Horsley – for Williams' circle, a *bête noire*<sup>16</sup> – seemed the alliance's embodiment. On 30 January, the anniversary of Charles I's 'martyrdom' and the week after Louis XVI's execution, he had preached before the Lords and had denounced the French Revolution. France, Horsley declared, was utterly ruined.

Her Government demolished! Her Altars overthrown! Her First-born  
despoiled of their Birth right! Her Nobles degraded! Her best Citizens

<sup>8</sup> *A Form of Prayer and Thanksgiving to Almighty God; For the Victory Gained by His Majesty's Fleet under the Command of Sir John Jervis, on the Fourteenth of February last [1797]* (1797), p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> *Form of Prayer to be Used on Twenty-ninth of November 1798*, p. 7.

<sup>10</sup> *Form of Prayer to be Used on Nineteenth of December 1797*, p. 5.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>13</sup> On those fast days, see Henry P. Ippel, 'British Sermons and the American Revolution', *Journal of Religious History* xii (1982), pp. 191–205.

<sup>14</sup> Paul Langford, 'The English Clergy and the American Revolution', *The Transformation of Political Culture: England and Germany in the Late Eighteenth Century*, ed. Eckhart Hellmuth (Oxford, 1990), pp. 275–307.

<sup>15</sup> Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727–1783* (Oxford, 1989), p. 627.

<sup>16</sup> For Parr's view of Horsley, see below, p. 129.

exiled! Her riches, sacred and profane, given up to the pillage of sacrilege and rapine! Atheists directing her Councils! Desperadoes conducting her Armies! Wars of unjust and chimerical ambition consuming her Youth! Her Granaries exhausted! Her Fields uncultivated! Famine threatening her multitudes! Her Streets swarming with Assassins, filled with violence, deluged with blood!<sup>17</sup>

Louis XVI's execution was simply murder: butchery 'on a public scaffold, after the mockery of arraignment, trial, sentence!'; butchery 'without the merciful formalities of the vilest malefactor's execution!'<sup>18</sup> In Britain, Horsley insisted, obedience to those in authority and the maintenance of the *status quo* was essential: his text was Romans XIII:1, 'Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers.' As Horsley extravagantly expounded such themes, Dr Parr, who had come to hear the sermon, growled 'Damnable doctrine! Master Horsley, damnable doctrine!'<sup>19</sup>

Across the kingdom, in March and early April, clergymen retired to their studies to compose their fast-day sermons, overwhelmingly supportive of the government and the war; and the ambitious amongst them considered publication. William Mavor was highly representative. Although, apparently, he had never before 'introduced politics into the pulpit', he thought that the 'peculiar circumstances of the times' justified such preaching and prepared accordingly.<sup>20</sup> He decided to include a brief history of the Revolution in his sermon, emphasizing the destruction of the nobility, the attack on the church, and France's military aggression;<sup>21</sup> the account would culminate in the execution of Louis XVI 'for whose fate nations wept, and only demons exulted'.<sup>22</sup> The Revolution's leaders were, in Mavor's eyes, 'madmen . . . wildly scattering firebrands round them', the people 'the mad multitude'.<sup>23</sup> Respecting domestic politics, Mavor determined to discuss both general principles and contemporary events. Social and economic inequality were part of the Creator's design, he wrote, corresponding to the 'regular chain of gradation' – from 'the lowest insect to the majesty of GOD' – in nature.<sup>24</sup> God had 'assigned to each [man] his character and his part in the drama of life';<sup>25</sup> and human happiness was ensured only when all worked harmoniously in their various stations.<sup>26</sup> Accordingly, God 'by his own express sanction and

<sup>17</sup> Samuel Horsley, *A Sermon, Preached before the Lords Spiritual and Temporal . . . on Wednesday, January 30, 1793*, 2nd edn (1793), p. 22.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>19</sup> Warren Derry, *Dr Parr* (1966), p. 148.

<sup>20</sup> William Mavor, *Christian Politics: A Sermon, Preached to a Country Congregation, on Friday, April 19, 1793*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1793), pp. 13–14.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 15–19.

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

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 17, 18. Nonetheless, Mavor was critical of the French *émigrés* and Austria and Prussia for their provocative, war-fomenting conduct in 1792 (*ibid.*, pp. 16–17).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 7–8.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8–10.

decrees has taught us the duty of subordination, and the advantages of obedience, not only to divine but to human laws'.<sup>27</sup> Mavor also decided to praise the King and the government and castigate those 'desperate and designing men', the British radicals.<sup>28</sup> He believed that George III showed 'paternal affection' for his people;<sup>29</sup> and that Pitt's ministry was 'wise and virtuous', rightly vigilant given the dangers posed by the revolutionaries' 'emissaries and their artifices'.<sup>30</sup> The radicals, Mavor was convinced, aimed at 'the destruction of the constitution, and the eventual ruin of every person of property and character'.<sup>31</sup> He naturally resolved to praise Reeves' loyalist associations too: for him, they had proved invaluable in countering the 'champions of sedition'.<sup>32</sup> Although he deplored 'all the horrors of war and of carnage', Mavor thought that Britain could not remain neutral, given the threat posed by France.<sup>33</sup> He therefore decided to conclude his sermon by asking God's blessing on 'our King and his royal family, his ministers . . . , his fleets, [and] his armies';<sup>34</sup> and by pronouncing a ringing exhortation 'to FEAR GOD – to HONOUR THE KING – to OBEY MAGISTRATES, AND TO BE READY TO EVERY GOOD WORK'.<sup>35</sup>

### Preaching and Publication

Had Williams been able to read Mavor's sermon notes while agonizing about his own sermon's content, he might have wished that he could be so sure about anything as Mavor seemed cocksure about everything. But by the fast day for 1793, Friday 19 April, Williams had become firmly convinced that the service constituted an illegitimate imposition generated by the Younger Pitt's government. He was also sure that the war was wrong. He therefore resolved to defy the government, and the complicit Church authorities, by preaching a 'disloyal' sermon. Weekday services were not always well attended: work or indifference thinned congregations, and, in January 1814, no-one, Bertie Greathed noted, attended a Thursday thanksgiving service at Milverton.<sup>36</sup> But Williams expected many to attend on 19 April 1793 at Wellesbourne, and envisaged, across the land,

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., pp. 17, note, 18, 19.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 20. Mavor wanted a measure of parliamentary reform 'constitutionally and quietly brought about at a proper season and by proper means'. But,

Heaven forbid that this task of reformation should ever revert to the mass of the people – to that insensate, debauched, and ignorant people, who, where they are possessed of the elective franchise in its full extent, *sell their birth-right for a mess of pottage* – who barter their votes for a dinner and a bottle of wine – who prefer the most paltry bribe to the good of their country . . . (ibid., pp. 19, note–20, note).

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., pp. 20–1.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., pp. 12, 17, note.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>36</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/120, Entry, 13 January 1814.

‘the established churches . . . crammed even to the suffocating plenitude of tabernacles and play-houses’.<sup>37</sup> He was not disappointed: the parishioners packed Wellesbourne church, anticipating an interesting, and perhaps an explosive, sermon. Their vicar dryly analysed ‘the motives which convene so large a number of us here this day’.<sup>38</sup> Besides piety, these were ‘curiosity . . . [and] decency, or even . . . loyalty’.<sup>39</sup> As soon as he had mounted the pulpit, Williams threw down the gauntlet:

WHEN I consider the cause, and the object of our meeting here this day, – the disposition of the assembly I am to address, – and the spiritual nature of the office I hold amongst you, – I almost despair of combining profitableness with acceptability in my present exhortation.<sup>40</sup>

This pessimism was, of course, partly rhetorical: Williams hoped to convert some Tory hearers to his view of the war and the government’s policies. This remained his hope until the Peace of Amiens in 1802.

In 1793, however, Williams did not want to convince merely his country congregation of the evils of the conflict and the government’s errors. He wished to reach a much wider audience by publishing his sermon. By doing so, his aim was possibly more than just propagating views which he saw as right and coherent. Almost certainly, Williams wanted to build a reputation as a thoughtful, principled, courageous cleric. Maybe feeling that his career had stalled at Wellesbourne, he hoped to acquire new Whig friends and possible patrons, and thereby advance it. If so, he was to be disappointed: the Whig patronage networks were collapsing. Charles James Fox himself could do little to assist his friends’ and supporters’ careers. Shortly after the formation of the Talents ministry in 1806, Greatheed wrote to Thomas Erskine, now the Lord Chancellor, requesting preferment for Williams. On 28 February 1807, he visited Erskine in London, for the same purpose.<sup>41</sup> But the government resigned a fortnight later; and Williams remained stranded at Wellesbourne.

Williams, in 1793, had to find a publisher prepared to print a sermon which denounced the war, other government actions, and the ‘imposition’ of the fast day by the authorities of Church and state. Given magistrates’ vigilance about ‘seditious’ publications at this time, printers were likely to be wary, and Williams’ choice, John Thompson of Birmingham, is interesting and revealing. Thompson was a Dissenter and printed works for other Dissenters, including many titles by Joseph Priestley.<sup>42</sup> He published the sermon which Priestley preached at William

<sup>37</sup> J. H. Williams, *Two Sermons Preached on the Public Fasts of April 1793, and February 1794* (1794), p. 9.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 10–11.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>41</sup> See below, pp. 137–8.

<sup>42</sup> Nesta Jenkins, ‘Printing in Birmingham in the Eighteenth Century. A Bibliography with Biographical Notes on Printers’, Library Association Fellowship thesis, 1972, pp. 230, 231, 234.



Field's ordination, Thomas Belsham's charge to Field, and Field's attacks on his High-Church adversaries in Warwick.<sup>43</sup> Thompson also printed pamphlets on the Birmingham riots, including Samuel Parr's *A Letter from Irenopolis* (1792), which warned the Dissenters to eschew provocative behaviour in view of the prevailing political tensions.<sup>44</sup> Probably Field and Parr recommended Thompson to Williams. Naturally, his religious sympathies inclined Thompson to radical politics – another of his authors was the seditious Unitarian Gilbert Wakefield<sup>45</sup> – and, almost inevitably, he was arrested in 1792/93. Charged with publishing a seditious libel, the second part of Tom Paine's *Rights of Man*, and Paine's *Letter . . . to the Addressers*, Thompson was held in solitary confinement.<sup>46</sup> But, when he was tried at Warwick, he was acquitted – though his acquittal of publishing the *Letter* resulted from a flaw in the indictment.<sup>47</sup> Since the trial ended on 9 April – ten days before the fast day – Williams' decision to employ him – if not just *faute de mieux* – was a public gesture of sympathy (and certainly could be seen as such by Williams' opponents). Thompson duly printed the 1793 sermon, *Piety, Charity, & Loyalty*, but he later emigrated to Philadelphia, having gone bankrupt;<sup>48</sup> and when Williams subsequently wanted to publish other sermons, he used a more celebrated publisher.

Williams wished to publish the fast sermons which he preached in 1794 and 1795, and the 1802 thanksgiving sermon celebrating the Peace of Amiens. And he ambitiously hoped that George Robinson, the great London publisher and bookseller, would do this. Robinson had a huge wholesale trade, and supplied bookshops across the kingdom. Intelligent, enterprising, and well connected, he published radical works, notably William Godwin's *Political Justice*, and, in 1793, he was fined for selling Paine's *Rights of Man*.<sup>49</sup> It is possible that Robinson approached Williams, and not vice versa, after the 1793 sermon's publication: certainly Robinson was sufficiently impressed to reprint the piece and issue it with the 1794 sermon as *Two Sermons Preached on the Public Fasts*.<sup>50</sup> Admiring principle, and enjoying controversy, he respected Williams' stance, and his firm also published the 1795 and 1802 sermons.<sup>51</sup> For his part, Williams was doubtless

<sup>43</sup> *A View of Revealed Religion; A Sermon, Preached at the Ordination of the Rev. William Field of Warwick, July 12, 1790. By Joseph Priestley, LL.D. F.R.S. With a Charge, Delivered at the Same Time, by the Rev. Thomas Belsham* (Birmingham, 1790); William Field, *A Letter Addressed to the Inhabitants of Warwick* (Birmingham, 1791); Field, *A Second Letter Addressed to the Inhabitants of Warwick* (Birmingham, 1791).

<sup>44</sup> Jenkins, 'Printing in Birmingham', pp. 230, 244.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 236.

<sup>46</sup> *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 15 April 1793; Clive Emsley, 'An Aspect of Pitt's "Terror": Prosecutions for Sedition during the 1790s', *Social History* vi (1981), pp. 173, 183.

<sup>47</sup> *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 15 April 1793.

<sup>48</sup> J. H. Williams, *Piety, Charity, & Loyalty* (Birmingham, 1793); Dr Williams's L, London, 24.157 (188), vv.

<sup>49</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine* lxxi, Part i (1801), pp. 578–80; Derek Roper, *Reviewing before the Edinburgh 1788–1802* (1978), pp. 32, 292, n. 18.

<sup>50</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*.

<sup>51</sup> J. H. Williams, *War the Stumbling-block of a Christian; or, the Absurdity of Defending Religion by the Sword* (1795); Williams, *A Thanksgiving Sermon for the Peace, Preached June 1, 1802* (1802).

highly gratified, confident that Robinson's company, if any firm could, would successfully market the pieces.

### **The Most Horrid and Unnatural State of Man: The Anti-War Sermons' Arguments**

The contexts in which Williams preached in 1793, 1794, 1795, and 1802 obviously altered and, in consequence, there are some variations in the four sermons' content and tone. Most apparent, unsurprisingly, is the difference between the agonized fast-day sermon at the war's commencement and the hopeful sermon preached at the thanksgiving service for the Peace of Amiens. Williams was, however, generally sensitive to the changing fortunes of war: in 1793, he could muster some hope that the struggle might end quickly – the French, he noted, 'are at this time retreating on all quarters' – but, by 1795, he was dejected at the slaughter.<sup>52</sup> Nonetheless, despite such variations, the sermons display sufficient intellectual and stylistic consistency to permit a thematic analysis of their common arguments and general character.

On what grounds, then, did Williams denounce the war of 1793–1802 and the government which waged it? He plainly hoped that the ministry would quickly end the conflict, but how did he present the case for peace?

At the outset, one must emphasize, as Martin Ceadel does,<sup>53</sup> that Williams was not a pacifist, always opposed to war. Perhaps this was not entirely clear from the first sermon, which contains some rather confusing wording: 'Such a state as this [i.e. war] can only be justified in a moral light by the law of self-defence, but in a religious view it is ever a state to be deplored.'<sup>54</sup> Later, however, Williams stated quite explicitly that a Christian had a right to self-defence. In 1794, he spoke of 'the *sober collected firmness* of christian self-defence' and, the following year, maintained that 'we can perceive no grounds for the assertion that a Christian *must not fight*'.<sup>55</sup> By extension, a war undertaken by the state for self-defence was just. Notwithstanding this, Williams maintained that self-protection was the sole Christian justification for armed conflict. In his thanksgiving sermon for the Peace of Amiens, he declared: 'One general principle . . . I shall content myself with asserting once more, before the subject is banished, I hope, from this place for ever; which is, that *A Christian may not fight, either individually or collectively, except in the unavoidable and unequivocal necessity of self-defence*.'<sup>56</sup>

Although the principle that self-defence justified war seems unambiguous, it was rather more problematical for Williams than one might initially suppose.<sup>57</sup> Indeed, in his sermon of 1793, he said that he could not judge if the struggle with

<sup>52</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. 29, note; Williams, *War the Stumbling-block*, p. 27.

<sup>53</sup> Martin Ceadel, *The Origins of War Prevention* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 159–60.

<sup>54</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, pp. 20–1. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63; Williams, *War the Stumbling-block*, p. 23.

<sup>56</sup> Williams, *Thanksgiving Sermon*, p. 9.

<sup>57</sup> Regarding this issue, Williams' concerns were not unique: see below, p. 107.

France was 'both just and necessary'.<sup>58</sup> This was perhaps a mildly evasive remark, suggesting a (wilful?) retreat from hard thinking, given that it was the French who had declared war – though, admittedly, the preceding belligerence of the British government somewhat clouded the issue. The case for self-defence was strong when a French invasion of Britain, or Ireland, seemed feasible, but, at other times, less so.<sup>59</sup> More generally, Williams claimed that he knew little of foreign and domestic politics.<sup>60</sup> Yet, this was really rhetorical self-depreciation ('I must confess myself . . . so ignorant . . .'): <sup>61</sup> had he really thought it, he would not have preached so forcefully against the war, still less published the sermons. Of course, as William Wilberforce told Christopher Wyvill, only those in government circles could fully appreciate the diplomatic complexities in the months before the war's outbreak.<sup>62</sup> But, as has been seen, Williams, like any politically-minded provincial gentleman, was able to keep abreast of national events. He could discuss them with men who knew London politicians well – notably Samuel Parr; he could read newspapers and periodicals. His sharp mind was capable of judiciously weighing conflicting arguments. And, while he hesitated to pronounce whether he considered the war as just or unjust, he was adamant that, even when war was justifiable, many of its attributes were loathsome to true Christians.

War, stated Williams, was 'the most horrid and unnatural state of man'.<sup>63</sup> The physical sufferings and grief it produced were appalling: battles, sieges, conflagrations, plunder, confiscations, 'the cries of the orphans, and the lamentations of the widows'.<sup>64</sup> War, Williams emphasized, 'presents nothing to the eye but sights of horror and desolation . . . [and] brings no sounds to the ear but cries of woe or execrations of blasphemy'.<sup>65</sup> Influenced by fashionable notions of sentimentality and sensibility, he appealed to the like-minded: 'I envy not that man the coldness, the marble consistency of his heart, who [when witnessing the casualties of war] . . . can sooth [*sic*] the sympathetic throbbings of nature with *justifications* built upon *conjecture* . . .'.<sup>66</sup> He wanted his hearers and readers to envisage 'ten thousand poor mortals stretched upon the ground, some dead, some dying, some agonizing with convulsive pangs'.<sup>67</sup> He no doubt thought it vital to depict such horrors luridly to his congregation because, since 1746, there had been no warfare in Britain itself. But, besides describing its physical consequences, Williams stressed that war had pernicious political and spiritual effects on the whole

<sup>58</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, pp. 21–2.

<sup>59</sup> Though possible French attacks on British colonies further complicated the matter.

<sup>60</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. 22.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> J. E. Cookson, *The Friends of Peace: Anti-War Liberalism in England 1793–1815* (Cambridge, 1982), p. 131.

<sup>63</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. 19.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

society that waged it. Before the war's outbreak, the French Revolution had produced trends in Britain which he detested: a growing intolerance of political differences; an increasingly oppressive climate of suspicion; the diminution of open debate. But he was also sure that further evils would hatch out in wartime. During wars, political opponents were easily branded potential traitors, the cat's paw of the enemy, a fifth column. In the 1790s and 1800s, this was to prove true not only for radicals and Dissenters but also for the Foxite Whigs. Yet, still worse was the spiritual impact of war. War, Williams declared, was 'pregnant with moral anarchy . . . [and] religious corruption'.<sup>68</sup> It was 'the *moral* scourge of nations', which spawned 'hatred, ambition, profaneness, blasphemy, [and] cruelty'.<sup>69</sup> Its outbreak was a tragedy and a 'public calamity' in the eyes of right-thinking, Christian people;<sup>70</sup> and so, as a clergyman, he thought he had a particular duty to denounce the conflict.<sup>71</sup>

Williams was, of course, principally concerned for men's souls. Consequently, he feared the corruption of the soldiers and sailors. Given the unprecedented mobilization for service abroad and the massive recruitment to volunteer companies,<sup>72</sup> it was natural for him to consider the spiritual well-being of the military in general and, more particularly, the souls of men enlisting from Wellesbourne and nearby. Loyalists linked martial service, civic virtue, and patriotism, and loyalist clergymen repeatedly noted that the first gentile convert to Christianity was Cornelius the centurion, accordingly stressing that military service and piety were compatible.<sup>73</sup> Williams, however, sought to counter such thinking. 'You read, indeed, in the Acts of the Apostles, of one *devout soldier*', he told his congregation in 1794, but 'this was after a continuance of *long* and *profound* peace, and in established quarters among fellow-citizens and friends.'<sup>74</sup> In wartime, '[b]y converting *man* into a *hireling man-killer*, you unavoidably introduce . . . into his *mind*' 'blasphemy, vain swearing, a total neglect of public and private prayer . . . [and] frequent and almost necessary drunkenness and dissipation'.<sup>75</sup> Patriotism – that Humpty-Dumpty word, so easily appropriated by political debaters of any hue – was not synonymous, Williams insisted, with a 'thirst for glory and renown',<sup>76</sup> still less with a crazed zeal for bloodshed; indeed, Christianity could salve international relations.<sup>77</sup> Those who enlisted hoping for military glory, for 'crowns, and wreaths, and titles', should beware.<sup>78</sup> Martial glory was a mirage. Who, having weighed the moral and spiritual consequences, would wish to

<sup>68</sup> Williams, *Thanksgiving Sermon*, p. 9.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8, 9.

<sup>70</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. 19.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 18–19.

<sup>72</sup> See below, pp. 118–20.

<sup>73</sup> Austin Gee, *The British Volunteer Movement 1794–1814* (Oxford, 2003), p. 184; Acts, X–XI.

<sup>74</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. 45.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> Williams, *Thanksgiving Sermon*, p. 19.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 14–20, 24.

<sup>78</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. 20.

become 'the most *successful destroyer of the human race*, and the most daring impugner of God's sacred commandment, *Thou shalt not kill*'?<sup>79</sup>

Nor was it only combatants' souls that were at risk. The nation at large supported the war and, through taxation and industry, sustained its continuation. It was, Williams stated in 1793, 'a reflection replete with *horror*, that a whole christian nation should have set its hand to a work, whose only means are hatred and violence, and whose certain end is rapine and slaughter, and grief and misery'.<sup>80</sup> Given his certainty about judgment, reward, and punishment in the afterlife, it is therefore not surprising that, the next year, he envisaged, 'a whole generation of mortals . . . arraigned together at the bar of Heaven, as conspirators against its holy law'.<sup>81</sup> Nevertheless, there was time for repentance, and, if war spawned vice, peace could nurture religion, virtue, and a harmonious society.<sup>82</sup> In 1802, delighted at the Treaty of Amiens, Williams declared: 'With Peace dwell piety, charity, science, literature, industry, security and liberty.'<sup>83</sup> The time was then ripe for 'all true Patriots . . . to serve their country . . . by enlarging the Fold of Christ'.<sup>84</sup> He concluded:

The minds of the truly virtuous will ever be wishing for . . . something that will have a fixed influence on the sentiments and hearts of men, and attract them to one centre of justice, liberty, and peace . . . [M]ay God incline their hearts to seek it, where alone it can be found, in the *simple Faith*, the *pure Morals*, and the *eternal Sanctions* of the GOSPEL.<sup>85</sup>

Of course, Williams recognized that 'the Parchment of Peace is soon transferred to the Drum of War'.<sup>86</sup> Less than a year after he preached the 1802 sermon, the Napoleonic wars began. Williams published no more sermons. Perhaps he was too mortified to do so, given his conviction that, without 'the dew of peace, the seeds of the Gospel will neither spring nor grow'.<sup>87</sup> But that is not the only explanation possible;<sup>88</sup> and, plausibly, his decision not to publish again resulted from a paralysing clash between his reason, which recognized the wars' necessity, and his emotions, which were revolted by the bloodshed.

Williams scorned the notion that the defence of religion was one of the conflict's chief objects. This justification of the war was widely promulgated by the government and the Church from the start of the struggle (and so before the commencement of dechristianization in France).<sup>89</sup> In 1798, Bishop Horsley of

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>82</sup> Williams, *Thanksgiving Sermon*, p. 26.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., pp. 35–6.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>87</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. 62.

<sup>88</sup> See below, pp. 133–4.

<sup>89</sup> See above, p. 89.

Rochester declared that, if Britain were invaded, the enemy would ‘overturn our altars; instigated . . . by that desperate malignity, against the faith he has abandoned, which in all ages, has marked the horrible character of the vile apostate’.<sup>90</sup> But, for Williams, war itself was destructive of religion. Wars checked Christianity’s growth:

The cross of Christ would have been preached unheard on the plains of Pharsalia, or amidst the opposed legions at Philippi; but when the Temple of Janus was shut, it was preached with boldness and with effect in the forums of the people, in the streets of cities, and in the palaces of Emperors.<sup>91</sup>

‘The SWORD of Christianity’, Williams stated unequivocally, ‘is the WORD OF GOD, and it will not admit of carnal warfare, either for its propagation or its defence.’<sup>92</sup> He cited Christ’s command, at his arrest, to Peter to sheathe his sword – though the disciple sought to defend ‘not problematically the *doctrine* of our blessed Lord, but positively and immediately his *person* and his *life*’.<sup>93</sup> There was no purpose in fighting for ‘*Virtue and Religion*’ since they were ‘the only things, “which NO MAN CAN TAKE FROM US”’.<sup>94</sup> Blending Christian compassion with Gibbonian disdain, Williams recalled with disgust the Crusades and Europe’s ‘*holy and unanimous desire* of deluging Asia with blood’.<sup>95</sup> In 1095, ‘the plain of Placentia [i.e. Piacenza] was crowded by an audience of three hundred thousand zealots, who silently imbibed the furious infection from the lips of a frantic monk’.<sup>96</sup> And when Pope Urban II proclaimed the first crusade at Clermont, there were ‘tumultuous clamours of enthusiasm’, and ‘the marketplace . . . shook with the universal exclamation, *It is the will of God, It is the will of God.*’<sup>97</sup> The lesson for the supporters of the war against France – they constituted, Williams admitted, a majority – was clear. ‘In all public bodies, the opinion of the *majority* has a right for the time, to direct the *public actions* of the *whole*. But it does not follow that the opinion of the majority at *that time* was *true*.’<sup>98</sup> This was a telling argument at a time when the authorities were limiting political debate in Britain. Moreover, modern wars for religion gave sceptics and atheists dangerous ammunition against Christianity: ‘supporters of the *peaceful Gospel*’ appeared hypocritical when defending violence.<sup>99</sup> This was certainly a clever

<sup>90</sup> F. C. Mather, *High Church Prophet: Bishop Samuel Horsley (1733–1806) and the Caroline Tradition in the Later Georgian Church* (Oxford, 1992), p. 256.

<sup>91</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, pp. 62–3.

<sup>92</sup> Williams, *War the Stumbling-block*, p. 6.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>95</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. 23.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 23–4.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>99</sup> Williams, *War the Stumbling-block*, p. 26. Williams was right:

As to war being *unchristian*, nothing can be more contrary to matter of fact; since no people are more fond of war than christians; and religion has certainly occasioned more wars than all



parry of the justification of the war on the ground that France was becoming, or had become, an atheistical state – though Williams evasively said little about French atheism, despite his dismay at growing infidelity at home.<sup>100</sup> All told, Williams was convinced that arguments derived from Scripture, history, and logic produced the same, unequivocal conclusions: ‘there is *no sense*’, he insisted, ‘in which it can be affirmed that a Christian is *fighting for his religion*, and . . . there is *no instance* to be produced, in which he ever did’.<sup>101</sup>

Williams chose his texts with care: ‘Behold! Ye fast for strife and debate’ (Isaiah LVIII:4); ‘Blessed are the peace-makers; for they shall be called the children of God’ (Matthew V:9); ‘Let no man put a stumbling-block in his brother’s way’ (Romans XIV:13); ‘Let us, therefore, follow after the things which make for peace’ (Romans XIV:19). The Old Testament was usually the clergy’s quarry for bellicose watchwords.<sup>102</sup> But Williams cleverly – indeed, almost insolently – extracted the first text from the very chapter in Isaiah prescribed for morning prayer by the 1793 form of service.<sup>103</sup> Williams also included numerous biblical quotations in the sermons. In line with his general religious thinking,<sup>104</sup> he maintained that they provided irrefutable arguments – unless ‘[h]andle[d] . . . partially or deceitfully’.<sup>105</sup> When discussing John XVIII:36 (‘My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight’),<sup>106</sup> he sharply observed, a ‘host of commentators cannot destroy the simplicity of this declaration’.<sup>107</sup> Thus, in 1793, he emphasized ‘God’s sacred commandment, *Thou shalt not kill*’.<sup>108</sup> The following year, when he considered wartime propaganda, he reminded his hearers that ‘“He that hateth his brother . . . is a murderer”’;<sup>109</sup> ‘the *standing orders* of Heaven’ were ‘“GLORY to GOD on high, on earth PEACE, GOODWILL to MEN”’.<sup>110</sup> In his 1802 sermon, he discussed ‘“*Blessed are the Meek*”’, and their promised reward,

other subjects. Besides, can that war be unchristian which is supported by twenty-five christian bishops at home, and ten times as many equally pious prelates abroad? Are not all our wars commenced by solemn appeals to Heaven? And are not all our victories celebrated by public thanksgivings and Te Deums?

Pasquin Shaveblock, *The Shaver’s New Sermon for the Fast Day*, 3rd edn (1795), p. 18. ‘Shaveblock’ was a code-word for guillotine.

<sup>100</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, pp. 3–4, 8.

<sup>101</sup> Williams, *War the Stumbling-block*, p. 23.

<sup>102</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. 9.

<sup>103</sup> *A Form of Prayer, to be Used . . . upon Friday the Nineteenth of April Next [1793]* (1793), p. 5.

<sup>104</sup> See above, pp. 29–30, 48–9, 59.

<sup>105</sup> Williams, *Thanksgiving Sermon*, p. 28.

<sup>106</sup> ‘My kingdom is not of this world’ was, of course, the text of Benjamin Hoadly’s notorious, ultra-Latitudinarian sermon of 1717, and its very use was likely to raise High-Church hackles.

<sup>107</sup> Williams, *War the Stumbling-block*, p. 18.

<sup>108</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. 20.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.



that ‘“*They shall inherit the earth.*”’<sup>111</sup> God would help the nation if it trusted properly in His protection and fully submitted to His will.<sup>112</sup>

Since Williams believed that clergymen should, in discharging their duties,<sup>113</sup> ignore secular influences, he was appalled, during the war years, by the government’s ‘arbitrary interference’ in matters belonging ‘peculiarly to ourselves’.<sup>114</sup> He deplored politicians’ presumption in expecting the clergy to propagate ‘a pious assent to the justice and necessity’ of the conflict.<sup>115</sup> The secular arm, now enjoying ‘a complete ascendancy’, had converted, he said, the Church ‘into a mere engine of the state’.<sup>116</sup> The Church’s ‘ministers [were] considered as so many tenants in vassalage to their feudal lord, who must be ready at all times to . . . crowd to the standard regardless of the cause’: a comparison nicely calculated to exploit Enlightenment contempt for the Middle Ages.<sup>117</sup> The issue of Church–state relations was, of course, topical, given the Dissenters’ campaigns to repeal the Test and Corporation Acts between 1787 and 1790. Williams naturally emphasized his loyalty to George III,<sup>118</sup> but he openly scorned the government’s propaganda.<sup>119</sup> As for fellow clergymen, he despised those who meekly submitted to the government’s commands, condemning ‘the bitter aloes of rancour and intemperance . . . [and] the politico-theological harangues of those who are now ransacking the Jewish armoury for weapons to use in their christian warfare, employing fanciful adaptations of the Old Testament’.<sup>120</sup> He strongly criticized the clergy’s practice of ‘assuming a fanatical discernment of . . . Almighty Providence’,<sup>121</sup> for nearly all pro-war sermons, as Emma Vincent Macleod notes, interpreted the struggle in providentialist terms:<sup>122</sup> rather, one could not uncover the purposes of God, ‘*whose way is in the sea, whose paths are in the great waters, and whose footsteps are not known*’.<sup>123</sup> When the conflict ended, Williams rejoiced at clergymen’s release from ‘the vain task of ransacking the pages of the peaceful Gospel after excuses for bloodshed’.<sup>124</sup>

Williams’ language reflects his capacity for application and his keen intellect. He plainly crafted his sermons very carefully (though it is, of course, impossible to know how far he polished them before publication); sometimes, interestingly, they echo very faithfully the cadences of Gibbon. Although *The English Review*

<sup>111</sup> Williams, *Thanksgiving Sermon*, p. 20.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 19–20.

<sup>113</sup> See above, pp. 27, 51.

<sup>114</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. vi.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p. vii.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. v–vi.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, p. vi.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>119</sup> See above, p. 101; and below, pp. 116–17.

<sup>120</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. 9.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> Emma Vincent Macleod, *A War of Ideas: British Attitudes to the Wars against Revolutionary France 1792–1802* (Aldershot, 1998), p. 143.

<sup>123</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. 9; Psalm LXXVII:19.

<sup>124</sup> Williams, *Thanksgiving Sermon*, p. 32.

found Williams' attention to style slightly too studied,<sup>125</sup> it observed that the 'sermons are . . . formed, to justness of taste, on the best models of composition'.<sup>126</sup> When detailing the horrors of the age, Williams employed graphic imagery – of contagion and ocean storms, for instance.<sup>127</sup> Some of the images are memorable – 'the standard of the *holy Lamb* amidst the *ramping lion* and the *ravening eagle* in the fields of blood'<sup>128</sup> – and one neatly satirizes the absurdity of his opponents' stance – 'the pure ethereal form of Christianity leaning familiarly on the fleshly arm of Policy, or sculking for protection behind the Warrior's shield'.<sup>129</sup> The use of pointed juxtaposition is effective: while 'the ambitious politician is vainly toiling to extend the boundaries of the empire, let all true Patriots unite to serve their country more essentially . . .'.<sup>130</sup> Similarly effective, given Williams' general arguments, is the intrusion of military language: 'the *standing orders* of Heaven', Christ, 'the great Captain of our salvation'.<sup>131</sup> And sometimes the language is simply caustic – as, in 1793, when Williams ridiculed those lay

bosoms [that] are now burning with vengeance at the recital of *foreign enormities*, which never felt a single spark of indignation at the review of their *own sins* . . . [and the] many eyes . . . now streaming for the fate of a *slaughtered king*, which never let fall one single drop for the agonies of a *crucified Saviour*.<sup>132</sup>

One engaging passage in the sermons is a denunciation of the first crusade, delivered, in Williams' imagination, by a man unmoved by the frenzy at Clermont:

'O! christians! . . . Stand still, and consider a moment, before you devote yourselves at the shrine of Moloch, and strike hands with the demon of desolation. The lands you are going to invade are *no lands of yours*, and the objects for which you are so eager to contend, are utterly *unconnected with your own interest or prosperity*. Think not your war *holy*, merely because it is declared against *infidels*, and remember, that infidels themselves, as such, deserve not your hatred but your pity. Or if christian meekness has entirely deserted your hearts, at least call pride and indignation to your assistance. Scorn to be the dupes of *others* [*sic*] *artifice*, or to make your dead carcasses the stepping stones of their ambition. Those haughty princes and potentates who have engaged you to this war, have *other ends* beside [*sic*] that of *religion* to answer, and care as little for your eternal as they do for your temporal welfare.'<sup>133</sup>

<sup>125</sup> *The English Review* xxvi (1795), pp. 381–2. In 1796, *The English Review* was absorbed into *The Analytical Review*: Roper, *Reviewing before the Edinburgh*, pp. 22, 179–80.

<sup>126</sup> *English Review* xxvi, p. 381.

<sup>127</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, pp. 26, 28.

<sup>128</sup> Williams, *War the Stumbling-block*, pp. 26–7.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>130</sup> Williams, *Thanksgiving Sermon*, pp. 26–7.

<sup>131</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. 58.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 9–10.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 24–5.

Williams doubtless enjoyed caricaturing Pitt and his colleagues (and the Austrian Emperor and the King of Prussia) as corrupt and duplicitous medieval monarchs: it was an apt comparison in the eyes of Whigs who believed that Pitt's avowed war aims masked hidden schemes from the French monarchy's restoration to the bolstering of authority at home. But Williams' writing is not uniformly compelling. His picture of the lone dissident – a man 'inspired with the spirit of prudence, and of peace', speaking with 'the still voice of reason'<sup>134</sup> – unguardedly or recklessly displays the intellectual self-confidence and vanity which his opponents so disliked. The dissident's envisaged fate – his 'mangled limbs would have paid the forfeiture of his moderation, and his dying groans would have been absorbed in the thunder of unnumbered voices, *It is the will of God*'<sup>135</sup> – likewise, despite the sardonic humour, suggests an unbecoming self-absorption, an eager expectation that his views would attract notice, the self-satisfaction of a martyr for truth. Problematical issues are sometimes concealed by the sermons' wording: above all, the dictum that the French nation 'intended well: – for it intended to be free' is certainly superficial and possibly self-deceiving.<sup>136</sup> Clever rhetoric sometimes defuses criticism; but only momentarily. In 1802, Williams noted that 'we are told . . . [Christian gentleness] is suited to individuals only, and will not do for great nations to act by'.<sup>137</sup> His response was a series of rhetorical questions: 'How do we know this? Has the Gospel said so? Do we know it by experience? Was it ever tried?'<sup>138</sup> But such rhetoric ignored the monstrous aggression of Bonaparte.

## Contexts

In September 1793, *The Analytical Review* maintained that, 'upon the occasion of the late fast, the same political cry resounded through almost all the churches in England' in 'perfect harmony'.<sup>139</sup> Certainly John Henry Williams assumed the same.<sup>140</sup> *The Evangelical Magazine*, two years later, concurred: 'the subjects . . . [fast-day sermons] generally treat on are nearly the same in almost every congregation';<sup>141</sup> and modern historians have thought likewise. Dr Macleod produces a clear conclusion from her survey of clerical publications treating the 1793–1802 conflict: that most Anglican parsons supported the government's war effort and preached accordingly.<sup>142</sup> Nonetheless, as Macleod notes, a small minority of parsons, along with some Dissenting ministers, openly opposed the conflict.<sup>143</sup> It is, therefore, worth examining the degree to which the views of such men

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>137</sup> Williams, *Thanksgiving Sermon*, p. 14.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., pp. 14–15.

<sup>139</sup> *The Analytical Review, or History of Literature, Domestic and Foreign* xvii (1793), p. 56.

<sup>140</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, pp. 8–10.

<sup>141</sup> *The Evangelical Magazine* iii (1795), p. 258.

<sup>142</sup> Macleod, *War of Ideas*, p. 137.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., pp. 148–9, 153–6.

resembled, or diverged from, those of John Henry Williams. It is also worth briefly surveying other eighteenth-century discussions of war in order to contextualize further Williams' arguments and evaluate how distinctive they were.

One well-known opponent of the conflict was the master of Tonbridge School, the Reverend Vicesimus Knox, not only because of his publications but also because an anti-war sermon, which he preached at Brighton in August 1793, occasioned a demonstration by soldiers.<sup>144</sup> His opinions closely resembled Williams'. Knox accepted the legitimacy of defensive war, which, he maintained, 'is certainly exempt from all the censure which falls on war wantonly and cruelly undertaken from pride and ambition'.<sup>145</sup> He used biblical texts effectively: "'Love your enemies," – "Blessed are the peace-makers," – "Do unto others as you wish they should do unto you"';<sup>146</sup> and chose as the text for his Brighton sermon Williams' 'standing orders of Heaven', "'Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good-will towards men"'.<sup>147</sup> The thinking of Peter Peckard, master of Magdalene College, Cambridge, and dean of Peterborough, was also like Williams'. On 25 February 1795, Peckard delivered the fast-day sermon in his cathedral. The 'duty of the day', he felt, 'seem'd to lead him' to give 'his opinion on the subject of War'; and in his preface to the published text, he crisply summarized that opinion: 'nothing can equal the absurdity of War, but its wickedness'.<sup>148</sup> He emphasized, too, God's judgment on those that 'delight in War, [who] will certainly receive their *Full Pay* according to their deserts'.<sup>149</sup>

Although Peckard, like Williams, thought defensive war was justified, he – again like Williams – nevertheless found self-defence a complex notion – indeed, one so ill-defined that he felt it sometimes impossible to know 'how far it may be legitimately extended'.<sup>150</sup> Other clerics went farther, and, unlike Williams, espoused pacifism. One Anglican clergyman anonymously produced a unyielding pacifist publication in 1798, *The Lawfulness of Defensive War upon Christian Principles Impartially Considered*.<sup>151</sup> '[A]re we to rush into murder,' the author asked, 'and in determined opposition to the will of the Supreme Being, to hazard our eternal welfare . . . ?'<sup>152</sup> A man, he continued, has

a soul to guard from every taint of guilt and disobedience to his Creator's will . . . [and] to preserve *this* . . . he should give up all, even the natural

<sup>144</sup> Robert Hole, *Pulpits, Politics, and Public Order in England 1760–1832* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 222.

<sup>145</sup> Vicesimus Knox, *A Narrative of Transactions Relative to a Sermon, Preached in the Parish Church of Brighton, August 18, 1793*, 3rd edn (1794), p. xvii.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>148</sup> Peter Peckard, *National Crimes the Cause of National Punishments* (Peterborough, n.d.), pp. iii, iv.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, p. v.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>151</sup> On its possible authorship, see Ceadel, *Origins of War Prevention*, pp. 176–7.

<sup>152</sup> *The Lawfulness of Defensive War upon Christian Principles Impartially Considered. By a Clergyman of the Church of England* (1798), p. 14.

life itself, rather than suffer it to contract a pollution which might accompany him beyond the grave, and incapacitate him for future happiness.<sup>153</sup>

Duty to God took precedence over duty to one's relations, friends, and country.<sup>154</sup> For the writer, and other pacifists, the key text was Christ's command to Peter in the garden of Gethsemane: 'Put up thy sword' (John XVIII:11).<sup>155</sup> Disobedience to injunctions to peace, stated *The Lawfulness of Defensive War's* author, was as sinful as disobedience to any other biblical prohibitions – such as those condemning theft, adultery, and drunkenness.<sup>156</sup> The prominent Baptist minister Joseph Hughes so loathed bloodshed that he argued that conflict should be avoided at any cost, and although other Baptists, like Robert Hall and John Rippon, rejected such pacifism, they endorsed Williams' belief that war was socially pernicious, a corrosive of morality and religion.<sup>157</sup>

Williams' anxieties about the souls of the military also merit contextualization. Such concerns were, of course, not new. Josiah Woodward's *The Soldier's Monitor* was first published in 1705 and distributed to Marlborough's armies; in 1802, it reached its thirtieth edition. Its aim was to save soldiers from 'Everlasting Burnings' in the 'bottomless Pit of Horror and Torment', and secure their 'utmost Bliss and Happiness'.<sup>158</sup> It urged soldiers to shun vices and bridle passions, to pray regularly and be devout and virtuous.<sup>159</sup> Similarly, Jonas Hanway, in his *Soldier's Faithful Friend* (1766), warned his readers of wicked men's 'eternal sufferings' in hell.<sup>160</sup> Later, in 1780, the Naval and Military Bible Society was instituted. An account of the body, published in 1806, explained its purpose:

At every period, and in every state, life is uncertain; but the lives of our valiant defenders are in peculiar danger, and, if it becomes one man to be more immediately prepared for death than another, it is surely that man whose death may happen suddenly, in a moment. How much then is it our duty to endeavour to prepare them!<sup>161</sup>

The Society therefore issued Bibles to the navy and army. Nearly forty thousand were distributed between 1780 and 1806.<sup>162</sup> The Society wanted the sailors and soldiers to embrace Christian virtues wholeheartedly: it hoped that they would, for instance, pray for their enemies and show kindness and compassion to

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., p. 8. Opponents countered this, and Matthew XXVI:52, by citing Luke XXII:36 – 'he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one'.

<sup>156</sup> *Lawfulness of Defensive War Considered*, pp. 18–19.

<sup>157</sup> Deryck Lovegrove, 'English Evangelical Dissent and the European Conflict 1789–1815', *Church and War*, ed. Sheils, pp. 272–3.

<sup>158</sup> Josiah Woodward, *The Soldier's Monitor* (1705), pp. 4, 45, 46.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., *passim*.

<sup>160</sup> Jonas Hanway, *The Soldier's Faithful Friend* (1766), pp. 104–5.

<sup>161</sup> *An Account of the Naval and Military Bible Society, Instituted in 1780* (1806), p. 5.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

captives and the vanquished.<sup>163</sup> Thus, 'the Sailor will steer his course . . . to the haven of eternal peace . . . [and] the Soldier will . . . pursue victory till he is more than a conqueror'.<sup>164</sup>

Williams' fears about the souls of soldiers clearly paralleled the concerns of *The Soldier's Monitor*, *The Soldier's Faithful Friend*, and the Naval and Military Bible Society. But there was a crucial difference between Williams' perceptions and the thinking of Woodward, Hanway, and the Society's supporters. To Williams 'the incompatibility of piety with military rage' was evident;<sup>165</sup> he was convinced that military service bred manifold vices. This was a common, indeed the general, view in eighteenth-century England.<sup>166</sup> John Wesley held that 'vice and profaneness in every shape reign among . . . [the military] without control', and Gilbert Wakefield thought most British soldiers were 'the vagabonds and outcasts of society, mere profligate mercenaries'.<sup>167</sup> Williams never forgot a vilely sadistic captain in the fifteenth foot, whom he had known at Gloucester, and who, sunk in depravity, ultimately committed suicide: the very embodiment of military vice.<sup>168</sup> In contrast with such perceptions, *The Soldier's Monitor* maintained that 'the just and valiant Exercise of . . . martial Employment . . . is not only lawful and expedient, but worthy also to be signalized and encouraged by particular Marks of Honour'.<sup>169</sup> For Hanway, soldiers were his '*brave friends*', and the Naval and Military Bible Society lauded 'the valour . . . of . . . [the forces'] brave and generous men'.<sup>170</sup> Even the pacifist author of *The Lawfulness of Defensive War* described the military as 'brave, but mistaken men';<sup>171</sup> though in a post-script, addressed specifically to them, he made a suggestion at which Williams never hinted. He wanted them to lay down their weapons, and, 'by ceasing from contentions for a perishable chaplet and an uncertain reward from men, become candidates for an unfading immortal crown, the sure recompense of the just'.<sup>172</sup>

Lastly, for many clerics – including supporters of the wars – there was much to ponder in the thesis that the Church had become, by the late eighteenth century, 'a mere engine' of government. *The Analytical Review*, which had strong radical and Dissenting connections, gloated about Williams' contentions concerning this:

WHATEVER degree of splendour or stability the church may be supposed to derive from it's [*sic*] alliance with the state, it is certain, that

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., pp. 5–6.

<sup>165</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. 45.

<sup>166</sup> Michael Snape, *The Redcoat and Religion* (Abingdon and New York, 2005), pp. 12–14, 68.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., p. 16; Gilbert Wakefield, *A Reply to Some Parts of the Bishop of Landaff's [*sic*] Address to the People of Great Britain*, 2nd edn (1798), p. 33.

<sup>168</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/117, Entry, 21 January 1807.

<sup>169</sup> Woodward, *Soldier's Monitor*, p. 5.

<sup>170</sup> Hanway, *Soldier's Faithful Friend*, p. 6; *Account of the Naval and Military Bible Society*, p. 5. After the resumption of war in 1803, some preachers praised certain characteristics of military life – for instance, 'habits of self command and obedience': Ceadel, *Origins of War Prevention*, p. 185.

<sup>171</sup> *Lawfulness of Defensive War Considered*, p. 34.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., pp. 34–5.



the clerical body is never so thoroughly degraded as when it condescends to become the tool of a crafty statesman – the obedient instrument, to be managed at pleasure, for the purpose of *exciting and leading the public mind*.<sup>173</sup>

Nonetheless, Anglican clergymen had long seen the risk to the Church's authority from an overweening state. This was true not only of High-Church Tories: 'Walpole's Pope', Bishop Edmund Gibson, had likewise recognized the threat.<sup>174</sup> In the 1790s, overmuch support for the government's policies could, in the eyes of Knox and Peckard, as well as Williams, compromise the Church's integrity. When Peckard preached his 1795 sermon, he pointedly observed that 'I fear it frequently happens [with justifications of war] that Moral Rectitude . . . is not so much considered as Political convenience.'<sup>175</sup> Like Williams, too, he knew that his opinions on the conflict would 'not be well relish'd by worldly Politicians'.<sup>176</sup> 'To write and speak freely is the duty of every clergyman', Knox declared. 'His office demands and justifies it.'<sup>177</sup> And he satirized loyalists' expectations of the clergy: 'Remember the PULPIT ought to be a STATE ENGINE.'<sup>178</sup> Williams' dismay about Church–government relations – the Church's 'situation of absolute dependence, and menial degradation', 'the supernal pressure of . . . [secular] arbitrary interference'<sup>179</sup> – was the understandable, and not unreasoning, antithesis of the total, anti-Jacobin Church–state alliance advocated by Samuel Horsley and like-minded men.<sup>180</sup>

Despite some lapses, Williams' anti-war sermons are impressive. His discussions of the physical horrors of war, and war's baneful effects on society and religion, are lucid and consistent. So are the fundamental convictions underpinning his various arguments: that arguments grounded on the Scriptures were irrefutable; that the Scriptures' teachings imposed clear duties on individuals and states which were never to be disregarded wilfully; that war imperilled the souls of both the combatants and those who sanctioned it; that the Church should not be the 'mere engine' of governments, nor should politicians expect it to be. Yet, although Williams was courageous in resisting the immensely powerful pro-war tide of the early 1790s, his arguments, if rarely voiced by others, were not especially original. They were easily drawn from the Gospels. During the War of American Independence, James Martin, an Opposition MP, could not 'imagine in what part of the New Testament many of our learned prelates have found out that it is recommended to carry fire, sword, and devastation amongst our fellow

<sup>173</sup> *Analytical Review* xvii, p. 56.

<sup>174</sup> John Walsh and Stephen Taylor, 'Introduction: The Church and Anglicanism in the "Long" Eighteenth Century', *The Church of England c. 1689–c. 1833: From Toleration to Tractarianism*, ed. John Walsh, Colin Haydon, and Stephen Taylor (Cambridge, 1993), p. 35.

<sup>175</sup> Peckard, *National Crimes*, p. 12.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, p. iii.

<sup>177</sup> Knox, *Narrative*, p. xii.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 171.

<sup>179</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, pp. v, vi.

<sup>180</sup> Mather, *High Church Prophet*, pp. 250–68.



creatures, even supposing we had every pretence of right on our side'.<sup>181</sup> By conceding the legitimacy of self-defence and not espousing an unequivocal pacifism, Williams denied himself a fuller commemoration in the Church of England's history ('the first statement of Anglican pacifism' was an anonymous tract published in 1796).<sup>182</sup> But his stance was a reasoned one, and his refusal to preach pure pacifism did not derive from a muddled inability to think the unthinkable: his step-by-step reasoning can be followed in his publications. It is his emotional detestation of war, so evident in the sermons, which is harder to explain. Unlike Peckard, who, from 1755 to 1782, had been an army chaplain,<sup>183</sup> Williams had minimal first-hand experience of military matters or men, though he read much about war. Clearly his Whig friends in south Warwickshire contributed to his thinking, but one wonders if other, earlier connections, or chance encounters, as with the captain in the fifteenth foot, were significant too. William Warburton, who had become bishop of Gloucester when Williams was at the Gloucester College School, and who ordained him priest in 1774, hated war. 'I look upon war with horror', Warburton told Charles Yorke. 'I regard it as one of the blackest sufflations of Hell, which blasts all the flourishing works of God.'<sup>184</sup> During the Seven Years' War, did the Bishop impart these uncompromising views – which, for the period, were unusual<sup>185</sup> – to Williams and his schoolfellows? Or to Williams later? Likewise, did Williams, while at Merton College, meet David Hartley, who was a fellow, and soon to be a leading opponent of the war with the American colonies? Did Williams converse with Hartley about international relations, war and peace?<sup>186</sup> Sadly, the sources permit only speculation and yield no answers to these questions.

## Reviews

Williams had sought a wide readership and courted controversy. So how were Williams' sermons received by reviewers?

Reviews published in periodicals were extremely important for the dissemination of authors' ideas. Reviewers might produce surprisingly detailed summaries of pamphlets or printed sermons deemed to contain cogent, fresh arguments, and they offered readers a clear evaluation of a work's worth. They often quoted publications extensively. Periodicals were acquired not only by private subscribers but also by public libraries and book clubs (even in quiet south Warwickshire – which Dr Parr derided as a primitive backwater – periodicals

<sup>181</sup> Langford, 'English Clergy and the American Revolution', p. 278.

<sup>182</sup> *Thoughts on the Lawfulness of War*: Ceadel, *Origins of War Prevention*, p. 174.

<sup>183</sup> John Walsh, 'Peckard, Peter (bap. 1717, d. 1797)', *ODNB*, XLIII, p. 374.

<sup>184</sup> *Letters from the Reverend Dr. Warburton, Bishop of Gloucester, to the Hon. Charles Yorke, from 1752 to 1770* (1812), p. 17.

<sup>185</sup> Langford, *Polite and Commercial People*, p. 623.

<sup>186</sup> Christopher F. Lindsey, 'Hartley, David (1731–1813)', *ODNB*, XXV, p. 609. I owe this suggestion to Julian Reid.

were easily accessible).<sup>187</sup> In 1797, the sales figures for *The Analytical Review*, *The British Critic*, *The Critical Review*, and *The Monthly Review* were, respectively, 1,500, 3,500, 3,500, and 5,000.<sup>188</sup> The ideas of works reviewed in periodicals thus reached a far wider readership than the original publications, while the significance of these figures is clear when one recalls that Lord Melbourne defined the pre-1832 political nation as the few thousand readers of *The Morning Chronicle*.<sup>189</sup> Overall, J. E. Cookson has concluded that a ‘single work could achieve a publicity for the case against the war which could be surpassed only by newspaper reports of Whig activity in parliament . . . [T]he notice . . . [a pamphlet] received could be greatly extended by extracts published in the newspapers and by reviews in the periodicals.’<sup>190</sup> Favourable reviews naturally gratified authors and promoted their ideas, but even hostile ones provided précis of the works’ reasoning. Damning notices might ensure a work’s notoriety, thereby indirectly boosting consideration of its content.<sup>191</sup> Reviews of Williams’ sermons naturally reflected a periodical’s political and ecclesiastical stance. When depressed, Williams doubtless despaired of influencing the minds of staunch Pittites and High Churchmen:<sup>192</sup> such men purchased Tory, High-Church publications, which decried his thinking. But it was gratifying that, from his snug parsonage in Wellesbourne, he could contribute to national debate, and, given his character, it is unlikely that he was much distressed when attacked in periodicals hostile to his, and his closest friends’, Churchmanship and politics. Indeed, it was sometimes pleasing to rile cocksure opponents.

The Tory, Anglican *British Critic* was established in 1793 expressly to counter Whig, Dissenting, or radical principles.<sup>193</sup> Its principles, its founders decided, ‘shd. avowedly be so friendly to the Establishment, That every True Briton might expect to have “his genuine Sentiments respected” ’.<sup>194</sup> It reviewed Williams’ first two sermons cursorily, in a frosty and headmasterly tone. ‘The writer of these sermons’, it began, ‘is a man of talents, which, in our judgment, he might have employed in a manner more to the advantage of his hearers and the public.’ We shall not, it continued loftily, ‘go out of our way to animadvert upon the partiality of his reasonings, or the insidiousness of his inferences’.<sup>195</sup> Williams’ statement that he was ‘a *Non-associate*, and a *Servant* of the *gentle* Jesus’ prompted a barbed, convoluted retort: ‘We pretend not to affirm that these characters can not co-exist; but we must be allowed to lament, at least, that the temper of the *latter* is

<sup>187</sup> See above, pp. 39, 45, 46.

<sup>188</sup> Roper, *Reviewing before the Edinburgh*, p. 24.

<sup>189</sup> Leslie Mitchell, *The Whig World 1760–1837* (London and New York, 2005), p. 15.

<sup>190</sup> Cookson, *Friends of Peace*, p. 131. He therefore notes that the ‘number of editions or the sale figures of a pamphlet are a most unreliable index of its influence’ (*ibid.*).

<sup>191</sup> The Pittite clergyman Edward Nares was mortified when one of his works was scarcely noticed in reviews: Merton College, Oxford, Archive, E.2.42, p. 110.

<sup>192</sup> Cf. Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. 1.

<sup>193</sup> Merton College, Oxford, Archive, E.2.41, pp. 176–7.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 177.

<sup>195</sup> *The British Critic* iii (1794), p. 578.

in so few instances improved by a union with the *former*.<sup>196</sup> The review ended condescendingly, almost depicting Williams as a well-meaning political innocent: 'Mr. W. writes like a man sincerely but desperately in love with peace.'<sup>197</sup> If he read this, its tone probably infuriated Williams: in the 1802 sermon, he expressed his dislike of 'the smile of sagacious triumph over extreme simplicity'.<sup>198</sup> Given the reviewer's contempt, it is unsurprising that *The British Critic* declined to review the 1795 sermon, thereby denying it publicity. Another Anglican periodical, started in 1801, *The Orthodox Churchman's Magazine*, pointedly chose to advertise, but not to review, the sermon celebrating the Peace of Amiens.<sup>199</sup>

The responses of *The Critical Review* and *The Monthly Review* were very favourable. Both periodicals espoused Whig and Dissenting principles.<sup>200</sup> Moreover, George Robinson was a part-owner of *The Critical*.<sup>201</sup> Williams, *The Critical* pronounced, was a writer of 'more than common ability and energy' and 'a friend to peace upon the most enlarged principles'.<sup>202</sup> In 1796, the reviewer – strongly opposed to the war's prolongation – noted that the periodical had earlier described 'the talents of Mr. Williams in terms of high commendation',<sup>203</sup> and now found his arguments entirely convincing: 'He exposes in very strong terms the absurdity of pretending to *fight for religion*, to *fight for God*!'<sup>204</sup> The thorough review included long quotations from the sermon.<sup>205</sup> Even more laudatory than *The Critical*'s comments were those of *The Monthly Review*. The latter extolled the sermons of 1793 and 1794: 'Most excellent! . . . [T]ruly manly and Christian . . .'.<sup>206</sup> '[M]ore full of thought and Christian sentiment, more spirited, and of a better tendency' than other fast sermons, they merited lengthy discussion,<sup>207</sup> with illustrative extracts. Williams' mind was, the reviewer declared, 'independent and liberal', his depiction of war, and its effects, 'true and affecting'.<sup>208</sup> The comments on the 1795 sermon were similar.

Mr. W. writes with animation and force; and we must acknowledge that his reasoning, aided by the resistless weight of the sacred writings, has made a greater impression on our minds, than has always been the case when we have risen from the perusal of discourses of the same kind.<sup>209</sup>

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Williams, *Thanksgiving Sermon*, p. 19.

<sup>199</sup> *The Orthodox Churchman's Magazine* ii (1802), p. 337.

<sup>200</sup> Stuart Andrews, *The British Periodical Press and the French Revolution 1789–99* (Basingstoke, 2000), p. 139.

<sup>201</sup> Roper, *Reviewing before the Edinburgh*, pp. 22, 31, 177.

<sup>202</sup> *The Critical Review*; or, *Annals of Literature*, 2nd Series, xii (1794), p. 112.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., xvi (1796), p. 223.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid., p. 224.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., pp. 224, 225.

<sup>206</sup> *The Monthly Review*, New Series, xiv (1794), p. 355.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., p. 357.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid., pp. 356, 357. *The English Review* maintained that Williams possessed 'a mind of great sensibility, enlightened by philosophy': *English Review* xxvi, p. 381.

<sup>209</sup> *Monthly Review*, New Series, xvi (1795), p. 475.

*The Analytical Review* – *The Anti-Jacobin Review*'s *bête noire* – viewed Williams' sermons from the Dissenting, radical vantage-ground. Its proprietor, Joseph Johnson, a Unitarian, published leading radicals' works in the 1790s, and, in 1799, was imprisoned for sedition.<sup>210</sup> Hostile to the war, *The Analytical* praised Williams and his publications. 'The writer . . . appears to be possessed of considerable talents, as well as of a manly and independent spirit', it declared.<sup>211</sup> The long review of the 1793 sermon, studded with quotations, judged that, 'to every unprejudiced mind', Williams' condemnation of the war 'must . . . be irresistibly convincing'.<sup>212</sup> When George Robinson reissued the sermon, *The Analytical* welcomed 'the republication of a discourse so ably written, and which breathes so liberal a spirit'.<sup>213</sup> 'The second sermon', it continued, 'is written with equal energy, and abounds with manly and philanthropic sentiments.'<sup>214</sup> *The Analytical* had given strong support, in 1789 and 1790, to the campaign for the Test and Corporation Acts' repeal.<sup>215</sup> Consequently, it was delighted by an Anglican parson's strictures on the Church's 'humiliating situation' vis-à-vis the state.<sup>216</sup> One wonders if its slightly gleeful tone when discussing this subject caused Williams to reflect a little uneasily about some of the company he was keeping, though, generally, he was no doubt heartened by *The Analytical*'s notices. Perhaps he would have been more disconcerted had he known that William Godwin, atheist, republican, anarchist, and author of *Political Justice* (1793), had included him, along with Samuel Parr, on a 'Dèsiderati' list.<sup>217</sup> Yet, soon Godwin ingratiated himself with Parr; and, in October 1794, Godwin and the Doctor came to Wellesbourne and dined with Williams at the parsonage. That dinner, at which Godwin and Parr debated about passions and reasoning, symbolized how considerably Williams' life had changed following his decision to publish his anti-war sermons.<sup>218</sup> And, again, one wonders whether the Vicar of Wellesbourne was entirely pleased.

<sup>210</sup> Carol Hall, 'Johnson, Joseph (1738–1809)', *ODNB*, XXX, pp. 282–3.

<sup>211</sup> *Analytical Review* xvii, p. 56.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, xix (1794), p. 173.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>215</sup> Andrews, *British Periodical Press*, p. 168.

<sup>216</sup> *Analytical Review* xvii, p. 56; and see above, pp. 104, 109–10.

<sup>217</sup> Bodleian L, Dep. b. 229/2.

<sup>218</sup> Bodleian L, Dep. e. 201, fol. 39v.

## Chapter Six

### ANXIETY, THE 1797 CAMPAIGN, AND AFTERWARDS

#### The Tightening Net

From 1792, Crown, government, and Parliament sought to subdue radical politics in England.

In May 1792, George III issued a proclamation urging magistrates to suppress ‘seditious Writings’ and ‘all Riots, Tumults and other Disorders’.<sup>1</sup> The government encouraged the authorities to prosecute radical authors and publishers and, in December, when it apparently thought an insurrection imminent, a second proclamation was issued, embodying the militia.<sup>2</sup> In May 1794, Habeas Corpus was suspended,<sup>3</sup> and, in the same month, the leading radicals Thomas Hardy, John Thelwall, and John Horne Tooke were charged with high treason – though they were subsequently acquitted. The next year, two key measures were enacted. First, the Treasonable and Seditious Practices Act defined treason as any ‘compassings, imaginations, inventions, devices, or intentions’, published or written, aiming to intimidate Parliament or ‘by force or constraint, to compel . . . [the King or his heirs] to change his or their measures or counsels’.<sup>4</sup> Secondly, the Seditious Meetings Act banned meetings of more than fifty people whose purpose was to petition Parliament regarding, or discuss changes to, the political and religious *status quo*.<sup>5</sup> In 1798, the Newspaper Publication Act required the registration of printing presses, and, in 1799, an Act was passed for ‘the More Effective Suppression of Societies Established for Seditious and Treasonable Purposes’.<sup>6</sup> Using secret service monies, the government subsidized the loyalist press, and, in 1792 and 1793, helped to launch two alarmist newspapers, *The Sun* and *The True Briton*. Locally, those suspected of disloyalty risked verbal intimi-

<sup>1</sup> *The London Gazette*, 19–22 May 1792.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 1–4 December 1792.

<sup>3</sup> 34 Geo. III, c. 54.

<sup>4</sup> 36 Geo. III, c. 7.

<sup>5</sup> 36 Geo. III, c. 8.

<sup>6</sup> 38 Geo. III, c. 78; 39 Geo. III, c. 79.

dation, victimization by employers, and physical assault, while the Alien Office employed informers and spies in order to track and expose the disaffected.<sup>7</sup>

With hindsight, Pitt's 'reign of terror' seems excessive: as Professor Dickinson observes, '[p]opular radicalism was occasionally in the ascendant, but it never achieved the levels of support which loyalism secured'.<sup>8</sup> But, in the 1790s, the danger of insurrection often seemed terrifyingly real to the government; and that Pitt refused to take risks is unsurprising, given how unexpectedly the French Revolution had erupted and how quickly it produced a bloodbath in, hitherto, the most civilized country in Europe. Pitt's policies proved effective: by 1796, the radicals seemed cowed. Judged retrospectively, it is clear that the government's actions did not permanently damage the constitution – Habeas Corpus, for instance, was initially suspended for only six months – and, ultimately, the measures preserved the social order, property, and the rule of law.<sup>9</sup> Yet, for contemporaries, that was not an outcome which seemed assured.

It is not surprising that John Henry Williams viewed the various measures with dismay. If he detested the loyalist associations,<sup>10</sup> they were, as he said, merely 'self-constituted' bodies;<sup>11</sup> horribly, the principal threat to civil liberties now came, for him, from the ministry itself. Government policies seemed to him calculated to destroy, not preserve, traditional freedoms, endangering the open, plural society which had developed in England since 1689. The legalisation concerning meetings and publishing threatened to curtail the free, and enriching, exchange of ideas in the 'public sphere'. Were not fears of conspiracies and insurrections assiduously and unscrupulously stoked by Pitt's ministry in order to bolster its support in both Parliament and the country? As early as 1793, Williams decried the corrupt times through which he was living,

when, by scattering around him the seeds of *terror* and *distrust*, an artful statesman can attract to himself the whole *harvest of confidence*; when *domestic plots* and conspiracies are either miraculously *concealed*, or still more miraculously and audaciously *asserted*; [and] when an intolerant persecution of mere inactive opinion is held by many to be both *honourable* and *constitutional*.<sup>12</sup>

He scathingly discounted the threat from 'Republicans, Levellers, Anarchists, Jacobins, Painists, or others of this obnoxious and seditious description (of whom

<sup>7</sup> Elizabeth Sparrow, 'The Alien Office 1792–1806', *Historical Journal* xxxiii (1990), pp. 361–84.

<sup>8</sup> H. T. Dickinson, 'Popular Conservatism and Militant Loyalism 1789–1815', *Britain and the French Revolution 1789–1815*, ed. Dickinson (Basingstoke, 1989), p. 124. But for some qualifications, see Mark Philp, 'Vulgar Conservatism 1792–3', *English Historical Review* cx (1995), pp. 42–69.

<sup>9</sup> Frank O'Gorman, 'Pitt and the "Tory" Reaction to the French Revolution 1789–1815', *Britain and the French Revolution*, ed. Dickinson, p. 37.

<sup>10</sup> See above, pp. 85–6.

<sup>11</sup> J. H. Williams, *Two Sermons Preached on the Public Fasts of April 1793, and February 1794* (1794), p. 30.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 27–8.

one hears so much, and sees so little)'.<sup>13</sup> It was a chimera, conjured, he brutally asserted, at a moment 'of almost universal diffidence and instability, when the passions and prejudices of men are insidiously worked upon, and artfully managed, to serve the vile ends of speculation and ambition'.<sup>14</sup> Of course, Williams was but partially informed about the events and policies which he discussed, and his interpretations of politics were moulded by long-held Whig principles or prejudices. Yet, his analysis was, in part, judicious: in particular, conservative propaganda greatly overestimated the danger from radicals – as have some modern historians.<sup>15</sup> Occasionally when preaching, Williams was, perhaps, additionally circumspect or disingenuous regarding some of his opinions. In his 1793 sermon, he praised George III and 'the *piety* and the *known humanity* of our BELOVED SOVEREIGN'.<sup>16</sup> But he further observed: 'happy is it that in times like these the prince whom we obey from *duty* we confide in from *affection*, and consider him as bound with us in *reciprocal ties* of loyalty'.<sup>17</sup> Did the last comment, stressing the contract between king and people, hint at a nagging concern that Williams dared not mention publicly? Did he accept Charles James Fox's contention that the war might advance 'the cause of Kings' in Britain, as well as on the Continent, restoring the Bourbons in France, strengthening Europe's autocrats, and producing a reinvigorated, authoritarian monarchy at home?<sup>18</sup>

Williams and his circle were alarmed and disgusted by the 1794 treason trials. As with the trial of the seven bishops in 1688, so much seemed at stake: 'the dearest rights and liberties of Britons', in Samuel Parr's view,<sup>19</sup> and the limits of state power and the independence of the judiciary. During the first trial, that of Thomas Hardy, Parr was intensely anxious. Horne Tooke asked him to give evidence at his own trial, and, accordingly, Parr went to London, although he arrived too late to testify.<sup>20</sup> William Godwin was visiting Warwickshire shortly before the trials, and, for him, they constituted 'the most important crisis in the history of English liberty, that the world ever saw'.<sup>21</sup> Perhaps he persuaded Williams to attend at least the opening of Hardy's trial on 28 October: in his frustratingly terse diary, he recorded 'See . . . Williams' there.<sup>22</sup> That this was indeed John Henry Williams appears very likely, considering Williams' political sentiments, and given that Godwin's journal notes 'dine at Williams's' while in

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., pp. 2–3.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>15</sup> O'Gorman, 'Pitt and the "Tory" Reaction', pp. 36–7.

<sup>16</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. 27.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., pp. 28–9.

<sup>18</sup> L. G. Mitchell, *Charles James Fox* (Oxford, 1992, repr. Harmondsworth, 1997), p. 130.

<sup>19</sup> William Field, *Memoirs of the Life, Writings, and Opinions of the Rev. Samuel Parr, LL.D.*, I (1828), p. 389–90.

<sup>20</sup> Warren Derry, *Dr Parr* (1966), p. 162.

<sup>21</sup> Albert Goodwin, *The Friends of Liberty: The English Democratic Movement in the Age of the French Revolution* (1979), p. 341.

<sup>22</sup> Bodleian L., Dep. e. 201, fol. 41r.



Warwickshire, only a fortnight before.<sup>23</sup> Certainly, presuming Williams attended, one wonders whether he provocatively wore conspicuous clerical dress – which, again, seems very probable – and whether he stayed until Hardy’s acquittal on 5 November and joined in the subsequent celebrations.<sup>24</sup>

Williams and his friends were also dismayed by the volunteer movement from 1794 and by the unprecedented mobilization of the ‘armed nation’, the regular army, the navy, the militia, and the volunteers. The ‘Face of our Country’, Samuel Parr complained in 1797, is covered ‘with Barracks, which the honest Jealousy of our Forefathers would never endure’.<sup>25</sup> The Earl of Warwick welcomed the government’s plan of March 1794 for men of property to raise volunteer corps and, despite his concerns about arming potentially disaffected, as well as loyal, plebeians, oversaw the creation of Warwickshire’s volunteer forces.<sup>26</sup> He subscribed £500 and Sir John Mordaunt subscribed £100.<sup>27</sup> By 1798, 1,245 volunteers had enlisted.<sup>28</sup> Six years later, the figure was 11,644.<sup>29</sup> Although Warwickshire’s proportion of volunteers in 1803 – below 14 per cent of adult male civilians – was less than the national average, nearly one fifth,<sup>30</sup> the volunteer corps were a conspicuous presence in a county not immediately threatened with invasion. And they were conspicuous around Wellesbourne. In 1799, there were over one hundred men in the Loyal Warwick Volunteers, and, by 1803, there was a corps, raised by John Lucy, at Hampton Lucy, one of the parishes for which John Morley had responsibility.<sup>31</sup> By 1803, Stratford-upon-Avon boasted three volunteer companies, totalling 250 officers and men; the Reverend James Davenport, Stratford’s unswervingly conservative vicar, was the first company’s chaplain.<sup>32</sup> Interestingly, there was no corps at Wellesbourne. Although Stratford had a population which was more than twice Wellesbourne’s, Wellesbourne’s population was twice that of Hampton Lucy, and could have supported a corps.<sup>33</sup> That one was not raised was perhaps out of deference to Williams’ sentiments. Or perhaps it was just felt that volunteers from Wellesbourne could easily go to

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., fol. 39v.

<sup>24</sup> For a detailed account of Hardy’s trial, see John Barrell, *Imagining the King’s Death: Figurative Treason, Fantasies of Regicide 1793–1796* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 318–65.

<sup>25</sup> *Aris’s Birmingham Gazette*, 5 June 1797.

<sup>26</sup> BL, Add. MS 38,480, fol. 139r; Austin Gee, *The British Volunteer Movement 1794–1814* (Oxford, 2003), p. 115.

<sup>27</sup> BL, Add. MS 38,480, fol. 140r.

<sup>28</sup> Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707–1837* (New Haven and London, 1992), p. 383.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 379.

<sup>30</sup> Gee, *British Volunteer Movement*, pp. 68, 71. Colley maintains that the 1804 figure of 11,644, with an additional 213 men already serving, constituted one-third of the county’s civilian males aged from seventeen to fifty-five – more than twice Gee’s percentage of ‘adult males’ for 1803 (Colley, *Britons*, p. 379).

<sup>31</sup> TNA, WO 13/4,571; WO 13/4,573.

<sup>32</sup> TNA, WO 13/4,573.

<sup>33</sup> *Parliamentary Papers* [348] XVIII: *Comparative Account of the Population of Great Britain in the Years 1801, 1811, 1821, and 1831* (1831), pp. 271, 273.

Stratford and join a company there.<sup>34</sup> Some militia men from Wellesbourne trained and exercised at Coventry.<sup>35</sup>

The extent to which the volunteer movement constituted a reactionary, loyalist force in Britain has been a matter of debate.<sup>36</sup> But it is difficult to believe that Williams and his Whig friends did not find the local volunteer companies disconcerting, if not intimidating. Each corps was an embodiment of the aggressive patriotism and bellicosity which they so deplored. The local volunteers, in their striking uniforms, were highly conspicuous, and their presence constantly emphasized to Williams his remoteness from an increasingly militaristic public culture. If the volunteers' rumbustious dinners and raucous victory celebrations offended him, drilling on Sundays was – as like-minded clergymen complained<sup>37</sup> – an affront to religion, as was the consecration of the corps' colours. '[W]e have seen our own troops marched to the house of God', John Morley later complained, 'in all the pomp of military parade, to the sound of profane music from martial instruments.'<sup>38</sup> In 1800, volunteers rioted at Banbury – local confirmation of how easily, as Williams warned in his sermons, vice infected those who enlisted.<sup>39</sup> And, naturally, it was the potential corruption of friends and parishioners which he found particularly distressing. The Warwickshire Regiment, in which Charles Mordaunt, Sir John's elder son, was an officer, was sent to Ireland, and was there during the suppression of the 1798 rising.<sup>40</sup> The carnage of 'Ninety-Eight was appalling: some thirty thousand – rebels and civilians, and soldiers of the Crown – were killed. Williams had known Charles since he was a boy and the two men enjoyed a warm friendship. Williams' concern was consequently deep: had Charles, while in Ireland, imperilled his soul?<sup>41</sup>

The military presence in south Warwickshire was a constant reminder of the gigantic national mobilization. During the wars against revolutionary and Napoleonic France, Britain's armed forces, including the militia and volunteers, reached treble the number mobilized during the War of American Independence.<sup>42</sup> In 1805, the government calculated that the military numbered 803,772

<sup>34</sup> The usual 'catchment' area for a volunteer corps was about four miles (Gee, *British Volunteer Movement*, p. 72); the distance from Wellesbourne to Stratford five.

<sup>35</sup> Warwickshire CRO, DR 69B/16/1, 2.

<sup>36</sup> J. E. Cookson, *The British Armed Nation 1793–1815* (Oxford, 1997), *passim*; Gee, *British Volunteer Movement*, *passim*. Key older studies include J. R. Western, 'The Volunteer Movement as an Anti-Revolutionary Force 1793–1801', *English Historical Review* lxxi (1956), pp. 603–14 and Robert R. Dozier, *For King, Constitution, and Country: The English Loyalists and the French Revolution* (Lexington, Kentucky, 1983), pp. 138–71.

<sup>37</sup> See, e.g., Gee, *British Volunteer Movement*, p. 215.

<sup>38</sup> John Morley, *Discourses Doctrinal and Practical* (Ipswich, 1815), p. 362.

<sup>39</sup> Gee, *British Volunteer Movement*, p. 242.

<sup>40</sup> Elizabeth Hamilton, *The Mordaunts* (1965), pp. 238–51.

<sup>41</sup> In fact, Charles Mordaunt was disturbed and depressed by the savagery with which the rebellion was crushed: *ibid.*, pp. 240–8. '[A]ll the flummery & nonsense in the dispatches to Government, etc is', he declared, 'nothing more than praising a well armed force for killing a mob': *ibid.*, p. 244.

<sup>42</sup> Cookson, *British Armed Nation*, p. 5.

men – more than a fifth of those capable of bearing arms.<sup>43</sup> Well might Williams again envisage ‘a whole generation of mortals . . . arraigned together at the bar of Heaven, as conspirators against its holy law’.<sup>44</sup> If he maintained contact with places which he remembered fondly, the local news presumably worried him. Gloucester, his native city and home while at school, raised the Royal Gloucester Yeomanry Cavalry.<sup>45</sup> The University of Oxford formed an Armed Association.<sup>46</sup> In 1798, Pembroke College, Oxford, subscribed £100 to the Voluntary Contribution for the war’s continuation, while the boys of Rugby School, which Harry had only just left, contributed £52 10s.<sup>47</sup> Rugby School also raised a volunteer contingent, as did the parishioners of St George’s, Hanover Square, the church in which Williams had been ordained deacon in 1774.<sup>48</sup> Winchcombe, where he had so briefly been vicar, and where his forebears were buried, formed an infantry corps.<sup>49</sup>

A possible further cause for concern was the stance of Williams’ diocesan, Bishop Hurd of Worcester. Hurd’s cast of mind, politically, was always conservative; and the Revolution in France deepened that conservatism. When writing to the King in 1797, 1798, and 1800, Hurd discerned the workings of Providence in Britain’s victories or contemporary politics.<sup>50</sup> His episcopal charge of 1800 praised his clergy for doing the ‘utmost to infuse into others . . . [a] ready obedience to the authority of Government, and . . . [a] zeal for the support and maintenance of our invaluable Constitution’.<sup>51</sup> It also described the war as ‘just and unavoidable’, ‘against an enemy the most outrageous that has ever alarmed Christendom’.<sup>52</sup> John Morley was dismayed by the charge:

The Bishops Charge has been usually theological, & never yet, since I have been in Orders, debased by unnecessary Reference to the political Contests of the Times. To Day, the Exordium contained some very acrimonious Language concerning the present state of Government & Religion in France, which have been of late daily improving . . .

Indeed had not this Charge been delivered by so great an Authority as Bishop Hurd . . . I shd. have thought it altogether a very contemptible Performance.<sup>53</sup>

If Hurd were informed about, or read, Williams’ sermons, he presumably

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 95.

<sup>44</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. 40.

<sup>45</sup> Gee, *British Volunteer Movement*, p. 201.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., pp. 89, 217.

<sup>47</sup> Douglas Maclean, *A History of Pembroke College, Oxford*, Oxford Historical Society XXXIII (Oxford, 1897), p. 499; G. H. Bettinson, *Rugby School* (Birmingham, 1929), p. 30.

<sup>48</sup> Bettinson, *Rugby School*, p. 31; Gee, *British Volunteer Movement*, p. 33.

<sup>49</sup> Gee, *British Volunteer Movement*, p. 82.

<sup>50</sup> A. Aspinall, ed., *The Later Correspondence of George III*, II (Cambridge, 1963, repr. 1968), p. 633, III (Cambridge, 1967), pp. 158, 310.

<sup>51</sup> *The Works of Richard Hurd, D.D.*, VIII (1811), p. 132.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., pp. 131–2.

<sup>53</sup> Warwickshire CRO, MI 142, Entry, 17 June 1800.

deplored them; but his surviving correspondence does not mention them.<sup>54</sup> Williams possibly expected Hurd to initiate disciplinary proceedings against him. When Vicesimus Knox preached his anti-war sermon,<sup>55</sup> one newspaper expressed the hope that his diocesan ‘would make . . . [him] an *example* to other PULPIT POLITICIANS’.<sup>56</sup> Moreover, in 1808, Bishop Porteus of London deprived the troublesome Latitudinarian/Socinian Francis Stone of his living.<sup>57</sup> Yet Williams probably did not fear Hurd’s anger. The Bishop was now an old, tired man (he had declined the primacy in 1783 partly on grounds of age). Perhaps Williams, always intellectually confident, felt he could counter any attacks, and believed that his legal studies at Oxford had sharpened his wits sufficiently for any disciplinary tussle. Certainly, it would have been difficult to silence him or, for his political stance, deprive him of his livings:<sup>58</sup> Stone was deprived for heresy – in 1806, he had preached, in the Pittite cleric Edward Nares’ words, ‘a most extraordinary Sermon . . . entirely in abuse of the Creeds, and articles of the establish’d Church’.<sup>59</sup> Yet it is most likely that Williams calculated – quite rightly – that the Church authorities were unlikely to risk making a martyr – or a victor – of a parson who claimed that he challenged their politics principally on grounds of conscience.

Nonetheless, Williams was increasingly isolated. There was clearly a tension between his Latitudinarianism and his fierce resentment of lay interference in clerical matters; but now Latitudinarianism itself was rapidly losing ground. The Latitudinarian clergymen who had welcomed the French Revolution in 1789 were dismayed by the monarchy’s overthrow in 1792. Gradually, most severed their ties with Rational Dissent and edged towards mainstream, Orthodox thinking. Their writings’ vocabulary changed – words and phrases like ‘candour’, ‘liberality’, and ‘the spirit of meekness’ disappeared.<sup>60</sup> By the mid 1790s, most liberal clerics thought that French power had to be restrained. By the end of the decade, their public statements regarding France were conventionally patriotic – though the private letters of some reveal continuing ambiguities and uncertainties about politics, and a few besides Williams’ immediate circle probably agreed with his view of the war. Those who did so were, however, an alarmingly small minority: overall, Latitudinarian influence was on the wane in the 1780s, and liberal thinking declined markedly in the Church of England in the decade

<sup>54</sup> I am grateful to Marion Symonds, Honorary Librarian of the Hurd Library, Hartlebury Castle, for this information.

<sup>55</sup> See above, p. 107.

<sup>56</sup> Vicesimus Knox, *A Narrative of Transactions Relative to a Sermon, Preached in the Parish Church of Brighton, August 18, 1793*, 3rd edn (1794), p. vii.

<sup>57</sup> Alexander Gordon, rev. R. K. Webb, ‘Stone, Francis (*bap.* 1738, *d.* 1813)’, *ODNB*, LII, p. 893.

<sup>58</sup> For the immense legal difficulties with such cases generally, see R. B. Outhwaite, *Scandal in the Church: Dr Edward Drax Free 1764–1843* (London and Rio Grande, 1997).

<sup>59</sup> Merton College, Oxford, Archive, E.2.42, p. 54. The sermon denied the doctrines of the Trinity and the Virgin Birth: Gordon, rev. Webb, ‘Stone’, LII, p. 893.

<sup>60</sup> Nancy Uhlar Murray, ‘The Influence of the French Revolution on the Church of England and its Rivals 1789–1802’, University of Oxford DPhil thesis, 1975, p. 80.

following 1789.<sup>61</sup> The man who best embodied the change was Bishop Richard Watson. Appointed bishop of Llandaff in 1782, he moved no higher. And, having initially welcomed some of the Revolution's reforms, opposed the war in 1793, favoured the peace initiatives promoted by the Duke of Bedford in 1795, and privately argued for peace until 1797, Watson performed a volte-face in 1798.<sup>62</sup> In his *Address to the People of Great Britain*, he maintained that the war had become just and necessary, given that the French had refused to make peace in 1796 and 1797, and now threatened invasion ('Hannibal is at the gates').<sup>63</sup> Watson's argument was utterly unequivocal:

Whatever doubts I formerly entertained, or (notwithstanding all I have read or heard on the subject) may still entertain, either on the justice or the necessity of commencing this war in which we are engaged, I entertain none on the present necessity and justice of continuing it. Under whatever circumstances the war was begun, it is now become just; since the enemy has refused to treat, on equitable terms, for the restoration of peace. Under whatever circumstances of expediency or in expediency the war was commenced, its continuance is now become necessary; for what necessity can be greater than that which arises from the enemy having threatened us with destruction as a nation?<sup>64</sup>

Samuel Parr was appalled at Watson's 'apostasy'.<sup>65</sup> So, probably, was Williams. Or was he?

It is interesting that, after the publication of his 1795 sermon, Williams published nothing until his 1802 *Thanksgiving Sermon for the Peace*. He had many opportunities to publish other sermons, since the annual fast days continued while the conflict raged, and there were the additional thanksgiving services following victories. Why, then, did he not publish more? Did he cease to decry the war? Was he, however reluctantly, convinced by the arguments of men like Watson that, since France refused to make peace, the conflict could properly be viewed as just? This seems unlikely, since the Foxite Whigs doubted the ministry's sincerity in the negotiations and Fox himself declared the haggling a 'ridiculous farce' in 1796.<sup>66</sup> Britain's government seemed bellicose: other powers – notably Prussia and Spain in 1795 – made peace with France. Indeed, Fox believed that Pitt, the paymaster of the 'accursed confederacy of despots', was intent on continuing the war with France until a Bourbon restoration was accomplished.<sup>67</sup> Did, then, Williams become convinced of the war's justice in 1798, when General Bonaparte amassed a force of 120,000 men for an invasion, despondency and alarm swept England, and the French endeavoured to assist the Irish

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., pp. 95–103.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., pp. 99–100.

<sup>63</sup> R. Watson, *An Address to the People of Great Britain*, 10th edn (1798), p. 41.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>65</sup> Murray, 'Influence of the French Revolution', p. 100.

<sup>66</sup> Mitchell, *Fox*, pp. 163–4.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., pp. 164–5.

rising? This too seems unlikely, given Parr's contempt for Watson's *Address*. It is more probable that, after 1795, Williams continued to denounce the war from the pulpit, but decided not to publish the sermons. It seems significant that, in his *Thanksgiving Sermon for the Peace*, he recalled how he had 'often asserted [his opinions about the evils of war] in' Wellesbourne church:<sup>68</sup> this hardly suggests that he had held his tongue for the preceding six years. There is a range of possible reasons for Williams' failure to publish further attacks on the war from 1796 to 1801. Perhaps he felt he had nothing to add to the arguments he had advanced in the 1793, 1794, and 1795 published sermons. Perhaps George Robinson felt this, and thought that repetitive pieces would not sell. Perhaps Williams and Robinson feared that new publications might lead to prosecution. The imprisonment, in 1799, of Gilbert Wakefield and the publisher Joseph Johnson horrified the Whigs and liberal printers. Wakefield's condemnation was, in Fox's eyes, the death blow to the liberty of the press, and it possibly alarmed Williams since the pamphlet for which Wakefield was indicted, a reply to Watson's *Address*, contained, *inter alia*, excoriating criticisms of the war.<sup>69</sup> Robinson was deeply disturbed, and refused to publish a pamphlet by Christopher Wyvill.<sup>70</sup> Or perhaps, regarding publication, Williams was simply daunted by the general, militant, and increasingly oppressive conservatism prevalent in the later 1790s. In 1814, John Morley maintained that 'even a rational and conscientious opinion unfavourable to warfare could not, for a long time, be honestly expressed, without the imputation of disloyalty'.<sup>71</sup>

However, Williams' actions in 1797 show that the Vicar of Wellesbourne was far from cowed at that point.

### The 1797 Campaign

In late 1796 and early 1797, the war seemed to be reaching its nadir. In May 1795, France and Holland made an offensive and defensive alliance, and so the Dutch armies and navy now fought with the French. In October 1796, pursuant to a Franco-Spanish alliance concluded in the summer, Spain declared war on Britain. In November 1796 and January 1797, Bonaparte defeated the Austrians at Arcola and Rivoli respectively; and, in April 1797, France and Austria negotiated the preliminaries of peace. It appeared that, soon, only Britain would be fighting France and her allies. As disturbances increased in Ireland, the attempted French landing at Bantry Bay in December 1796 – it failed only because of stormy weather – horrified the British. Even Britain's naval superiority, splendidly confirmed by Jervis' victory at Cape St Vincent in February 1797, was jeopardized, in April and May, by the mutinies of the fleets at Spithead and the Nore.

<sup>68</sup> J. H. Williams, *A Thanksgiving Sermon for the Peace, Preached June 1, 1802* (1802), p. 9. My italics.

<sup>69</sup> Mitchell, *Fox*, p. 155; Gilbert Wakefield, *A Reply to Some Parts of the Bishop of Landaff's [sic] Address to the People of Great Britain*, 2nd edn (1798), pp. 22–3, 28, 35.

<sup>70</sup> J. E. Cookson, *The Friends of Peace: Anti-War Liberalism in England 1793–1815* (Cambridge, 1982), p. 102.

<sup>71</sup> Morley, *Discourses*, p. 362.



Moreover, the financial and economic costs of the war were crippling. In 1793, the national debt had been £242.9m; in 1797, it reached £359.2m.<sup>72</sup> A financial crisis was signalled in February 1797 by the Bank of England's decision to suspend cash payments. Heavier taxation was plainly needed, but, as interest rates and the prices of consumer goods rose, it was unclear whether the battered economy was capable of sustaining the war for much longer.

The crisis 'becomes more and more alarming', William Windham, the Secretary at War, stated in February 1797.<sup>73</sup> It seemed to the Whigs that the time had come to topple the Younger Pitt's ministry. In both the Lords and the Commons, they introduced motions for peace. Moreover, some malcontents among the Pittites – 'the Armed Neutrality' – stated their willingness to desert the government, because they wanted a speedy peace and were convinced that Pitt would not conclude one; and, between March and June, they sought to create a new ministry.<sup>74</sup> Understandably encouraged, the Whigs decided to co-ordinate the raising of county and borough petitions asking George III to dismiss Pitt's government and to end the war. Twelve counties and a considerable number of towns produced such addresses.<sup>75</sup>

In Warwickshire, Whig gentlemen and their clerical allies decided to produce a petition. They hoped to secure its endorsement by the shire's nobility, gentry, clergy, freeholders, and inhabitants, and therefore, at the start of May, Samuel Parr drew up a requisition to the High Sheriff for a county meeting.<sup>76</sup> In the light of the 'alarming Disasters of the Times', the meeting would discuss 'the Propriety of addressing the King, to dismiss his present Ministers from his Councils for ever'.<sup>77</sup> Their dismissal, Parr asserted, was 'indispensably necessary' for ending 'the aggravated Calamities of War', crippling taxation, and sustained harm to commerce, manufactures, and public credit.<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, he stated, 'a radical and systematic Change in the Administration of Government' was needed, following 'the genuine, pure, and salutary Principles of our free Constitution'.<sup>79</sup> Williams' clerical circle was promptly mobilized in support of the requisition. John Morley energetically obtained signatures.<sup>80</sup> Along with Morley, Edward Willes and Williams signed the requisition, as did a number of important Warwickshire landowners, notably the Earl of Guilford, Lord Dormer, Sir John Throckmorton of Coughton Court, the young Sir Francis Burdett, and Bertie Greatheed.<sup>81</sup> The Sheriff swiftly agreed to 'a Meeting of Freeholders and

<sup>72</sup> Chris Cook and John Stevenson, *British Historical Facts 1760–1830* (Basingstoke, 1980, repr. 1991), p. 187.

<sup>73</sup> Aspinall, ed., *Correspondence of George III*, II, p. xxi.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. xxii–xxix.

<sup>75</sup> Cookson, *Friends of Peace*, p. 161.

<sup>76</sup> Warwickshire CRO, MI 142, Entry, 1 May 1797.

<sup>77</sup> *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 29 May 1797.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> Warwickshire CRO, MI 142, Entries, 1, 2 May 1797.

<sup>81</sup> *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 29 May 1797.



Inhabitants of the County’;<sup>82</sup> and Morley then arranged the printing of handbills advertising it, and organized their distribution at Warwick, Southam fair, and Alcester market.<sup>83</sup>

The county meeting was held on 31 May. Different witnesses’ accounts, coloured by political partisanship, do not entirely concur about the proceedings. It is clear, however, that the meeting was very well attended – it was, *Aris’s Birmingham Gazette* stated, ‘one of the largest assemblies ever known’ at Warwick<sup>84</sup> – and this necessitated moving it from the county hall to the race ground. There, from three wagons, on which were chalked ‘No Pitt’, the proponents of the petition addressed the crowd. Bertie Greatheed delivered ‘a violent philippic’ against the ministry, and proposed the address, asking the King to remove the government, the essential ‘requisite, to the Attainment of a speedy, proper, and lasting Peace’.<sup>85</sup> Sir John Throckmorton seconded the address, and Sir Francis Burdett and Lord Dormer attended the meeting and supported the petition, the adoption of which Sir Francis urged warmly. However, despite the attendance of the noblemen and great landowners, it was Williams who read the petition.<sup>86</sup> That a mere vicar, and not an aristocrat, did so was the clearest testimony to Williams’ standing as a champion of peace; regarding his peace campaigning, this was, perhaps, his finest hour. However, as Williams read the address, those who disapproved of it, including the Earl of Warwick, the Earl of Aylesford, and Sir John Mordaunt, ‘seceded to an eminence at some little distance’, after which the Sheriff declared the majority in favour of the petition.<sup>87</sup> Before the meeting was dissolved, it was triumphantly decided to publish the address in several Midland and London newspapers, and the Sheriff and the county MPs were requested to present it to the King.<sup>88</sup> Williams was sure that the majority had approved the address, and John Morley thought that ‘nearly 3 to 2 [were] against those who opposed it’.<sup>89</sup> The Pittites, however, fiercely contested this, claiming that ‘a very great majority of numbers, and a much greater majority of the principal Gentlemen’ opposed the petition.<sup>90</sup> Likewise, *Aris’s Birmingham Gazette* maintained that the Pittites ‘displayed a great superiority of numbers and respectability’, and deplored ‘the cheering vociferations and roaring of . . . [the mere] *inhabitants*’.<sup>91</sup> The Tories were angered by the numbers attending the meeting – the result of the Sheriff’s ‘very novel Address to the *Inhabitants* of the County’ – and noted sneeringly that ‘a great number [present] . . . were . . .

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 5 June 1797.

<sup>83</sup> Warwickshire CRO, MI 142, Entries, 26, 27, 29, 30 May 1797.

<sup>84</sup> *Aris’s Birmingham Gazette*, 5 June 1797.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> Warwickshire CRO, MI 142, Entry, 31 May 1797; MI 337/1, Entry, 31 May 1797; *Aris’s Birmingham Gazette*, 5 June 1797.

<sup>87</sup> *Aris’s Birmingham Gazette*, 5 June 1797.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 26 June 1797; Warwickshire CRO, MI 142, Entry, 31 May 1797.

<sup>90</sup> *Aris’s Birmingham Gazette*, 19 June 1797.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 5 June 1797.

recompensed for the loss of their day's work'.<sup>92</sup> Certainly, the Whigs' victory was partly secured by the attendance of a large number of workmen from Birmingham, organized by the town's manufacturers and, possibly, by 'the Young Dissenters':<sup>93</sup> a clear challenge to the Pittite aristocrats who had amassed their tenants (apparently 'the respectable body of freeholders and tenantry' who attended the Earl of Aylesford numbered nearly two thousand).<sup>94</sup> Convinced that the petition's adoption was '*in Defiance of a very great Majority of the [county's] most respectable Freeholders and Inhabitants*', the Pittites, led by the Earl of Warwick and Sir John Mordaunt, produced a counter-address to the King, declaring their support for the *status quo* politically, and decrying the demands of the Whigs.<sup>95</sup> That petition soon 'received . . . no less than 3714 respectable signatures' and was sent to all Warwickshire's market towns, so that more could be obtained.<sup>96</sup>

Nevertheless, Williams' circle had much at which they could rejoice. After the county meeting, Dormer, Greateed, Morley, and Parr, along with Sir Francis Burdett, Sir John Throckmorton, and some other hundred 'Patriots', went to the Wool Pack in Warwick and enjoyed a celebratory dinner which lasted into the evening.<sup>97</sup> The following week, the Whigs were still celebrating when William Godwin visited the Midlands. Godwin breakfasted with Morley, stayed with Parr, and dined at Atherstone on Stour with Morley, Parr, and 'a set of jolly fellows, to commemorate the victory, or rather no-victory, gained . . . by the High Sheriff of Warwickshire & the oppositionists, over the Lord Lieutenant & the ministerialists'.<sup>98</sup> Godwin also visited 'Welsburn', so it is likely that he met Williams too.<sup>99</sup> Yet, Williams did not attend the dinner at the Wool Pack (judging by Morley's diary, which lists 'my Friends & Brother Clergymen' by name, but does not mention him).<sup>100</sup> Williams was, perhaps, emotionally exhausted after the events at the race ground, or possibly, given his prominent rôle in them, too modest to attend. But he was a convivial man who enjoyed his friends' company, and for whom the meeting's outcome was ostensibly a very gratifying one, if not a triumph, with the Pittites' bad-tempered retreat. Had he hoped for a fuller endorsement of his stance on the war? That seems unlikely, given Warwickshire's well-known Toryism.<sup>101</sup> Did, therefore, his failure to go to the Wool Pack betoken deeper concerns?

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 19 June 1797. In Staffordshire, the Sheriff ruled that it would be irregular for 'manufacturers and inhabitants' to attend a county meeting: Cookson, *Friends of Peace*, p. 161.

<sup>93</sup> Cookson, *Friends of Peace*, p. 161.

<sup>94</sup> *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 5 June 1797. It was stated in the newspaper that these 'respectable' men had arrived at Warwick on horseback, whereas many of the '*Inhabitants* . . . were . . . conveyed in boats': *ibid.*, 19 June 1797.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 5 June 1797.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Warwickshire CRO, MI 142, Entry, 31 May 1797.

<sup>98</sup> Bodleian L, Dep. b. 210/4, File 6, fol. 168r; Dep. e. 203, fol. 19v.

<sup>99</sup> Bodleian L, Dep. e. 203, fol. 19v.

<sup>100</sup> Warwickshire CRO, MI 142, Entry, 31 May 1797.

<sup>101</sup> See above, p. 76.

J. E. Cookson has sensitively delineated the divergences between Whigs and ‘liberals’ in their opposition to the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars.<sup>102</sup> Comparably, it is probable that Williams had some reservations – indeed, some fundamental reservations – about the address, even though Samuel Parr was its author.<sup>103</sup> Although the petition mentioned the vileness of war, it stressed political and economic – and bypassed religious and ethical – arguments for making peace and removing the ministers. It viewed interference in other states’ internal concerns as unwarrantable. Bungling diplomacy, it claimed, had alienated some European nations and wrecked peace negotiations with France. The conflict was ruinous economically, and tragic:

Impelled by galling Poverty, our Peasantry and Manufacturers have quitted their peaceful and useful Labours, for the Profession of Arms; and then have been doomed to perish by Thousands in the Havock of Battle, and by Tens of Thousands amidst the more cruel Devastations of scorching Climates and pestilential Diseases.<sup>104</sup>

The costs of the war, including wasteful subsidies for allies, were, the address continued, financially catastrophic: despite crippling taxes, the state teetered on the brink of bankruptcy. Ireland seethed with discontent. In England and Scotland, the ministers had almost created a ‘System of Terror’, cowing the people by ‘menacing Intimations of Coercion beyond the Laws’, by ‘the Severities of unconstitutional Statutes’, and by stretching ‘the most wholesome Laws beyond their proper Tone, against real or supposed Offenders’.<sup>105</sup> Williams agreed with all these charges against the government, and was honoured to read the address at the county meeting. But it is noticeable that the petition lacked any religious underpinning. Williams was sure that the war was an affront to God’s ordinances; that it was baneful to piety and obstructed the progress of Christianity; that it imperilled the souls of his countrymen, and particularly the souls of those serving in the armed forces. The petition’s entirely secular wording probably disappointed, or even dismayed, him. Concluding the various charges, the address trumpeted ‘[s]uch are the Errors, and such the Crimes, which we impute to . . . [the] Ministers’.<sup>106</sup> In his sermons, Williams imputed much more to them: not merely ‘Errors’ and ‘Crimes’, but also – and far more heinously – sins.

Of course, the 1797 Whig petitions did not dislodge the Younger Pitt’s ministry. The 1796 election had returned 424 ministerial and only 95 Opposition MPs.<sup>107</sup> Ever sensitive to the public mood, Pitt sought to conciliate the administration’s critics. In April 1797, he had announced a diplomatic mission to Vienna,

<sup>102</sup> Cookson, *Friends of Peace*, *passim*.

<sup>103</sup> Derry, *Parr*, p. 197.

<sup>104</sup> *Aris’s Birmingham Gazette*, 5 June 1797. Over half the British soldiers sent to the Caribbean between 1793 and 1801 died, mostly of yellow fever.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>107</sup> Boyd Hilton, *A Mad, Bad, and Dangerous People? England 1783–1846* (Oxford, 2006), p. 94.

and seemed hopeful that Austro-French negotiations could produce a general peace. He approached the French Directory in June, and, in July, Lord Malmesbury commenced peace negotiations at Lille.<sup>108</sup> The nation was, in any case, divided about government policy: in many places besides Warwickshire, hostile addresses were matched by counter-petitions sent to George III in support of Pitt.<sup>109</sup> Besides, no change of ministry was possible without the King's consent, and George did not want Pitt replaced. Fox had always thought that the Armed Neutrality's schemes would come to nothing. At the end of May, despairing of the political future, he and some thirty Foxites seceded from the Commons.<sup>110</sup>

Nevertheless, the Whig petition, and particularly the proceedings at the county meeting, provoked much political bitterness in Warwickshire, and Williams and his friends were consequently assailed by both clerical and lay critics. *The Analytical Review* had, in 1793, praised the 'manly and independent spirit' which Williams displayed.<sup>111</sup> Now, he needed courage.

The Reverend John Lucy vehemently voiced the anger of conservative clergymen. Lucy was perhaps the clergyman brutally derided as one of the Earl of Warwick's sycophants in a pamphlet by the young Walter Savage Landor, one of Parr's friends ('[h]is cheeks are florid, his brow slanting and fleshy . . . [for years] I have not seen the counterpart of so flat inexpressive a face . . .').<sup>112</sup> Given his Toryism, it was certainly unfortunate that Lucy was the rector of Hampton Lucy, where John Morley was the curate and schoolmaster. There was always some friction over politics between the two men, and Morley was little inclined to conciliate the churlish Lucy. Morley, Dr Parr noted, 'is a little impetuous in his temper, and lays himself too open to the calumnies of those who envy his accomplishments . . . [and] detest his politics'.<sup>113</sup> At a dinner some three weeks after the county meeting, Lucy furiously attacked Morley's political opinions. When 'Mr. Lucy had taken more than his usual Quantity of Wine', Morley recorded in his diary,

he began to tell me that if . . . I . . . spent more Time with my Family, & busied myself less with the Affairs of the Nation, it might have been as well for me . . . He . . . , as if to shew the immense Difference between Rector and Curate, and to give a Specimen of the Arguments he could employ to most Advantage, said that he had made a Determination to dispossess me of the Curacy and School at Hampton Lucy, but that Compassion for my Family had restrained him.<sup>114</sup>

<sup>108</sup> On the negotiations, see John Ehrman, *The Younger Pitt: The Consuming Struggle* (1996), pp. 50–66.

<sup>109</sup> Cookson, *Friends of Peace*, p. 159.

<sup>110</sup> Hilton, *Mad, Bad, and Dangerous People?*, p. 94.

<sup>111</sup> *The Analytical Review, or History of Literature, Domestic and Foreign* xvii (1793), p. 56.

<sup>112</sup> Walter Savage Landor, *To the Burgesses of Warwick*, ed. R. H. Super, Luttrell Society Reprints VIII (Oxford, 1949), p. 2.

<sup>113</sup> Bodleian L, Dep. c. 512, Samuel Parr to William Godwin, 25 November 1795.

<sup>114</sup> Warwickshire CRO, MI 142, Entry, 19 June 1797.

Lucy also ‘abused Lord Dormer, and declared he wd. no more enter his Doors’; denounced the High Sheriff’s conduct; and ‘[s]poke in Terms of Contempt of Mr Williams’s Speech’.<sup>115</sup> Morley remonstrated: “‘Sir . . . he made no Speech, he only read the Address.’” The address, Lucy retorted, was ‘one of the “most vilest & most foolish Things as . . . [he] ever heard”’.<sup>116</sup> His grasp of politics was limited: earlier, when discussing with Greateed and Williams ‘the State of public Affairs . . . [he] had expressed *some Regret* that Taxes shd. so rapidly increase as they had done of late. But nothing farther.’<sup>117</sup> Morley, like Williams, thought him simply stupid (his ‘Weakness of Intellect’).<sup>118</sup> But Lucy’s political outlook was certainly shared by most Anglican clerics. The Revolution had stiffened their pre-1789 conservatism, and they supported the crusade of Church and state against France and Jacobinism so loudly trumpeted by Bishop Horsley (charitably described by Parr as ‘an episcopal Fiend, an impudent Plagiary, a pretended Christian & an immoral Man’).<sup>119</sup>

Besides the anger of clergymen like Lucy, Williams faced the animosity of Warwickshire’s Pittite politicians. Abraham Bracebridge of Atherstone Hall, a magistrate and failed MP,<sup>120</sup> was a fervent admirer of Britain’s ‘much-envied and unequalled Constitution’ and ‘the most unexceptionable . . . form of Government that human wisdom can devise’.<sup>121</sup> With ‘every Gentleman of respectability’ in Warwickshire, he had hoped to resist ‘the destructive measure proposed by the Patrons of Republican Principles’ at the county meeting, and thereby preserve ‘the hitherto unimpeached Loyalty of . . . [the] County’.<sup>122</sup> After the Tories’ defeat, Bracebridge wrote a letter of complaint which was published in the Pittite *True Briton* and *Aris’s Birmingham Gazette* and which maintained that the ministry was ‘obnoxious only to the few who wish to pull down and destroy, and find . . . [its] ability and integrity an irresistible barrier to such their diabolical Republican Principles’.<sup>123</sup> Having described Greateed’s and Parr’s parts at the meeting, he noted that a ‘Clergyman, by the name of WILLIAMS, began to read an inflammatory discourse, much too gross and insulting to be patiently heard by Friends to our KING and Country’, thereby occasioning the withdrawal of the

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid. Morley pressed him about this. ‘“I thought Sir”, observed I, that you were not in the Field “early enough to hear the Address read”. No, he said, he was not. “You have read it, I suppose”. No.’ (Ibid.)

Despite Lucy’s politics, his name appeared on the requisition for the county meeting (*Aris’s Birmingham Gazette*, 29 May 1797). Subsequently, Lucy claimed that Morley had duped him about the requisition, and Morley protested – perhaps too much (Warwickshire CRO, MI 142, Entry, 19 June 1797). ‘I affixed Mr. Lucy’s Name and my own’ to the paper, Morley had earlier noted in his journal (ibid., Entry, 1 May 1797).

<sup>117</sup> Warwickshire CRO, MI 142, Entry, 19 June 1797.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., Entry, 31 May 1797; see above, p. 75.

<sup>119</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/117, Entry, 30 December 1807.

<sup>120</sup> John Money, *Experience and Identity: Birmingham and the West Midlands 1760–1800* (Manchester, 1977), pp. 100, 213.

<sup>121</sup> *Aris’s Birmingham Gazette*, 19 June 1797.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

Pittites.<sup>124</sup> Williams was incensed by the charge. Even if Bracebridge was using the word ‘republican’ not precisely but simply as a term of abuse, it was absurd to apply it to Williams, given the respect with which he wrote of the King, his aristocratic values, and his description of republicans as ‘obnoxious and seditious’, at the start of his first published sermon.<sup>125</sup> Williams was also riled by the dismissive tone (a ‘Clergyman, by the name of WILLIAMS’) and the view that he stood outside the circle of Warwickshire’s respectable gentlemen. He inserted a sharp rebuttal in *Aris’s Birmingham Gazette*:

SIR,

‘A *Magistrate* of the name of BRACEBRIDGE’ having published a most infamous and malicious Libel against me, which appeared in your paper of Monday last (and for which the said Magistrate may soon be called upon to answer *in another place*) you are required, as an impartial conveyer of public intelligence, to state this SIMPLE FACT, viz. that the ‘gross, insulting, and inflammatory discourse’ which he affirms to have been read by a ‘Clergyman of the name of Williams,’ was absolutely neither more nor less than the PETITION TO THE KING, which was approved by the majority of the meeting, and has since been presented to his Majesty by the High Sheriff and both the Members for the County.

I am, SIR,

Your humble servant,

J. H. WILLIAMS.<sup>126</sup>

Of course, Williams’ answer was unavailing. The week after it was published, another letter attacking his politics was published in *Aris’s Birmingham Gazette*. The author, who had attended the county meeting, claimed to be ‘a plain independent Tradesman’, impartially adjudicating between the claims of ‘Mr. Bracebridge, a Magistrate’ and ‘Mr. Williams, a Clergyman’.<sup>127</sup> But he did not disguise his own politics: he was, he stated, grateful to the government, which ‘equally secures to every person living under it, all the benefits he is justly entitled to’.<sup>128</sup> And, for him, Williams was ‘an angry or political Clergyman’; those who supported the petition were ‘in a great measure . . . a rabble armed with menacing bludgeons’; while the petitioners’ opponents were ‘the first and most respectable characters and freeholders’ of the county.<sup>129</sup> That the majority opposed the address’s arguments, the writer claimed, was ‘very evident . . . to every impartial eye’, despite the contrary ‘assertion’ by Williams, whose ‘sight was *not* perfect’.<sup>130</sup> It would be interesting to know whether Williams was enraged by, or just disdainful of, an attack on his honour by this ‘plain . . . Tradesman’, and the

<sup>125</sup> See above, pp. 116–17; Williams, *Two Sermons*, pp. 2–3.

<sup>126</sup> *Aris’s Birmingham Gazette*, 26 June 1797.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 3 July 1797.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

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



other insults. That he declined to reply suggests that he was contemptuous.<sup>131</sup> Part of the ‘rabble’, the letter’s author further maintained, was ‘*hired* for the occasion’.<sup>132</sup> But Williams presumably thought that no-one, not even a tradesman, could accuse him of such base conduct.

### Contrasting Representations

The Pittites’ anger at Williams’ rôle in raising the 1797 petition, and the Warwickshire meeting’s outcome, was not only expressed in the press and verbally but was also commemorated in two durable, though now very rare, medals. The Tories commissioned the medals, which were cast in copper or bronze, with the first also in a base alloy – so as to reach more people.<sup>133</sup> On the obverse of the first one is the inscription ‘AS IF/ FROM TEMPLE/BAR SOME HEAD/ WAS CUT,/ AND/ ON REBELLING/ TRUNK THE FACE/ WAS PUT’. The reverse shows an ass drawing an execution cart containing three men – the High Sheriff, Samuel Parr, and Williams – with hangman’s nooses above their heads. The Whig crowd on the left is labelled ‘WRONG/ HEADS’, that on the right, the Tories, ‘RIGHT/ HEADS’. Above the picture is the caption ‘GREAT-HEADS’.<sup>134</sup> The second medal shows ‘THE END OF THREE LOGGER HEADS’, with the three men now hanged, and has the caption ‘AS IF/ FROM NEWGATE/ CELLS, THREE FELONS/ LED,/ AND ON THE/ NEW DROP TY’D, TILL/ DEAD, DEAD,/ DEAD’.<sup>135</sup> It is revealing that the Tories chose Parr and Williams for particular castigation, along with the ‘corrupt’ Sheriff. Unlike lay Whig opponents, the two clerics seemed, to the conservative-minded, doubly traitorous: subversive of not only the state but also the established Church – though content to enjoy the revenues of Church livings. Of course, the medals were not wholly serious but were grimly humorous too. The second medal especially depicts the men as common criminals. The Miltonic verses were calculated to annoy Whigs like Greatheed and Williams, who venerated Milton,<sup>136</sup> while linking the ‘Greatheads’ with Cromwell’s Roundheads. Nonetheless, the medals clearly show the indignation which ‘an angry or political Clergyman’ could provoke.

<sup>131</sup> When, in 1808, an attack on Greatheed and Parr, *Guy’s Porridge Pot*, was published, Greatheed noted it disdainfully, and only very briefly, in his journal (Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/118, Entry, 30 June 1808).

<sup>132</sup> *Aris’s Birmingham Gazette*, 3 July 1797.

<sup>133</sup> Laurence Brown, *A Catalogue of British Historical Medals 1760–1960, Volume I: The Accession of George III to the Death of William IV* (1980), pp. 105–6; R. Dalton and S. H. Hamer, *The Provincial Token-Coinage of the Eighteenth Century Illustrated*, IX (1915), p. 260.

<sup>134</sup> Brown, *Catalogue I*, p. 105.

<sup>135</sup> Dalton and Hamer, *Provincial Token-Coinage*, IX, p. 260.

<sup>136</sup> Greatheed disliked Dr Johnson’s treatment of Milton in the *Lives of the Poets*: Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/119, Entry, 25 November 1810; cf. James Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, ed. R. W. Chapman and J. D. Fleeman (Oxford, 1980), p. 1,114. Williams prefixed his 1802 sermon with ‘*The Meaning, not the Name, I sing*’ from *Paradise Lost*: Williams, *Thanksgiving Sermon*, title page.



A very different representation of Williams was produced five years later, when the Vicar of Wellesbourne sat for his portrait. The painter was William Artaud, whose patron was Bertie Greatheed's son.<sup>137</sup> Artaud came to Guy's Cliffe in 1801–02 and, besides the portrait of Williams, painted portraits of Greatheed Senior, Samuel Parr, and Edward Willes.<sup>138</sup> He probably enjoyed meeting Williams: he was reputedly a 'violent democrat',<sup>139</sup> and, significantly, painted a portrait of Joseph Priestley and one of Gilbert Wakefield in 1801, following the latter's release from prison.<sup>140</sup> Williams was painted in his black clerical coat. The picture shows a man with a high brow, dark, searching, thoughtful eyes, a long nose, and short chin.<sup>141</sup> The expression is earnest and slightly anxious. (In a sketch by the younger Bertie Greatheed, he again looks pensive, but much calmer – and rather fleshier.)<sup>142</sup> There are, it seems, no portraits of him when younger or in later life. The portrait was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1803, along with another by Artaud of Williams' younger daughter, Sally.<sup>143</sup> In August of that year, a mezzotint of Williams' portrait was published by the engraver William Say (who also produced mezzotints of Artaud's portraits of Parr and Wakefield).<sup>144</sup> It was usual to produce a run of between two and four hundred mezzotints of a portrait,<sup>145</sup> and Say appears confident that Williams was sufficiently well known (or notorious) for the mezzotints to sell satisfactorily.

Nonetheless, respect for Williams, or anger at his stance, was now fading. In 1802, *The Gentleman's Magazine* published a review of his *Thanksgiving Sermon for the Peace*. The review was neither supportive nor hostile, but indifferent. After 'an attentive perusal of this discourse', it stated, 'we cannot find any reason why it should be circulated beyond the pulpit or the parish where it was delivered, though it refers to "three fast sermons, by the same vicar, on the same subject"'.<sup>146</sup> Unsurprisingly, Williams' opinions on war were less interesting or provocative once peace was made. But, as Williams gloomily suggested in the summer of 1802, the peace was unlikely to last long;<sup>147</sup> and, in May 1803, war was resumed with Napoleonic France. How, then, did the Vicar of Wellesbourne view the conflict from 1803 to 1815?

<sup>137</sup> Robin Simon, 'Artaud, William (1763–1823)', *ODNB*, II, p. 529.

<sup>138</sup> J. P. T. Bury and J. C. Barry, eds, *An Englishman in Paris: 1803. The Journal of Bertie Greatheed* (1953), p. 49, n. 1, p. 53, n. 1.

<sup>139</sup> Simon, 'Artaud', II, p. 528.

<sup>140</sup> Bury and Barry, eds, *Englishman in Paris*, p. 53, n. 1; Bruce E. Graver, 'Wakefield, Gilbert (1756–1801)', *ODNB*, LVI, p. 737.

<sup>141</sup> Frontispiece.

<sup>142</sup> Cover illustration. The sketch is now in the possession of Mr Michael Heber-Percy.

<sup>143</sup> A. C. Sewter, 'The Life, Work, and Letters of William Artaud 1763–1823', University of Manchester MA thesis, 1951, II, p. 387. Sally's portrait is reproduced in Prince Frederick Duleep Singh, *Portraits in Norfolk Houses*, ed. Edmund Farrer, II (Norwich, [1928]), facing p. 288.

<sup>144</sup> National Portrait Gallery, D4.798; Sewter, 'Artaud', II, p. 387.

<sup>145</sup> I am grateful to Peter Forsaith for advice about this.

<sup>146</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine* lxxii, Part ii (1802), p. 945.

<sup>147</sup> Williams, *Thanksgiving Sermon*, pp. 11–13.

## The Napoleonic Wars

When hostilities began in May 1803, many Whigs and liberals in Britain were dismayed.<sup>148</sup> Although Bonaparte's aggression – notably towards various Italian states and Switzerland – was disturbing, Fox maintained that war was unnecessary and that 'a few civil words [with the French] would have done all'.<sup>149</sup> It was the British who broke the Treaty of Amiens, by refusing to evacuate Malta as agreed, and the British who declared war. For a man like Williams, believing that only self-defence justified a war, the government's conduct was deeply reprehensible and depressing. But, in a short time, Britain no longer appeared the aggressor in the conflict. Bonaparte clearly intended to invade. He amassed an army of 130,000 men around Boulogne and a flotilla of 2,240 boats and barges. Invasion fears swept Britain: as Bonaparte famously observed, 'it is necessary for us to be masters of the sea for six hours only, and England will have ceased to exist'.<sup>150</sup> Britain was not free from the threat of invasion until October 1805, when Napoleon had moved the *Grande Armée* against the Austrians and Nelson's victory at Trafalgar ensured that an invasion was impossible in the foreseeable future.

Consequently, from 1803 to 1805, there was a general consensus that Britain was engaged in a defensive, and hence just, war. Stalwart peace advocates and those who deplored, or had misgivings about, the government's conduct in May 1803 concurred in this.<sup>151</sup> And it is very probable that John Henry Williams did so. Such a stance would constitute not a pusillanimous disavowal of his former principles, but rather the logical adaptation of those principles to changed circumstances. He had maintained in 1795 that 'we can perceive no grounds for the assertion that a Christian *must not fight*'.<sup>152</sup> Likewise, in his 1802 sermon, he had stressed '[o]ne general principle . . . that *A Christian may not fight, either individually or collectively, except in the unavoidable and unequivocal necessity of self-defence*'.<sup>153</sup> The camp at Boulogne made the '*necessity of self-defence*' all too palpable. Across the country, clergymen preached patriotic sermons on the need to fight for family, neighbours, king, and homeland; and it is likely that Williams preached in this vein in 1803, though eschewing bellicosity, adding qualifications to simplistic definitions of a just war, and praying fervently for the return of peace. That he did is further suggested by Samuel Parr's conduct when war was renewed. Having denounced the conflict of 1793–1802 and Bishop Watson's *Address* of 1798, Parr now defended the war. In a fast-day sermon,

<sup>148</sup> Cookson, *Friends of Peace*, p. 174.

<sup>149</sup> Mitchell, *Fox*, p. 201.

<sup>150</sup> Mark Philp, 'Introduction: The British Response to the Threat of Invasion 1797–1815', *Resisting Napoleon*, ed. Philp (Aldershot, 2006), p. 2.

<sup>151</sup> Cookson, *Friends of Peace*, pp. 169–85.

<sup>152</sup> J. H. Williams, *War the Stumbling-block of a Christian; or, the Absurdity of Defending Religion by the Sword* (1795), p. 23.

<sup>153</sup> Williams, *Thanksgiving Sermon*, p. 9.

delivered at Hatton in October 1803, and published in 1804, he declared, 'I am convinced that, in repelling the invader, "we *are* fighting for our lives and our laws"', fighting as 'self-preservers, as Englishmen, and as christians'.<sup>154</sup> He distinguished, however, between true and false patriotism, emphasized war's vileness but also the danger from France, and again voiced his contempt for clerics who had supported the 1793–1802 struggle.<sup>155</sup> As Warren Derry, one of the Doctor's modern biographers, observed, 'Parr's discourse was [in part] an apologia designed to demonstrate the consistency of his own attitudes.'<sup>156</sup> French liberties had been jeopardized by the earlier war; British liberties were threatened in 1803; and hence, by endorsing the war against Bonaparte, Parr 'was not an apostate from the cause of freedom but was following the path prescribed by his principles'.<sup>157</sup> Williams would have had no difficulty in producing a similar apologia.

It is noticeable, however, that Williams chose to publish no sermons during the Napoleonic wars. Perhaps he saw no purpose in doing so. Following Trafalgar, the war seemed to have reached an interminable and depressing stalemate: a sea power unable to subdue a land-based empire and vice versa. The death of Charles James Fox in September 1806 deprived Williams of his chief guide to national and international politics. Perhaps he also felt outflanked by new writers who stridently advocated an unequivocal pacifism. There was, principally, the Reverend Richard Warner, curate of St James's church, Bath, who, as one of Parr's friends, was presumably familiar with Williams' publications, but for whom, unlike Williams, the New Testament drew no distinction between '*offensive and defensive* hostilities, between warfare of *aggression and repulsion*'.<sup>158</sup> There were other, more personal, reasons for Williams' withdrawal from public politics. He was getting old: he was sixty in 1807.<sup>159</sup> And his distaste for Napoleon's régime may have been considerable. In 1802, the Greatheeds had gone, merely as tourists, to Paris, but, after the outbreak of war, they were refused permission to return to England – a contemptuous violation of the earlier, civilized (if unrealistic) convention that civilians should be undisturbed by the warring of states.<sup>160</sup> Yet, if Williams saw the war as defensive and necessary from 1803 to 1805, it is unclear whether he did so after Trafalgar. On 17 November 1805, soon after news of the victory had reached England, Williams preached a sermon which was probably a denunciation of war: one of its texts was 'the peace of God which passeth all understanding'.<sup>161</sup> And, naturally, he detested the consequences of the continuing

<sup>154</sup> Samuel Parr, *A Sermon Preached on the Late Fast Day, Wednesday, Oct. 19, 1803* (1804), pp. 19, 30.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1–17, 18, 19, 20, 28.

<sup>156</sup> Derry, *Parr*, p. 234.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>158</sup> Richard Warner, *War Inconsistent with Christianity*, 5th edn (Bath, 1805), p. xiv.

<sup>159</sup> See below, too, pp. 139–45.

<sup>160</sup> Bury and Barry, eds, *Englishman in Paris*, p. xvii.

<sup>161</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/116, Entry, 17 November 1805.

struggle. In December 1807, he wrote to Samuel Parr, deploring, for both financial and constitutional reasons, the increasing militarization of society.

What think you of the irregular system of recruiting the regulars every second year through the funnel of the militia? Is it just, reasonable, or constitutional? How long *will* the Lord Lieutenants bear it? How long *can* the parishes bear it? Our poor-rates are increased from it this year fifty pounds, besides the loss to poor individuals of forty more.<sup>162</sup>

Given Williams' general beliefs about war, criticism of the conflict with Napoleon on financial and legalistic grounds was plainly a narrow of angle of attack. But it is possible to reconstruct, at least partially, Williams' wider view of the Napoleonic wars from two revealing thanksgiving sermons published by his friend John Morley in 1815. Morley had preached these the previous year, in January and July: the first when the conflict seemed near its end, the second following the definitive peace treaty. Much of their argument was conventional, appropriate to the occasions. The 'hand of God', Morley declared, 'has been clearly manifested in our deliverance';<sup>163</sup> '[b]y the blessing of heaven . . . our dwellings have been preserved from pillage, our towns from desolation, and our altars from pollution'.<sup>164</sup> A grateful nation, therefore, needed to effect its spiritual improvement, and individuals needed to become 'better men and better christians'.<sup>165</sup> Williams disliked crude readings of God's providence;<sup>166</sup> but his thinking was accurately reflected in the call for spiritual regeneration and in other parts of Morley's sermons. Like Williams, Morley stressed the paramount importance of saving souls – 'of more value than . . . [an individual's] body, than all the gold of Ophir, and than all the kingdoms of the world'<sup>167</sup> – and the terrors of 'everlasting death – . . . death to all hope'.<sup>168</sup> Like Williams, too, he emphasized the need to spread 'the pure and uncorrupted word of God';<sup>169</sup> the difference between 'real' and nominal Christians;<sup>170</sup> 'the danger of infidelity';<sup>171</sup> and the importance of good social conduct.<sup>172</sup>

Morley's 1814 sermons thus contain some discussion of the fundamental principles concerning religion and war enunciated by Williams earlier. Given the closeness of Morley's and Williams' religious outlooks, and their shared Whig

<sup>162</sup> John Johnstone, ed., *The Works of Samuel Parr, LL.D.*, VIII (1828), p. 293.

<sup>163</sup> Morley, *Discourses*, p. 353.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 361–2.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 363.

<sup>166</sup> See above, p. 104. Morley also saw Napoleon as the agent of God's will: the Emperor's 'plans . . . were directed by providence for the benefit of mankind' (Morley, *Discourses*, p. 346). Bonaparte was the means whereby guilty nations were chastised (*ibid.*, p. 357); and when this was done, God overthrew him – the severity of the Russian winter in 1812 was His work, Morley claimed (*ibid.*, p. 359).

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 342.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 348.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 343, 363.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 343.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 363.

politics, one can hardly doubt that, like his friend, the Vicar of Wellesbourne continued to maintain these principles throughout the wars' duration, despite his failure to publish new sermons stating this. Concluding the July sermon, Morley pointedly expressed, echoing Williams, concerns about the fast and thanksgiving days' propriety: 'After more than twenty annual days of "general fasting and humiliation," we now celebrate, for the second time in this year, "a devout thanksgiving." Let it *be* devout', he continued, 'free from intemperance of every kind, free from tumult and disorder, free from self-applause, and full of gratitude to God.'<sup>173</sup> In that discourse, he disclaimed any 'political prejudices', saying that a 'fruitless examination into the cause of the war' would be inappropriate;<sup>174</sup> but, in the earlier sermon, he partly blamed the government for the struggle's renewal in 1803, observing that the Peace of Amiens 'proved to be nothing better than an armed truce', contrived by '*the intrigues of cabinets, influenced by a spirit very different from that of charity . . . for selfish, mis-called patriotic purposes*'.<sup>175</sup> In both sermons, he deplored the wars' length – '*double that of the celebrated siege of Troy*'<sup>176</sup> – and noted that 'many of us have sons now grown up to manhood, who have never known till now one day of public peace'.<sup>177</sup> Like Williams, he deplored the material cost of the wars. 'Has it been a matter of no consequence for us', he asked,

to be excluded, as a commercial country, from almost every port in Europe? Has it been an evil of no magnitude to keep up a standing army of unexampled strength, for a longer period than was ever before known among us, and a navy in proportion? to add scores upon scores of millions, year after year, to an enormous burden of national debt?<sup>178</sup>

Still, what was chiefly distressing for Morley, as again for Williams, was that the conflict had been morally and spiritually debilitating. 'All pride is folly or something worse,' Morley observed, 'and national pride is not less contemptible or less criminal than personal pride, especially when it arrogantly opposes itself to the sacred dictates of truth.'<sup>179</sup> Overall, the war, even though it preserved Britain from conquest, was a 'horrible and long protracted calamity'.<sup>180</sup> Given Williams' despair over the conflict of 1793–1802, there can be little doubt than he viewed the longer struggle of 1803–14/15 in the same light.

Yet, as time went on, his limited protests, and the silence of his *alter ego* Bertie Greatheed, occasioned criticism. In the summer of 1813, Greatheed received a letter from Walter Ruding of Westcotes in Leicestershire. Williams had known

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., p. 365.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., p. 353.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., p. 341.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., p. 340.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., p. 362.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., p. 358.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., p. 353.

the Rudings for years: Rogers Ruding, who became a distinguished numismatist, was at Merton College, Oxford, during Williams' sojourn there in 1774, and his uncle was a fellow; and, later, Williams and his family sometimes stayed at Westcotes, as did the Greatheeds.<sup>181</sup> 'Bertie Greatheed, John Henry Williams, John Parkes', Ruding's letter intoned, 'where are you all, & what are you doing? You once made some noise in the world, but now alas are silent. What is the cause? Shall we call him a good General, who after one defeat, cannot rally & return to the combat?' Where, Ruding continued, 'is the ardor, the public spirit, the oratory once so eminently display'd from the Waggon of Warwickshire? Are they all evaporated, are they absorpt in the general apathy & stupor?'<sup>182</sup> Ruding hoped that Greatheed, Parkes, and Williams would support a renewed campaign for parliamentary reform, but Greatheed declined, while admitting that 'the scenes that have been acted both at home & abroad for the last 20 years, have produced in me perhaps a culpable disgust to all interference in public life'.<sup>183</sup> Francis Canning, the squire of Foxcote (Warwickshire), also broached the subject, and Greatheed said the same, adding that the 'course . . . of . . . events has . . . drive[n] me from public life to retirement and the society alone of a few intimate Friends'.<sup>184</sup> Increasingly, that was true for Williams too. For him, a turning-point was probably 1806–07, when Greatheed importuned Lord Chancellor Erskine about preferment for him. When Greatheed wrote to Erskine, he expected sympathetic assistance from so staunch a Whig;<sup>185</sup> the defence counsel in the 1794 treason trials, the champion of a free press, and the author of a fierce attack on the war against revolutionary France.<sup>186</sup> But the reply, while warm, was non-committal,<sup>187</sup> though it led the optimistic Greatheed 'to hope that . . . [Erskine] may do something for Williams'.<sup>188</sup> Nothing, however, was done, and when, nearly a year later, Greatheed went to see Erskine about it in London, his 'hopes of success . . . [were] most slender'.<sup>189</sup> 'I pressed Williams's business to the utmost', he noted in his journal, 'amid many interruptions and fifty other topics'; and he obtained from the Chancellor a 'general promise to do what he'

<sup>181</sup> Sarah Bendall, 'Ruding, Rogers (1751–1820)', *ODNB*, XLVIII, p. 88; Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/117, Entries, 15, 26 September 1807; CR 1,707/120, Entries, 6, 7, 8 December 1813.

<sup>182</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/120, Walter Ruding to Bertie Greatheed, 28 May 1813.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, Bertie Greatheed to Walter Ruding, 4 June 1813.

After Charles James Fox's death, Greatheed despaired of the Whig leadership, and particularly Sheridan, although he remained loyal to Whig principles. He disliked the Prince of Wales; and, when, in 1807, the Prince visited Warwickshire, he sought to avoid him. In 1813, he was depressed by Parliament's refusal to concede Catholic emancipation. Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/117, Entries, 3 January, 18 September 1807; CR 1,707/120, Entry, 26 May 1813.

<sup>184</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/119, Entry, 10 May 1811.

<sup>185</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/116, Bertie Greatheed to Thomas, Baron Erskine, 27 March 1806.

<sup>186</sup> Erskine's arguments had, of course, been primarily political. Nonetheless, his views were at one with Williams' regarding war and peace generally, and also the rhetoric that Christianity's defence constituted one justification for the war. Thomas Erskine, *A View of the Causes and Consequences of the Present War with France*, 2nd edn (1797), pp. 55–7, 114, 126.

<sup>187</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/116, Thomas, Baron Erskine to Bertie Greatheed, 21 April 1806.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, Entry, 22 April 1806.

<sup>189</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/117, Entry, 23 February 1807.

could.<sup>190</sup> Yet, he knew it was ‘a feeble hold upon a great man’;<sup>191</sup> and when the Talents fell, the opportunity had passed. Thereafter, Williams was likely – and knew he was likely – to remain at Wellesbourne, and, despite interventions from Ruding and others, make less and less noise in the world. The last of the Romans, he would regretfully witness the destruction of so much that he valued.

By 1809, Greatheed had come to see Napoleon as an ‘evil Demon . . . [though] a great one’.<sup>192</sup> Detesting war, John Henry Williams was appalled by the man who had engulfed Europe in blood. When peace was finally restored in 1815, Williams presumably offered profound and heartfelt thanks to God in St Peter’s church, rejoicing that the nation’s trial had ended and also feeling huge personal relief. He had been vicar of Wellesbourne for thirty-seven years, and, for more than half of them, Britain had been at war with revolutionary and Napoleonic France. His stance respecting the conflicts had strained, or ruptured, his relations with his flock, his relatives, other clerics of the Church of England, and many of the Warwickshire quality. It had also dashed most hopes of preferment in the Church. Williams was now nearly seventy years old. In old age, while faithfully discharging his pastoral duties, he would become increasingly concerned to put his private affairs in order and prepare for death.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid., Entry, 28 February 1807.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/118, Entry, 10 May 1809.



## Chapter Seven

### ASSESSMENT

#### Williams' Last Years

It has been seen that, in his last years, Williams chose to undertake personally, for as long as possible, his duties as vicar of Wellesbourne with Walton Deyville.<sup>1</sup> Now, he was the patriarch of Wellesbourne; in 1828, the year before his death, he celebrated fifty years of his ministry there. His interest in politics continued to wane – hardly surprisingly, since the Tory administrations of the 1810s and 1820s seemed for so long all but invulnerable. Regarding his private concerns, Williams wished to organize his finances effectively and make proper provision for his children after his death. And, having settled earthly things, he wanted to prepare for the day when he would meet his God.

For a time, one source of satisfaction for Williams lay in his children, their seemingly assured security and good prospects. However, first misfortune, and then tragedy, were waiting in the wings.

Harry Williams enjoyed a smooth and successful career. In 1797, he went to Oxford, matriculating from Brasenose College, then the most prestigious college in the University. On graduating BA in 1801, he was awarded one of the College's Hulme exhibitions, allowing him to prepare for ordination.<sup>2</sup> In 1803 and 1804 respectively, he was elected a probationer, then a full, fellow of Merton College – the college which his father had joined in 1774.<sup>3</sup> In 1805, he proceeded MA, was ordained deacon in 1807, and was priested the following year.<sup>4</sup> He normally lived at Wellesbourne, but held his fellowship at Merton, where he had 'beautiful chambers', until 1820, when he was preferred to the living of Malden in Surrey.<sup>5</sup> Harry was, like his father, both an able and agreeable person, 'all kindness, good humour, & good sense':<sup>6</sup> as Thomas Burgess, then a fellow of Corpus

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 62.

<sup>2</sup> *Brasenose College Register 1509–1909*, I (Oxford, 1909), p. 403.

<sup>3</sup> Merton College, Oxford, Archive, 4.16, p. 75; College Register, pp. 475, 480.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses: The Members of the University of Oxford 1715–1886*, IV (Oxford, 1888), p. 1,563; Oxfordshire RO, MS Oxf. Dioc. Papers, b. 22, fols 19v, 24v.

<sup>5</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/119, Entry, 9 July 1811; Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses 1715–1886*, IV, p. 1,563; Hampshire RO, 21M65/E2/1,498.

<sup>6</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/126, Entry, 22–8 January 1826.

Christi College, Oxford, and later a bishop, had told Samuel Parr in 1789, the chance a man ‘has of becoming a Fellow of any College . . . depend[s] entirely on his own behaviour, the connections he may make, & accidents, which it is impossible to foresee’.<sup>7</sup> Harry was a balanced individual, who enjoyed a range of interests from socializing and travel to fishing and amateur science.<sup>8</sup> He was adored by Bertie and Ann Greatheed, and came to stand in their dead son’s stead (Harry had been born the year before the younger Bertie).<sup>9</sup> He was forever visiting Guy’s Cliffe, staying for days, dining and spending quiet evenings with the family. He accompanied Greatheed – who was nearly nineteen stone, and was concerned about his weight<sup>10</sup> – on energetic and lengthy walks in all weathers. Moreover, the depth of Greatheed’s affection for his friend’s son was shown in his will: he left him a huge legacy of some £3,000.<sup>11</sup> John Henry Williams was intensely proud of Harry’s achievements and accomplishments, delighted at his vocation, and happy that Harry would be able to live as a gentleman, his wish and expectation since he had enrolled him at Rugby School. On Whit Sunday 1810, when Wellesbourne church was re-opened following its rebuilding, father and son conducted a service together. ‘Harry read prayers exceedingly well and with much composed dignity’, Greatheed recorded, and Williams ‘gave one of the very finest sermons I ever heard’.<sup>12</sup>

Yet, though all went well for Harry, it did not for his sisters. Grace, Williams’ elder daughter, was engulfed by blindness; and by March 1806, she was totally blind.<sup>13</sup> In December 1808, the condition was declared irreversible, although, as late as 1811, the family hoped an operation might restore some lateral sight.<sup>14</sup> Grace continued playing the piano and the organ, learnt to bind books, played whist (with perforated cards), and chess (showing her patience and powers of

<sup>7</sup> Bodleian L, MS Eng. misc. c. 274, fol. 257r.

<sup>8</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/116, Entries, 23, 25, 26 June 1806; CR 1,707/117, Entry, 20 January 1807; CR 1,707/120, Entries, 24 March, 8 April 1813. In 1813, following the fashion produced by Scott’s poetry, Harry undertook a tour of Scotland: CR 1,707/120, Entries, 27 July, 9 October 1813. He also visited Amsterdam in 1814 and Switzerland in 1817: CR 1,707/121, Entries, 10 July, 7 August 1814; CR 1,707/122, Entries, 19 April, 6 June 1817.

<sup>9</sup> Greatheed kept one of Harry’s schoolboy poems, ‘Verses on my sister Sally Williams’, written to tease the subject:

Oh my pretty Sally how beateous [*sic*] thou art  
pleasing in countenance and loving in heart  
But knowest thou not beautys only a shade?  
Its just like a Rose that is going to fade.

Yale University L, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript L, OSB MS 68/2/61. Given what later occurred, Greatheed may have preserved the poem for melancholy reasons.

<sup>10</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/118, Entry, 24 July 1808.

<sup>11</sup> TNA, Prob. 11/1,710. It is further revealing that Harry, following Bertie’s death in 1826, acted as a witness to the widowed Ann Greatheed’s will: Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/107.

<sup>12</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/119, Entry, 10 June 1810.

<sup>13</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/116, Bertie Greatheed to Thomas, Baron Erskine, 27 March 1806.

<sup>14</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/118, Entries, 8, 9, 12 December 1808; CR 1,707/119, Entries, 12 January, 5, 18 February 1811. The possible surgery was cutting the pupils.

concentration).<sup>15</sup> But, despite her accomplishments, and sweet nature, her chances of marriage were now minimal: a sympathizer – seemingly prompted by the kindly Greatheed – left her £1,000 in 1808.<sup>16</sup> Grace lived with her father until his death.<sup>17</sup> He left her half his estate in his will.<sup>18</sup>

When Greatheed wrote to Lord Chancellor Erskine in 1806, his description of Williams' misfortunes was depressing. Williams was, Greatheed stated,

a Man struggling against the growing burthen of the times; scarcely able to keep up his noble head, and threatened with an old age of poverty in addition to those sorrows which no mortal man can cure; his own growing infirmities; a sick Wife at whose bed side he now is; and a beloved Daughter afflicted with total blindness . . .<sup>19</sup>

This picture was exaggerated: Mrs Williams was then in bed because she had sprained her knee,<sup>20</sup> and Williams was scarcely 'threatened with . . . poverty' (Greatheed was apt to complain that he himself had little money!). Nonetheless, Williams' last years seemed unlikely to be cheerful.

Amid the encircling gloom, 13 January 1812 was an intensely happy day for John Henry Williams. On it, he performed the marriage ceremony for his younger daughter, Sally, in St Peter's, Wellesbourne. Only the family and their closest friends were in the church. Williams 'kept great & visible in controul', Greatheed gave Sally away, Ann Caroline Greatheed and Grace were the bridesmaids, and Harry and Greatheed the witnesses.<sup>21</sup> The bridegroom was Robert Fellowes, the son of a Norfolk squire. He had matriculated from New College, Oxford, in 1797, the year of Harry Williams' matriculation.<sup>22</sup> Possibly the two young men became friends at the University, and Harry introduced Fellowes to Sally; though perhaps the introduction was made by Fellowes' kinsman, another Robert Fellowes, one of Samuel Parr's protégés.<sup>23</sup> Sally's husband was 'unaffected, gentlemanlike & well looking', a man who enjoyed fishing and shooting (he was a crack shot).<sup>24</sup> He was also the heir to a fine estate at Shotesham, south of Norwich. The Fellowes family had bought it in 1731, and, between 1784 and 1789, the young John Soane built a spacious and beautiful mansion for Robert's father.<sup>25</sup> Robert

<sup>15</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/116, Entry, 28 March 1806; CR 1,707/117, Entry, 7 January 1807; CR 1,707/118, Entry, 22 September 1808; CR 1,707/120, Entry, 2 September, Poem, 3 December 1813.

<sup>16</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/118, Entry, 29 December 1808.

<sup>17</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/126, Entry, 10 January 1828.

<sup>18</sup> TNA, Prob, 11/1,759.

<sup>19</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/116, Bertie Greatheed to Thomas, Baron Erskine, 27 March 1806.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., Entries, 2, 3, 12 March 1806.

<sup>21</sup> Warwickshire CRO, 69/4, Entry, 13 January 1812; CR 1,707/119, Entry, 13 January 1812.

<sup>22</sup> Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses 1715–1886*, II (Oxford, 1888), p. 455.

<sup>23</sup> Alexander Gordon, rev. Mark Clement, 'Fellowes, Robert (1770–1847)', *ODNB*, XIX, p. 276.

<sup>24</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/119, Entry, 3 November 1811; CR 1,707/120, Entries, 4 July 1812, 8 April 1813.

<sup>25</sup> Nikolaus Pevsner and Bill Wilson, *Norfolk, Volume II: North-West and South*, 2nd edn (Harmondsworth, 1999, repr. 2000), p. 648.

Fellowes was to live the life of a country squire there, and became a notable figure in the county, acting as a JP (there was a ‘Justice room’ at Shotesham Park) and one of Norfolk’s deputy lieutenants.<sup>26</sup> But, for their immediate needs, the couple acquired a house at Wasperton, a few miles from Wellesbourne.<sup>27</sup> Williams can scarcely have hoped for a better match for Sally. She now belonged to the landed élite and had a clear position in county society. He hoped that her son, his grandson, would inherit the Shotesham estate. Indirectly, therefore, the marriage amply confirmed Williams’ own place in polite society, recognition of which he had always craved and valued.

However, Williams’ hopes for the Fellowes match were tragically not fulfilled. In 1812, Sally became pregnant, but the child was still-born.<sup>28</sup> She was soon pregnant again, enjoyed good health throughout her pregnancy, and, in April 1814, gave birth to a daughter.<sup>29</sup> But a week afterwards, Sally developed a fever and, a few days later, she died at home at Wasperton.<sup>30</sup> The family was ‘prostrate and astonished’, though, noted Greatheed, ‘[e]ach is as a christian ought to be’.<sup>31</sup> The Williamses and Fellowes went to Guy’s Cliffe, where for several days they read sermons on appropriate texts.<sup>32</sup> Williams was too devastated to conduct the funeral himself;<sup>33</sup> and, for over two years afterwards, whenever he went past the house at Wasperton, he shut his eyes.<sup>34</sup> Horribly, this was the very moment when, following Napoleon’s abdication, the pacification of Europe was achieved: the pacification for which Williams had for so long prayed and the occasion, under different circumstances, for joyful celebration as well as solemn thanksgiving. Instead, the family remained ‘[q]uite unhinged and broken up’.<sup>35</sup> When, in December, Williams came to compose the epitaph for Sally’s tomb, he decided to use it as an admonition about the uncertainty of life. This stone, he wrote, ‘stands here for a *Warning* – to the *Young* – the *Happy* and the *Prosperous*. – It says to them – “*Be ye also ready*”! – Accept your portion with thankfulness; but rejoice in it with trembling; for sorrow is ever at hand, and so are Death and Judgment.’<sup>36</sup>

While a fellow of Merton, Harry could not marry, but, shortly after securing the Malden living, he did so. ‘Today our Harry & Selina were married’, Bertie Greatheed happily recorded in his journal on 22 June 1820.<sup>37</sup> The bride, Selina Johnson, was a member of a family whom the Williamses had known for years.

<sup>26</sup> Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses 1715–1886*, II, p. 455.

<sup>27</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/119, Entry, 21 October 1811.

<sup>28</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/120, Entry, 28 February 1813.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, Entries, 4 August 1813, 19 February, 8 April 1814.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, Entries, 16, 19 April 1814.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, Entry, 19 April 1814. For Greatheed, Sally’s death was ‘Vicenza come again!’ (*ibid.*).

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, Entries, 20, 21, 22, 24 April 1814.

<sup>33</sup> Warwickshire CRO, DR 754/2, Entry, 23 April 1814.

<sup>34</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/122, Entry, 19 September 1816.

<sup>35</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/120, Entry, 25 June 1814.

<sup>36</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/121, Entry, 31 December 1814.

<sup>37</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/123, Entry, 22 June 1820. Greatheed continued: ‘A happy event; but all changes are painful. No more of the same society: no more casual & frequent coming over and staying here! I delight that they are married, but the bachelor & the little maid were pleasant to me.’

The marriage produced a daughter, Louisa Anna, baptized in December 1821.<sup>38</sup> Williams, always a devoted family man, doubtless delighted in both his grandchildren. Nevertheless, there were fresh disappointments – though less bitter ones than Sally’s death – in his last years too. He feared that his name would not be perpetuated when he, descended from a branch of an old and honourable family, died; and, indeed, when Harry died in 1834, he had no son.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, Robert Fellowes remarried, and his elder son by his second wife became the heir to Shotesham Park.<sup>40</sup> And, as the shadows lengthened, Williams probably contemplated, with some regret, what might have been, had not his political activities obstructed further preferment in the Church. Given his abilities, he could have expected to end his career in a more important station than a country benefice – albeit an agreeable one. Edward Gibbon thought his last years would be a time of ‘autumnal felicity’;<sup>41</sup> but Gibbon’s ambitions had been satisfied when, aged fifty, he had completed *The Decline and Fall*. Yet, if his youthful ambitions were unfulfilled, Williams, unlike Gibbon, believed utterly in the afterlife, and could find consolation accordingly. In his last years, he perhaps recalled a kindly comment from a review praising one of his published sermons: ‘The author may not be rewarded with a bishoprick, but he may obtain what is of still greater value.’<sup>42</sup>

Williams became increasingly isolated during this period. First, there was the departure of friends and family. In 1810, John Morley moved to Yorkshire.<sup>43</sup> In 1814, he became rector of Bradfield Combust in Suffolk, combining the living with the curacy of an Ipswich church. The following year, he published a collection of his sermons, *Discourses Doctrinal and Practical*, to which many of his Warwickshire friends subscribed, including Williams and Harry Williams, Bertie and Ann Greathed, and Samuel Parr.<sup>44</sup> So did some of his political opponents, notably John Lucy and James Davenport.<sup>45</sup> Williams lost a true friend when Morley moved; though, in 1816, Morley was appointed vicar of Aylesbury, only some thirty miles from Wellesbourne.<sup>46</sup> Of Williams’ children, Sally spent three months at Shotesham in 1812 – ‘a change which’, at the time, occasioned ‘much emotion’<sup>47</sup> – and Harry had moved to Surrey by August 1820 (Greadthed had hoped to obtain a Warwickshire benefice for him).<sup>48</sup> Then, in the 1820s, death

<sup>38</sup> Surrey History Centre, 2,473/1/3, Entry, 2 December 1821.

<sup>39</sup> *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, New Series, ii (1834), p. 554.

<sup>40</sup> Sir Bernard Burke, *A Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Landed Gentry of Great Britain and Ireland*, 9th edn, ed. Ashworth Peter Burke, I (1898), p. 499.

<sup>41</sup> J. B. Bury, ed., *Autobiography of Edward Gibbon* (Oxford, 1907, repr. 1978), p. 220.

<sup>42</sup> *The Monthly Review*, New Series, xvi (1795), p. 475.

<sup>43</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/119, Entry, 15 May 1810.

<sup>44</sup> John Morley, *Discourses Doctrinal and Practical* (Ipswich, 1815), pp. xix, xxii, xxiii.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. xviii, xx.

<sup>46</sup> George Lipscomb, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Buckingham*, II (1847), p. 45.

<sup>47</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/120, Entry, 16 July 1812.

<sup>48</sup> Surrey History Centre, 2,473/1/3, Entry, 5 August 1820; Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/119, Entry, 15 November 1810.

claimed a number of Williams' loved-ones and friends. His wife, Sarah, who for some years had suffered with angina, died suddenly in August 1820.<sup>49</sup> The coincidence with Harry's departure was awful: in November, Bertie Greatheed visited Williams and later noted in his diary, 'Wellsbourne [*sic*] is a new place! Its old character totally gone.'<sup>50</sup> Samuel Parr died in 1825. Then Greatheed, Williams' closest friend for over forty years, died in January 1826. On his deathbed, he dictated the final journal entries and, poignantly, the very last words were: 'I was able to receive a short visit from Innes & Williams, who kindly came over to enquire after me.'<sup>51</sup> Greatheed left Williams a bequest of £300.<sup>52</sup> In one of his sermons, Williams had observed that old friends were best fitted to '“bear each others [*sic*] increasing burdens,” & to sooth the infirmities of declining age with mutual consolation'.<sup>53</sup> And, movingly, he had envisaged 'the dreadful apparition of being left alone on the earth': 'What wd. become of me', he had asked, 'if my old companions shd. all die before me?'<sup>54</sup> For him, the answer was clear:

When my Lovers, & my Friends are far removed, the Lord himself will draw nearer to me; he can & will so bless me with such an inward sense of his presence, as will more than compensate for the absence of all that was dear to me on the Earth . . . After a whole day of storm & agitation, I will not account it any great misfortune to have one hour of calm serenity before my sun goes down . . . I will 'acquaint myself with God & be at Peace'.<sup>55</sup>

Obviously Williams knew that he would die soon. His health gradually declined: he developed gout, and, in 1817, he had a long operation for a fistula which had troubled him for years, and this resulted in a great loss of blood.<sup>56</sup> He sometimes became depressed.<sup>57</sup> In 1816, Greatheed noted that his '[h]abits of home staying are growing upon him which I dont like to see'.<sup>58</sup> Williams had his wife's body buried next to his mother's grave, thereby establishing a family plot in Wellesbourne's churchyard. In 1823, he made his will, splitting his estate equally between Harry and Grace.<sup>59</sup> In late December 1825, a fortnight before his own death, Greatheed visited Wellesbourne and passed a quiet day there. Williams 'is very well upon the whole,' Greatheed noted, 'but ages; Wellsbourne [*sic*] is a changed place to him; he is weary of it'.<sup>60</sup> In May 1826, Williams and

<sup>49</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/123, Entry, 17 August 1820; DR 69/6, Entry, 20 August 1820.

<sup>50</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/123, Entry, 20 November 1820. Even the fine elms had gone.

<sup>51</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/126, Entry, 12 January 1826. George Innes was the perpetual curate of Milverton.

<sup>52</sup> TNA, Prob, 11/1,710.

<sup>53</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/34, Sermon on John XIII:1, unfoliated.

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

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/121, Entry, 5 October 1815; CR 1,707/122, Entries, 17 April, 16 August 1817.

<sup>57</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/122, Entry, 24 April 1816.

<sup>58</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/121, Entry, 1 February 1816.

<sup>59</sup> TNA, Prob, 11/1,759.

<sup>60</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/126, Entry, 28 December 1825.



Grace visited Guy's Cliffe, and Charles Bertie Percy, Ann Caroline's husband, observed that 'Mr. Williams is getting old & fretful.'<sup>61</sup> By 1828, it seems that Williams and Grace had moved to Leamington;<sup>62</sup> and now he spiritually prepared for death. As he had once told his congregation, it was necessary, like St Paul, to 'die daily'.<sup>63</sup> 'Every one of us', he had stated, 'may . . . form to himself a mental picture, drawn with tolerable accuracy, of the last scene, in which he is to act his mortal part.'<sup>64</sup> Then, powerfully, he had moved from the third to the first person. 'I behold the very faces that will then surround me, and which I am to see for the last time . . . I behold myself giving my last example, and affording my last testimony to the power of that holy faith, which has been common to us all.' 'Brethren', he had concluded, 'we must not shrink from these contemplations . . . [T]hey may be repeated, and increased, even to a degree of placid satisfaction.'<sup>65</sup> Then,

we shall learn by God's grace to look *through* them, and *beyond* them. – The more frequent, and the more steady our view, the more clearly will the expected reward appear before us; the more strongly shall we be fortified, and comforted by the thought that we are following, in all things, the example of that blessed Saviour, who for the Joy that was set before him, endured the Cross, despised the shame, and is for ever set down on the right hand of the Majesty on High.<sup>66</sup>

When, in 1811, Greateed had read this sermon at family prayers, he found it 'moved me so that it was with difficulty I could proceed to the end'.<sup>67</sup>

John Henry Williams died, aged eighty-two, on 12 May 1829 at his home in Leamington. Six days later, he was buried, next to his wife Sarah, in the churchyard at Wellesbourne.<sup>68</sup> His political endeavours, almost belonging to another age, were largely forgotten;<sup>69</sup> indeed, rather painfully, the clergyman who conducted the funeral, the Reverend John Watson, had been born after the conflict of 1793–1802 which Williams had so vociferously decried.<sup>70</sup> But, in his last years, Williams was little concerned with his worldly reputation. Far more important were the account which he would render to God at the last judgment and his hopes that, through preaching the Gospel to others, he had saved his own soul.<sup>71</sup> The positioning of the grave, by the church porch, was, presumably, a mark of humility and contempt for the world: future parishioners, who had not

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., Entry, 20 May 1826.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., Entry, 10 January 1828.

<sup>63</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/34, Sermon on John XVIII:4, unfoliated; I Corinthians XV:31.

<sup>64</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/34, Sermon on John XVIII:4, unfoliated.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/119, Entry, 12 May 1811.

<sup>68</sup> Worcestershire RO, BA 2,245/24, Ref. S132–8, p. 41, No. 326.

<sup>69</sup> See above, p. 1.

<sup>70</sup> J. A. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses . . . Part II. From 1752 to 1900*, VI (Cambridge, 1954), p. 372.

<sup>71</sup> J. H. Williams, *Two Sermons Preached on the Public Fasts of April 1793, and February 1794* (1794), pp. 50–1.



known him, would unconcernedly walk by or over it when entering and leaving St Peter's.<sup>72</sup> Similarly humble was the tombstone, with its bald inscription 'IHW 1829' and no epitaph commemorating Williams' life and virtues. Yet perhaps the choice of 'I', not 'J', suggests just a last, self-indulgent, flicker of Williams' pride in his gentlemanly status: the abbreviation indicated the Latin, and hence patrician, form of John, 'Iohannes'.<sup>73</sup>

### The Death of a Whig

The last two years of John Henry Williams' life were years of huge importance in British politics. In 1828, Parliament repealed the Test and Corporation Acts. In 1829, a month before Williams' death, George IV gave his assent to Catholic emancipation. It is inconceivable that Williams did not welcome these measures, presuming that he maintained to the end a minimal interest in politics,<sup>74</sup> his fundamental Whig principles, and his friendly relations with Protestant Dissenters and Roman Catholics. Had he lived a little longer, he would have applauded the Whigs' return to office and would probably have welcomed their Reform Act of 1832. In 1793, he had hoped that 'the voice of the people [might soon] be heard . . . in . . . [an] assembly of their *own real representatives*'.<sup>75</sup>

Of course, Williams' use of 'the people' was ambiguous. By it, did he mean 'the political nation' or the whole, male nation? Probably he meant – like the Foxite Whigs – the propertied and educated, men immune from political bribery or bullying, and capable of judicious reflection on political issues: 'the principles of Whiggism . . . those old fashioned ones', to which Greatheed adhered.<sup>76</sup> Williams was born in the reign of George IV's great-grandfather, able to remember the Seven Years' War; in the 1820s and 1830s, his world was passing. It was probably good that he died when he did. If the Test and Corporation Acts' repeal, Catholic Emancipation, and even the 1832 Reform Act accorded with his principles, some of the Whigs' pronouncements and reforms in the 1830s violated them. The Tory–Church alliance, epitomized by most bishops' hostility to the Reform Bill, had stoked Whig politicians' criticisms of the established Church.

<sup>72</sup> Though, as Hugh Trevor-Roper argued in a memorable Oxford University sermon On the Sin of Pride in 1979, such ostentatious humility could itself sometimes constitute a repellent species of pride; and could back-fire. 'Speaker Lenthall [1591–1662] . . . directed, in his will, that his tomb should be inscribed with two words only: *Vermis sum*, I am a worm: an epitaph, it has been observed, whose humility should not blind us to its essential truth.' Christ Church, Oxford, Archive, SOC.DACRE 2/1/43, fols 1–2. I am very grateful to Mrs Judith Curthoys for sending me a copy of this sermon.

<sup>73</sup> That Williams preferred 'I' to 'J' is suggested by the use, with his name, of the former in the list of the subscribers to John Morley's *Discourses Doctrinal and Practical*: 'J' was used in other names listed. Morley, *Discourses*, pp. xvii–xxiii.

<sup>74</sup> He voted in the 1820 general election for the Whig candidate, Francis Lawley: *The Poll of the Freeholders of Warwickshire, at the Election at Warwick, on the 31st October, and 1st, 2d, 3d, 4th, 6th, and 7th November, 1820* (Birmingham, 1821), p. 62. I am grateful to Margaret Escott for information about this election.

<sup>75</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. 30.

<sup>76</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/120, Bertie Greatheed to Walter Ruding, 4 June 1813.

The bishops, said Earl Grey in 1831, should ‘set their house in order, and prepare to meet the coming storm’.<sup>77</sup> In the 1790s, Williams had deplored the Church’s ‘situation of . . . menial degradation’ relative to the state, the clergy’s craven subservience to politicians who – confident of that continuing posture, and in return for it – protected the Church from its critics and enemies.<sup>78</sup> However, in the 1830s under the Whigs, the state itself seemed to be the Church’s declared enemy, determined to effect ecclesiastical change and brook no opposition.<sup>79</sup> There was nothing more mortifying, Williams had maintained in 1793, than lay interference in matters belonging peculiarly to the Church.<sup>80</sup> Had he lived into the 1830s, would he have deserted the Whig party, having supported it for so long, and supported High Tories in defence of the Church under siege? Or would he have accepted the state’s intervention, or, at least, convinced himself that the Whigs’ reforms – some of which resembled plans advocated by Bishop Watson in the 1780s<sup>81</sup> – were needed? It was fortunate that he was not faced with this new, ‘galling alternative’.

### A Life in Context

John Henry Williams enjoyed a long life. How should it be viewed in the context of his own age, and, indeed, more generally?

In his *History of England*, Macaulay produced a picture of the late-seventeenth-century rural clergy – ‘a plebeian class’, ‘not much more refined . . . than small farmers or upper servants’<sup>82</sup> – which is notoriously a caricature.<sup>83</sup> But he also noted that ‘the individual clergyman, as compared with the individual gentleman’, under the later Stuarts, ‘ranked much lower than in our days’;<sup>84</sup> and certainly the clergy’s wealth and status rose during Williams’ lifetime. Overall, clerical incomes increased greatly – the result of rising revenues from the land generally, and lucrative tithe commutation when land was enclosed. By the early nineteenth century, two-thirds of livings were worth not less than £150, then deemed the clerical poverty line, though an income earned by only 7/8 per cent of contemporaries.<sup>85</sup> Incomes were enhanced by pluralism; and many clerics had

<sup>77</sup> *Hansard’s Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd Series, VII (1832), col. 968. But for the Whigs’ pragmatic view of the Church, despite such hostile rhetoric, see G. F. A. Best, ‘The Whigs and the Church Establishment in the Age of Grey and Holland’, *History* xlv (1960), pp. 103–18.

<sup>78</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, pp. v–vi.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. William Palmer, *A Narrative of Events Connected with the Publication of the Tracts for the Times* (Oxford, 1843), pp. 4–5.

<sup>80</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. vi.

<sup>81</sup> Richard Brent, *Liberal Anglican Politics: Whiggery, Religion, and Reform 1830–1841* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 3–4.

<sup>82</sup> Lord Macaulay, *The History of England from the Accession of James the Second*, ed. Charles Harding Firth, I (1913), pp. 315, 320.

<sup>83</sup> Sir Charles Firth, *A Commentary on Macaulay’s History of England* (1938, repr. 1964), pp. 96–7, 129–32.

<sup>84</sup> Macaulay, *History of England*, I, p. 313.

<sup>85</sup> John Walsh and Stephen Taylor, ‘Introduction: The Church and Anglicanism in the “Long” Eighteenth

private means. In rural localities, wealthier clergymen were increasingly integrated into landed society, and in towns they lived like the solid, professional bourgeoisie. More than hitherto, clergymen were recruited from gentry families in the later eighteenth century. Clerics, like other propertied gentlemen, discharged administrative duties locally – as land tax commissioners, highway surveyors, and turnpike trustees. Most notably, they increasingly became JPs: by 1831, one clergyman in six was a magistrate.<sup>86</sup> Such clergymen were naturally gratified by their enhanced social status and their place within the propertied hierarchy. Yet these changes – which were not universal: clerical poverty was far from eliminated – engendered problems too. Clerical gentrification widened the cultural divide between parsons and their plebeian flocks. Pluralism could result in the spiritual neglect of parishes. Clerical JPs were easily represented as the landed élite's henchmen, enforcers of harsh, sometimes brutal, laws.<sup>87</sup>

Clearly Williams' life and career are in part, though not entirely, representative of these trends. Descended from an honourable family, Williams was proud of his lineage and hopeful for his dynasty. He was very much a gentleman, displaying surety of rank in his parish, easy in aristocratic company. His manners were impeccable: when wrangling with John Lucy about tithes, for example, his letters were scrupulously polite.<sup>88</sup> Concerned that he, and later his family, should live well, Williams proved adept in exploiting personal connections and was financially shrewd, as, above all, his property dealings show. With his finances firmly grounded, his lifestyle resembled the gentry's, as attested by his comfortable, refurbished parsonage, his carriage (did it display his escutcheon?), his sending his son to Rugby and Oxford. His close, lasting friendship with Bertie Greatheed, long commemorated by Artaud's portrait at Guy's Cliffe, highlights Williams' social standing and attributes. At Wellesbourne, Williams was able to pursue his intellectual interests, through reading historical and political, besides theological, works, and through his writing. For recreations, he enjoyed drama and music. Yet, although the cultural gulf between Williams and his plebeian parishioners was yawning, he was intensely concerned about their spiritual and material welfare. Regarding pluralism, he ensured the spiritual well-being of Fleet Marston's congregation by appointing a succession of curates. In that he seemingly undertook no county administration, his career diverged from the path followed by many of the beneficed clergy. Of course, from the 1790s, his political views, and his contempt for the Church–state alliance, precluded service as a JP.<sup>89</sup>

Century', *The Church of England c. 1689–c. 1833: From Toleration to Tractarianism*, ed. John Walsh, Colin Haydon, and Stephen Taylor (Cambridge, 1993), p. 7; W. R. Ward, ed., *Parson and Parish in Eighteenth-Century Hampshire: Replies to Bishops' Visitations*, Hampshire Record Series XIII (Winchester, 1995), p. xx. £150 a year was twice a Wesleyan preacher's payment: Ward, ed., *Parson and Parish*, p. xx.

<sup>86</sup> Walsh and Taylor, 'Introduction', p. 28.

<sup>87</sup> See, e.g., Paul Langford, *Public Life and the Propertied Englishman 1689–1798* (Oxford, 1991), p. 435.

<sup>88</sup> Warwickshire CRO, L6/1,075, 1,076.

<sup>89</sup> Warwickshire CRO, QS 1/2/1, fol. 18r; QS 1/2/2, unfoliated. By contrast, James Davenport, the

Given his concern for status – and his legal education especially fitted him for the magistracy – Williams probably had some regrets about this. He could have done some good as a Justice. But, then, there was the consolation that he was a martyr for principle.

Williams' pastoral endeavours and religious thinking illustrate a number of tendencies in the later Hanoverian Church of England. Penelope Corfield, Geoffrey Holmes, and Rosemary O'Day have charted the gradual 'professionalization' of the clergy,<sup>90</sup> and Jeremy Gregory has stressed the clergy's common commitment to effective evangelizing, a commitment which transcended party loyalties and differences of Churchmanship.<sup>91</sup> Certainly, Williams was an entirely 'professional' clergyman: at Wellesbourne, he adopted a clockwork routine, punctiliously conducted the range of services (even when attendance was minimal), and performed his duties into his late seventies. Teaching God's word – in order to 'promote the general cause of virtue and religion, and to increase the number of real christians and good men'<sup>92</sup> – was his principal duty. Despite the bitter political divisions in Warwickshire, and though deploring John Lucy's Pittite stance, Williams, when absent from Wellesbourne, was happy and grateful if Lucy conducted worship in his stead.<sup>93</sup> Williams' religious thought is not neatly categorized, since he mixed, and endeavoured to reconcile (if uneasily), differing positions. His chief debt was to Latitudinarian, Whig principles and ideas: the principle of *sola scriptura*; the right of private judgment and to 'free enquiry'; a stress on practical Christianity; a rational vision of religion's congruity with Newtonian science and Enlightenment values; charity towards Protestant Dissenters and, more generally, a commitment to civil liberties. Although Latitudinarianism's strength declined in the 1780s, and the French Revolution produced a massive reaction against liberal religion,<sup>94</sup> Williams resolutely adhered to these tenets, and, indeed, drew strength from them in the difficult war years. He combined them, however, with an evangelical seriousness. He entirely supported the evangelicals' castigation of those who practised merely a nominal Christianity – an attack not only on shallow laymen but also on too 'moderate', uninspiring if 'professional', over-laicized clerics<sup>95</sup> – and, in his preaching, he repeatedly differentiated between 'real' and nominal Christians. A gifted,

staunchly conservative vicar of Stratford-upon-Avon, was appointed a Justice in 1795: James Davenport, *The Davenport Family of Reading and Welford-on-Avon* (Worcester, 1923), p. 12. William Daniel and John Lucy were also clerical magistrates (Warwickshire CRO, QS 1/2/2, unfoliated).

<sup>90</sup> Penelope J. Corfield, *Power and the Professions in Britain 1700–1850* (1995), pp. 102–36; Geoffrey Holmes, *Augustan England: Professions, State, and Society 1680–1730* (1982), pp. 83–114; Rosemary O'Day, *The Professions in Early Modern England 1450–1800* (Harlow, 2000), pp. 47–110.

<sup>91</sup> Jeremy Gregory, *Restoration, Reformation, and Reform 1660–1828: Archbishops of Canterbury and their Diocese* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 283–5.

<sup>92</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, pp. vi–vii.

<sup>93</sup> Warwickshire CRO, L6/1/075.

<sup>94</sup> Nancy Uhlar Murray, 'The Influence of the French Revolution on the Church of England and its Rivals 1789–1802', University of Oxford DPhil thesis, 1975, pp. 80–124.

<sup>95</sup> Walsh and Taylor, 'Introduction', p. 29.

intelligent man, Williams carefully drew on a range of Protestant thinking. Sometimes, there was jarring, or potential jarring, both intellectual and emotional. His Enlightenment rationality and optimism and contempt for enthusiasm conflicted with evangelical stress on human depravity and emotionalism. It may well be that Williams himself was unaware of such tensions. In a very long life, as a witness to cataclysmic events, he emphasized different elements at different times, both publicly and privately. That was naturally true of others: the Latitudinarian Bishop Watson urged the conversion of nominal Christians;<sup>96</sup> John Wesley himself was a ‘reasonable enthusiast’.<sup>97</sup>

Williams’ political endeavours can be set in different contexts. Some are narrow. His stalled Church career, the disappointing result of his politics, is representative of the eclipse of the Whig party, riven by internal conflict from 1790. His contributions to the multiple debates on the French Revolution were forceful though tightly circumscribed. Williams’ political campaigning in Warwickshire illustrates the divisions in provincial society which resulted from the French Revolution. It sheds fresh light, too, on the work and convictions of the small and short-lived<sup>98</sup> – but intelligent and articulate – knot of Whig clergymen, best known through studies of Dr Samuel Parr. Yet it is also possible to adopt a wider perspective, to see a life in the context of centuries, as Williams himself sometimes did. Williams’ hostility to the war of 1793–1802 exemplifies the perennial tensions between Christians’ commitment to Christ’s moral teaching and their duties as members of a secular polity. St Augustine wrestled with this problem, and that of the ‘just war’, maintaining that war was justified when waged for society’s good (including the securing of a lasting peace). Similarly, St Thomas Aquinas stated that war was justified when it advanced good, was waged on the sovereign’s authority, and the cause was just. The Church of England’s Thirty-Seventh Article baldly stated that it ‘is lawful for Christian men, at the commandment of the Magistrate, to . . . serve in the wars’.<sup>99</sup> But the applicability of such general formulations was, and is, as Williams’ published sermons illustrate, always liable to debate in relation to particular wars. Such debates repeatedly highlight tensions between church and state, but were, and still prove, especially problematical for established churches, firmly yoked to the state, like the Church of England. Williams’ concern that the Church of England was a ‘mere engine’ of the secular arm has innumerable parallels from its creation to the present. There are, too, many echoes of his refusal to underwrite the state’s war policy and his dislike of bellicose patriotism: the former, for instance, in Bishop Bell’s condemnation of allied bombing during World War II; the latter, in Archbishop Runcie’s ‘tepid’ thanksgiving service for the victorious Falklands War.

<sup>96</sup> Murray, ‘Influence of the French Revolution’, p. 120.

<sup>97</sup> Henry D. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism* (1989).

<sup>98</sup> It left no successor. Among the third Lord Holland’s papers, there is a list of Whig clerics, compiled shortly after Williams’ death; and it notes none in Warwickshire. BL, Add. MS 51,922, Book B, fol. 26v.

<sup>99</sup> Oddly, though the Latin text uses ‘iusta bella’, the term was omitted in the English translation.

Williams' criticism of the war against revolutionary France, though less striking than uncompromising pacifist ideologies, was cogent, rigorously grounded on the Scriptures; and his sermons are staging-posts on the road to fully developed anti-war ideologies. His is an honourable place in the history of peace campaigning, inside the Church of England and generally. Lastly, regarding broad contexts, Christianity, and especially Protestantism with its stress on private judgment, frequently pits individuals' consciences against authority, either ecclesiastical or secular, or both; and Williams' refusal to bend his conscience to 'the infallible authority of fallible men' is one small, but moving, example of this.<sup>100</sup>

That angry and political clergymen enraged those in authority and Pitt's supporters is clear. In 10,000 parishes, clergymen spoke with authority to their congregations, including the illiterate members who were influenced by print only at second hand. Given the Church-state alliance, the government expected the clergy's support for war and ministerial policies. Parsons were to proclaim such support, and counter seditious ideas, from the pulpit, and might oversee the distribution of loyalist propaganda. Regarding the fast days, J. E. Cookson observes that there 'may well have been no other occasions when the social influence of the Anglican establishment was so fully mobilized on behalf of the state'.<sup>101</sup> Men like Williams were infuriating, defying the ecclesiastical and secular authorities, and betraying their class. When they denounced the conflict, or government actions, they were articulate and carefully grounded their arguments on the Scriptures, so that their case was difficult to rebut. Well educated, and with time for writing, they could polish and publish their sermons, and produce other pamphlets. It was difficult to discipline them, since a living was regarded as a species of property;<sup>102</sup> the troublesome Francis Stone was deprived of his benefice for heresy, not prosecuted for his political writings.<sup>103</sup> Prosecution risked creating martyrs, as the imprisonment of Gilbert Wakefield demonstrated.<sup>104</sup> Irritated authorities also recognized that parish parsons had first-hand knowledge of the war's impact on the localities: were not Williams, John Morley, and Samuel Parr authentically voicing the complaints of their humble parishioners when decrying the conflict's economic impact?<sup>105</sup> Wakefield, in his *Reply to Some Parts of the Bishop of Landaff's* [sic] *Address*, maintained that the lower orders were so impoverished that they would welcome any change of government and not resist a French invasion.<sup>106</sup> The pamphlet is a hugely powerful attack on

<sup>100</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. vii.

<sup>101</sup> J. E. Cookson, *The Friends of Peace: Anti-War Liberalism in England 1793–1815* (Cambridge, 1982), p. 134.

<sup>102</sup> See R. B. Outhwaite, *Scandal in the Church: Dr Edward Drax Free 1764–1843* (London and Rio Grande, 1997), *passim*.

<sup>103</sup> See above, pp. 7, 121.

<sup>104</sup> Bruce E. Graver, 'Wakefield, Gilbert (1756–1801)', *ODNB*, LVI, pp. 736–7.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. the description by the Cambridge fellow William Frend of the poor's sufferings in the Fenlands in his *Peace and Union Recommended to the Associated Bodies of Republicans and Anti-Republicans* (St Ives, 1793), pp. 47–9.

<sup>106</sup> Gilbert Wakefield, *A Reply to Some Parts of the Bishop of Landaff's* [sic] *Address to the People of*



Pitt's government and the war against revolutionary France. But Wakefield had left the established Church in 1779,<sup>107</sup> whereas Williams, Morley, and Parr, as Church of England parsons, were biting the hand that fed them, to the horror of their opponents and to the satisfaction of Dissenters.

Regarding the Church of England's clergy, Williams maintained in the 1790s that 'some . . . may possibly object to . . . [the war's] justice, [while] many . . . may be unconvinced of its necessity'.<sup>108</sup> In reality, it cannot be ascertained whether his surmise about the many unconvinced is correct; and here the historian's problem is the same as that of Williams and his contemporaries. Since the vast majority of sermons treating the conflict were not published, since it was pro-war parsons who stood to gain from publishing their discourses, and since surviving private correspondence is patchy, it is impossible to gauge the number of clerics who were unsure and lukewarm about the government's war policy, or entirely hostile to it. Nevertheless, the extant evidence clearly indicates that the uncertain and the malcontents were but a small minority, as Robert Hole and Emma Vincent Macleod argue.<sup>109</sup> Given their backgrounds, Burkean thinking, fears of domestic revolt, and conviction that the French republic was profoundly anti-Christian, it was natural for most clergymen to support Pitt's government and its war. And most liberal clergymen came to do so, though the private correspondence of some individuals reveals political uncertainties and anxieties disguised in public utterances.<sup>110</sup> Yet was there a subversive underside to outward, if grudging, compliance? For the secular and Church authorities, there were persistent concerns that waverers – and particularly those awkward clerics whose theological opinions bordered on heterodoxy – might sap loyalism through a manifest tepidity or subtle, underhand criticism, and, then, if the war effort flagged, openly withdraw their support for it. These concerns are fully understandable in the light of the conspiracy theses prevalent at the time, variations on the themes of the abbé Barruel, and fears of clandestine subversion.<sup>111</sup> At least Williams was open, scorning dissimulation: he would not, he resolved in 1793, 'endure the continual mortification of *keeping silence, yea even from good words*'.<sup>112</sup>

For Williams was a man of integrity and high principle. William Field elevated Williams' rebuke to the Wellesbourne book club to an act of 'true greatness', and,

*Great Britain*, 2nd edn (1798), pp. 35–7. Wakefield based his claim on the poverty he witnessed in the vicinity of his home in Hackney (*ibid.*, p. 36).

<sup>107</sup> Graver, 'Wakefield', LVI, p. 735.

<sup>108</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. vii.

<sup>109</sup> Robert Hole, *Pulpits, Politics, and Public Order in England 1760–1832* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 149; Emma Vincent Macleod, *A War of Ideas: British Attitudes to the Wars against Revolutionary France 1792–1802* (Aldershot, 1998), p. 149.

<sup>110</sup> Murray, 'Influence of the French Revolution', pp. 103–6.

<sup>111</sup> See Nigel Aston, 'Burke and the Conspiratorial Origins of the French Revolution: Some Anglo-French Resemblances', *Conspiracies and Conspiracy Theory in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Barry Coward and Julian Swann (Aldershot, 2004), pp. 213–33.

<sup>112</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. 18; Psalm XXXIX:2.



while this displays Field's somewhat absurd penchant for inflation,<sup>113</sup> sympathetic reviewers of the anti-war sermons were surely right to stress Williams' 'manly', determined stance.<sup>114</sup> By publishing those sermons, Williams was provocatively castigating both the secular and Church authorities and courting antagonism. J. E. Cookson has demonstrated that middle-class Dissenters were the principal opponents of the wars between 1793 and 1815.<sup>115</sup> But such defiance was emotionally easier for these men, with their defining tradition of opposition, than for Williams, an increasingly isolated clergyman of the Church of England who prided himself on his gentlemanly status. His adherence to his fundamental convictions, even when circumstances altered, and the consistency of his conduct are striking. No doubt, he inwardly enjoyed the self-satisfaction of a zealot for truth. No doubt, his obduracy was strengthened by his opponents' invective. No doubt, too, his Whig friends' encouragement bolstered his resolve, while their anticipated derision blocked the possibility – if ever contemplated – of any retreat with dignity and self-respect.<sup>116</sup> It is incumbent on historians to look quite through the deeds of men, to question surface words, to expose concealed motives. Yet, there is little to suggest that Williams hoped to advance his career by his political campaigning (even his adversaries did not suggest that). Had that been his motive, he would surely have recanted inconvenient errors, like most other liberal Churchmen, in the 1790s. In 1793, he had not prudently hedged his bets, but backed the wrong horse. Thereafter, only a fool would have persisted in doing the latter. Or a committed, idealistic man of honour. And Williams was no fool, but gifted and intelligent.

'The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there.' And *think* differently. Possibly the principal value of this study lies in emphasizing that. John Henry Williams insisted that worldly considerations were trivial compared to spiritual duties. It is today easy to dismiss this world-view with anachronistic incredulity. Since the 1960s, a 'secular society' has developed in Britain with astonishing rapidity. Between 1980 and 2000, some three hundred churches in England were closed annually; by 1999, church attenders on one Sunday constituted only 7.5 per cent of the English population.<sup>117</sup> In schools, worship and religious education have declined markedly. In 1996, the combative and vocal

<sup>113</sup> In his 'many incisive polemics . . . the dignity of style and the profusion of literary and classical illustration contrast curiously with the pettiness of the disputes': R. K. Webb, 'Field, William (1768–1851)', *ODNB*, XIX, p. 490.

<sup>114</sup> See above, pp. 20, 113, 114.

<sup>115</sup> Cookson, *Friends of Peace*, *passim*.

<sup>116</sup> Samuel Parr was merciless to, and about, turncoats. When James Mackintosh accepted the post of recorder of Bombay from the Tory Addington, Parr was incensed. Before departing, Mackintosh happened to remark to Parr that one O'Coigly, an Irish priest executed for treason in 1798, was 'as bad as a man could possibly be'. 'No, no, not so bad', barked Parr. He 'was a priest, – he might have been a lawyer; he was an Irishman, – he might have been a Scotchman; he was consistent, – he might have been an apostate'. Warren Derry, *Dr Parr* (1966), pp. 235–6.

<sup>117</sup> Doreen Rosman, *The Evolution of the English Churches 1500–2000* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 310, 313.

atheist Richard Dawkins became Professor of the Public Understanding of Science at Oxford, the university which was for so long the Church of England's bastion and principal seminary, the university of Wesley and the Tractarians. Galloping ignorance of Christianity's tenets imperils a proper understanding of European and world history just as much as the diminished knowledge of Greek, Latin, and the classical heritage. It is, perhaps, especially hard to appreciate Williams' religious intensity because he lived in a society which often appears deceptively modern,<sup>118</sup> and also because he was a staid Church of England cleric, and not, in the phrase of Dr Parr's follower Robert Fellowes, one of the 'emissaries of Fanaticism'.<sup>119</sup>

In modern 'secular societies', belief in a life after death has inexorably declined. In Williams' lifetime, Edward Gibbon sarcastically mocked 'the faith of enthusiasts, who sing Hallelujahs above the clouds'.<sup>120</sup> But John Henry Williams' thinking was dominated by an unshakeable belief in the afterlife and the day of judgment. '[W]e are fighting, at the peril . . . of our SOULS', Williams maintained, 'from the moment that we were baptized into the holy name of Christ, until the last moment, when we shall go to give an account of our conduct to the great Captain of our salvation.'<sup>121</sup> When he denounced the war against revolutionary France, his overwhelming concern was for the souls of those embroiled in the conflict. When, down the decades, he preached at Wellesbourne, his overwhelming concern was for the souls of his parishioners. By expounding the Scriptures according to his understanding and his conscience, Williams also hoped to secure his own salvation. And he remembered too the solemn admonition when he was priested: if the Church 'or any Member thereof do take any hurt or hindrance by reason of your negligence, ye know the greatness of the fault, and also the horrible punishment that will ensue'.<sup>122</sup> As Greatheed had recognized, Williams' vision always 'extended far beyond the beggarly elements of this life into eternity'.<sup>123</sup>

<sup>118</sup> 'The problem of integrating into a single vision aspects of past society which strike us as "modern" and aspects which strike us as alien seems for some reason to be one historians of eighteenth-century England find particularly hard to resolve': Joanna Innes, 'Not so Strange? New Views of Eighteenth-Century England', *History Workshop* xxix (1990), p. 183.

<sup>119</sup> Robert Fellowes, *Religion without Cant* (1801), p. 31.

<sup>120</sup> Bury, ed., *Autobiography of Gibbon*, p. 221.

<sup>121</sup> Williams, *Two Sermons*, p. 58.

<sup>122</sup> *The Form and Manner of Ordering of Deacons and Priests, According to the Order of the Church of England* [London?, 1765?], unpaginated.

<sup>123</sup> Warwickshire CRO, CR 1,707/117, Entry, 21 February 1808.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Manuscript Sources

#### **Bodleian Library, Oxford**

Dep. b. 210/4, File 6

Dep. b. 229/2

Dep. c. 512

Dep. e. 201

Dep. e. 203

EW1/2

EW1/3

MS Eng. misc. c. 274

MS Rawl. Letters 4, 39

MS Top. Oxon. b. 78

MS Top. Oxon. c. 250, II

R. Top. 850/3

#### **British Library, London**

Add. MS 16,919

Add. MS 16,921

Add. MS 16,922

Add. MS 16,923

Add. MS 16,924

Add. MS 16,925

Add. MS 16,931

Add. MS 38,480

Add. MS 51,922, Book B

#### **Buckinghamshire Record Office**

Q/RPL/1/45

#### **Cheshire Record Office**

DCR 36/1/3

#### **Christ Church, Oxford, Archive**

SOC.DACRE 2/1/43

**Church of England Record Centre, London**

F5,064

**Dr Williams's Library, London**

24.157 (188)

**Gloucester Cathedral Library**

MS 85

**Gloucestershire Record Office**

E1, Deacons, 1774

GDR 307

GDR/D1/311/382

GDR/D14/1

‘Cathedral Church of St Peter and the Holy and Invisible Trinity Gloucester.  
Cathedral Registers 1661–1872. Baptisms and Burials’ (1976)

**Hampshire Record Office**

21M65/E2/1,498

**Lambeth Palace Library**

Fiat, FII, 1778

FI/P

VBI/11

**Lichfield Record Office**

B/A/1/23

B/A/10/W

**Lincolnshire Archives**

LC 38, 50

PD 132/26

PD 185/36

REG/39

SPE 7

**Merton College, Oxford, Archive**

4.16

Buttery Book 1773–74

College Register

E.2.41

E.2.42

MCR 4.16

**Oxfordshire Record Office**

MS Oxf. Dioc. Papers, b. 21

MS Oxf. Dioc. Papers, b. 22

PAR/278/01/R1/2

PAR/278/01/R5/1

**Pembroke College, Oxford, Archive**

4/4/1

9/1/96

9/1/97

9/1/98

9/1/99

9/1/100

9/1/101

40/5/3

45/2/1

**Rugby School, Archive**

Bill, Midsummer Recess, 1793

**Surrey History Centre**

2,473/1/3

**The National Archives, Kew**

Prob. 11/1,068

Prob. 11/1,704

Prob. 11/1,710

Prob. 11/1,759

WO 13/4,571

WO 13/4,573

**Warwickshire County Record Office**

CR 566/15

CR 1,707/33

CR 1,707/34, Sermon on John XIII:1

CR 1,707/34, Sermon on John XVIII:4

CR 1,707/107

CR 1,707/116

CR 1,707/117

CR 1,707/118

CR 1,707/119

CR 1,707/120

CR 1,707/121

CR 1,707/122

**Warwickshire County Record Office (cont.)**

CR 1,707/123  
CR 1,707/126  
CR 2,486  
DR 13/6  
DR 69/3  
DR 69/4  
DR 69/5  
DR 69/6  
DR 69A/7  
DR 69B/16  
DR 159/2  
DR 159/5  
DR 159/11  
DR 514/86  
DR 754/2  
L6/1,075  
L6/1,076  
L6/1,077  
MI 142  
MI 337/1  
QS 1/2/1  
QS 1/2/2

**Worcestershire Record Office**

BA 2,337, Ref. 732.4, Parcel 47, Nos 1,005, 1,005a  
BA 2,245/24, Ref. S132–8  
BA 2,289/21 (viii), Ref. 807

**Yale University Library, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library**

OSB MS 68/2/61

**Primary Printed Sources**

*An Account of the Naval and Military Bible Society, Instituted in 1780* (1806)  
*Aphorisms, Opinions, and Reflections of the Late Dr. Parr* (1826)  
Aspinall, A., ed., *The Later Correspondence of George III*, II (Cambridge, 1963, repr. 1968), III (Cambridge, 1967)  
Atkyns, Sir Robert, *The Ancient and Present State of Glo[u]cestershire*, ed. Smith, Brian S., I (Wakefield, 1974)  
Barker, E. H., *Parriana: or Notices of the Rev. Samuel Parr, LL.D.*, I (1828)  
*Bibliotheca Parriana. A Catalogue of the Library of the Late Reverend and Learned Samuel Parr, LL.D.* (1827)

- Boaden, James, *Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons*, II (1827)  
*A Brief Account of Stratford-upon-Avon* (Stratford-upon-Avon, n.d.)
- Bruce, John, ed., *Liber Famelicus of Sir James Whitelocke*, Camden Society LXX (1858)
- Burn, Richard, *Ecclesiastical Law*, II (1763)
- Bury, J. B., ed., *Autobiography of Edward Gibbon* (Oxford, 1907, repr. 1978)
- Bury, J. P. T., and Barry, J. C., eds, *An Englishman in Paris: 1803. The Journal of Bertie Greatheed* (1953)
- Campbell, Thomas, *Life of Mrs. Siddons*, I, II (1834)  
*The Clergyman's Intelligencer* (1745)
- Cobbett, William, ed., *The Parliamentary History of England, from the Earliest Period to the Year 1803*, XXXIII (1818)
- Defoe, Daniel, *A Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain*, ed. Cole, G. D. H., and Browning, D. C., II (1974)
- Erskine, Thomas, *A View of the Causes and Consequences of the Present War with France*, 2nd edn (1797)
- Fellowes, Robert, *Religion without Cant* (1801)
- Fendley, John, ed., *Bishop Benson's Survey of the Diocese of Gloucester 1735–1750*, Gloucestershire Record Series XIII ([Gloucester], 2000)
- Fenwick, T. Fitz-roy, and Metcalfe, Walter C., eds, *The Visitation of the County of Gloucester* (Exeter, 1884)
- Field, W., *An Historical and Descriptive Account of the Town & Castle of Warwick; and of the Neighbouring Spa of Leamington* (Warwick, 1815)
- Field, William, *A Letter Addressed to the Inhabitants of Warwick* (Birmingham, 1791)
- , *A Second Letter Addressed to the Inhabitants of Warwick* (Birmingham, 1791)
- , *Memoirs of the Life, Writings, and Opinions of the Rev. Samuel Parr, LL.D.*, I, II (1828)
- The Form and Manner of Ordering of Deacons and Priests, According to the Order of the Church of England* [London?, 1765?]
- A Form of Prayer and Thanksgiving to Almighty God; For the Victory Gained by His Majesty's Fleet under the Command of Sir John Jervis, on the Fourteenth of February last [1797]* (1797)
- A Form of Prayer and Thanksgiving . . . to be Used . . . on Thursday the Twenty-ninth Day of November 1798* (1798)
- A Form of Prayer and Thanksgiving . . . to be Used . . . on Tuesday the Nineteenth Day of December 1797* (1797)
- A Form of Prayer, to be Used . . . upon Friday the Nineteenth of April Next [1793]* (1793)
- A Form of Prayer, to be Used . . . upon Friday the Twenty-eighth of February Next [1794]* (1794)
- A Form of Prayer, to be Used . . . upon Wednesday the Twenty-fifth of February Next [1795]* (1795)



- Fosbrooke, Thomas Dudley, *An Original History of the City of Gloucester* (1819)
- Fox, Levi, ed., *Correspondence of the Reverend Joseph Greene*, Historical Manuscripts Commission JP VIII (1965)
- Freund, William, *Peace and Union Recommended to the Associated Bodies of Republicans and Anti-Republicans* (St Ives, 1793)
- Gibson, Edmund, *Codex Juris Ecclesiastici Anglicani*, II (1713)
- The Gloucester Guide* (1792)
- A Grammar of the Greek Language: Originally Composed for the College-School, at Gloucester* (Boston, Mass, 1800)
- Greatheed, Bertie, *The Regent: A Tragedy* (1788)
- Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd Series, VII (1832)
- Hanway, Jonas, *The Soldier's Faithful Friend* (1766)
- Horsley, Samuel, *A Sermon, Preached before the Lords Spiritual and Temporal . . . on Wednesday, January 30, 1793*, 2nd edn (1793)
- Ireland, Samuel, *Picturesque Views on the Upper, or Warwickshire Avon* (1795)
- Jago, Richard, *Edge-hill, or, the Rural Prospect Delineated and Moralized* (1767)
- Johnstone, John, ed., *The Works of Samuel Parr, LL.D.*, I, VI, VIII (1828)
- King, Erasmus, *A Catalogue of the Experiments Made by Mr. King, in his Course of Natural Philosophy* [London?, 1741?]
- Knox, Vicesimus, *A Narrative of Transactions Relative to a Sermon, Preached in the Parish Church of Brighton, August 18, 1793*, 3rd edn (1794)
- Landor, Walter Savage, *To the Burgesses of Warwick*, ed. Super, R. H., Luttrell Society Reprints VIII (Oxford, 1949)
- The Lawfulness of Defensive War upon Christian Principles Impartially Considered. By a Clergyman of the Church of England* (1798)
- Letters from the Reverend Dr. Warburton, Bishop of Gloucester, to the Hon. Charles Yorke, from 1752 to 1770* (1812)
- Lipscomb, George, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Buckingham*, I, II (1847)
- Marshall, P. J., and Woods, John A., eds, *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke*, VII (Cambridge and Chicago, 1968)
- Mavor, William, *Christian Politics: A Sermon, Preached to a Country Congregation, on Friday, April 19, 1793*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1793)
- , *The Duty of Thanksgiving, for National Blessings* (Oxford, 1798)
- , *Miscellanies* (Oxford, [1829])
- Miller, R., and Laugharne, H., *Remarks upon a Letter to the Printer of the Birmingham Gazette . . . and also upon a Letter Addressed to the Inhabitants of Warwick . . . by William Field* (Warwick, [1791])
- Morley, John, *Discourses Doctrinal and Practical* (Ipswich, 1815)
- Mr. Justice Ashhurst's Charge to the Grand Jury for the County of Middlesex* [London, 1792]
- Parliamentary Papers [348] XVIII: Comparative Account of the Population of Great Britain in the Years 1801, 1811, 1821, and 1831* (1831)

- Parliamentary Papers XXXV: Accounts and Papers VIII* (1831–32)
- Parr, Samuel, *A Sequel to the Printed Paper Lately Circulated in Warwickshire by the Rev. Charles Curtis*, 2nd edn, corrected (1792)
- Parr, Samuel, *A Sermon Preached on the Late Fast Day, Wednesday, Oct. 19, 1803* (1804)
- Peckard, Peter, *National Crimes the Cause of National Punishments* (Peterborough, n.d.)
- A Pocket Companion for Oxford*, new edn (Oxford, 1764)
- The Poll of the Freeholders of Warwickshire, at the Election at Warwick, on the 31st October, and 1st, 2d, 3d, 4th, 6th, and 7th November, 1820* (Birmingham, 1821)
- Quiller Couch, Lilian M., ed., *Reminiscences of Oxford by Oxford Men 1559–1850*, Oxford Historical Society XXII (Oxford, 1892)
- Ransome, Mary, ed., *The State of the Bishopric of Worcester 1782–1808*, Worcestershire Historical Society, New Series, VI (Leeds, 1968)
- [Rudder, Samuel], *A New History of Gloucestershire* (Cirencester, 1779)
- Serres, Olivia Wilmot, *The Life of the Author of the Letters of Junius, the Rev. James Wilmot, D.D.* (1813)
- Shaveblock, Pasquin, *The Shaver's New Sermon for the Fast Day*, 3rd edn (1795)
- Smith, Francis, *Warwickshire Delineated*, 2nd edn (Southam, n.d.)
- Stone, Francis, *An Examination of the Right Hon. Edmund Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1792)
- , *A Letter to the Right Rev. Dr. Beilby Porteus, Lord Bishop of London, on the Subject of his Citation of the Writer before the Spiritual Court* (1807)
- A View of Revealed Religion; A Sermon, Preached at the Ordination of the Rev. William Field of Warwick, July 12, 1790. By Joseph Priestley, LL.D. F.R.S. With a Charge, Delivered at the Same Time, by the Rev. Thomas Belsham* (Birmingham, 1790)
- Wakefield, Gilbert, *A Reply to Some Parts of the Bishop of Landaff's [sic] Address to the People of Great Britain*, 2nd edn (1798)
- Warner, Richard, *War Inconsistent with Christianity*, 5th edn (Bath, 1805)
- , *Literary Recollections*, II (1830)
- Watson, R., *An Address to the People of Great Britain*, 10th edn (1798)
- Watson, Richard, *A Charge Delivered to the Clergy of the Diocese of Landaff [sic], June, 1791* (1792)
- Williams, J. H., *Piety, Charity, & Loyalty* (Birmingham, 1793)
- , *Two Sermons Preached on the Public Fasts of April 1793, and February 1794* (1794)
- , *War the Stumbling-block of a Christian; or, the Absurdity of Defending Religion by the Sword* (1795)
- , *A Thanksgiving Sermon for the Peace, Preached June 1, 1802* (1802)
- Woodward, Josiah, *The Soldier's Monitor* (1705)
- The Works of Richard Hurd, D.D.*, VIII (1811)

### Newspapers and Periodicals

- The Analytical Review, or History of Literature, Domestic and Foreign* xvii (1793); xix (1794)  
*Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 17 December 1792; 21 January, 18 February, 15 April 1793; 29 May, 5, 19, 26 June, 3 July 1797  
*The British Critic* iii (1794)  
*The Critical Review; or, Annals of Literature*, 2nd Series, xii (1794); xvi (1796)  
*The Edinburgh Review* xi, No. xxi (1807)  
*The English Review* xxvi (1795)  
*The Evangelical Magazine* iii (1795)  
*The Gentleman's Magazine* lxxi, Part i (1801); lxxii, Part ii (1802); lxxxiii, Part ii (1813); xcix, Part ii (1829); New Series, ii (1834)  
*The Glo[u]cester Journal*, 2 May 1785  
*Leamington Spa Courier*, 16 May 1829  
*The London Gazette*, 19–22 May, 1–4 December 1792; 26 February–2 March 1793  
*The Monthly Repository* xiii (1818)  
*The Monthly Review*, New Series, xiv (1794); xvi (1795)  
*The Orthodox Churchman's Magazine* ii (1802)

### Visual Sources

- William Artaud's portrait of John Henry Williams  
 Bertie Greathed Jr's sketches of members of the Williams family, now in the possession of Mr Michael Heber-Percy  
 National Portrait Gallery, D4,798

### Secondary Sources

#### Books, Reference Works, Articles, and Essays

- Andrews, Stuart, *The British Periodical Press and the French Revolution 1789–99* (Basingstoke, 2000)  
 Aston, Nigel, 'Burke and the Conspiratorial Origins of the French Revolution: Some Anglo-French Resemblances', *Conspiracies and Conspiracy Theory in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Coward, Barry, and Swann, Julian (Aldershot, 2004), pp. 213–33  
 Barrell, John, *Imagining the King's Death: Figurative Treason, Fantasies of Regicide 1793–1796* (Oxford, 2000)  
 ———, *The Spirit of Despotism: Invasions of Privacy in the 1790s* (Oxford, 2006)  
 Barton, J. L., 'Legal Studies', *The History of the University of Oxford, Volume V: The Eighteenth Century*, ed. Sutherland, L. S., and Mitchell, L. G. (Oxford, 1986), pp. 593–605

- Bebbington, D. W., *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain* (1989)
- Bennett, G. V., 'Against the Tide: Oxford under William III', *The History of the University of Oxford, Volume V: The Eighteenth Century*, ed. Sutherland, L. S., and Mitchell, L. G. (Oxford, 1986), pp. 31–60
- , 'The Era of Party Zeal 1702–1714', *The History of the University of Oxford, Volume V: The Eighteenth Century*, ed. Sutherland, L. S., and Mitchell, L. G. (Oxford, 1986), pp. 61–97
- Best, G. F. A., 'The Whigs and the Church Establishment in the Age of Grey and Holland', *History* xlv (1960), pp. 103–18
- Bettinson, G. H., *Rugby School* (Birmingham, 1929)
- Black, Jeremy, *British Foreign Policy in an Age of Revolutions 1783–1793* (Cambridge, 1994)
- , *George III: America's Last King* (New Haven and London, 2006)
- Blanning, T. C. W., *The Origins of the French Revolutionary Wars* (Harlow, 1986)
- Brasenose College Register 1509–1909*, I (Oxford, 1909)
- Brent, Richard, *Liberal Anglican Politics: Whiggery, Religion, and Reform 1830–1841* (Oxford, 1987)
- Brown, Laurence, *A Catalogue of British Historical Medals 1760–1960, Volume I: The Accession of George III to the Death of William IV* (1980)
- Buckley, Jessie K., *Joseph Parkes of Birmingham* (1926)
- Burke, Sir Bernard, *A Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Landed Gentry of Great Britain and Ireland*, 9th edn, ed. Burke, Ashworth Peter, I (1898)
- Cave, Lyndon F., *Royal Leamington Spa* (Chichester, 1988)
- Ceadel, Martin, *The Origins of War Prevention* (Oxford, 1996)
- Champion, J. A. I., *The Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken* (Cambridge, 1992)
- Christie, Ian R., *Stress and Stability in Late Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford, 1984, repr. 1986)
- Clark, J. C. D., *English Society 1688–1832* (Cambridge, 1985)
- , *English Society 1660–1832* (Cambridge, 2000)
- Clark, Peter, *British Clubs and Societies 1580–1800* (Oxford, 2000)
- Claydon, Tony, 'The Sermon, the "Public Sphere", and the Political Culture of Late Seventeenth-Century England', *The English Sermon Revised*, ed. Ferrell, Lori Anne, and McCullough, Peter (Manchester and New York, 2000), pp. 208–34
- Colley, Linda, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707–1837* (New Haven and London, 1992)
- Collins, Irene, *Jane Austen and the Clergy* (London and Rio Grande, 1994)
- Colville, Frederick Leigh, *The Worthies of Warwickshire who Lived between 1500 and 1800* (Warwick and London, [1870])
- Cookson, J. E., *The Friends of Peace: Anti-War Liberalism in England 1793–1815* (Cambridge, 1982)
- , *The British Armed Nation 1793–1815* (Oxford, 1997)
- Corfield, Penelope J., *Power and the Professions in Britain 1700–1850* (1995)

- Cruikshanks, Eveline, Handley, Stuart, and Hayton, D. W., eds, *The House of Commons 1690–1715*, V (2002)
- Dalton, R., and Hamer, S. H., *The Provincial Token-Coinage of the Eighteenth Century Illustrated*, IX (1915)
- Daunton, Martin, 'The Fiscal-Military State and the Napoleonic Wars: Britain and France Compared', *Trafalgar in History*, ed. Cannadine, David (Basingstoke, 2006), pp. 18–43
- Davenport, James, *The Davenport Family of Reading and Welford-on-Avon* (Worcester, 1923)
- Dent, Emma, *Annals of Winchcombe and Sudeley* (1877)
- Derry, Warren, *Dr Parr* (1966)
- Dickinson, H. T., 'Popular Conservatism and Militant Loyalism 1789–1815', *Britain and the French Revolution 1789–1815*, ed. Dickinson (Basingstoke, 1989), pp. 103–25
- Dickinson, Harry T., 'Popular Loyalism in Britain in the 1790s', *The Transformation of Political Culture: England and Germany in the Late Eighteenth Century*, ed. Hellmuth, Eckhart (Oxford, 1990), pp. 503–33
- Dozier, Robert R., *For King, Constitution, and Country: The English Loyalists and the French Revolution* (Lexington, Kentucky, 1983)
- Duleep Singh, Prince Frederick, *Portraits in Norfolk Houses*, ed. Farrer, Edmund, II (Norwich, [1928])
- Ehrman, John, *The Younger Pitt: The Consuming Struggle* (1996)
- Emsley, Clive, 'An Aspect of Pitt's "Terror": Prosecutions for Sedition during the 1790s', *Social History* vi (1981), pp. 155–84
- Evans, A. W., *Warburton and the Warburtonians* (1932)
- Evans, Eric J., 'Some Reasons for the Growth of English Rural Anti-Clericalism c. 1750–c. 1830', *Past and Present* No. lxxvi (1975), pp. 84–109
- Fairfax-Lucy, Alice, *Charlecote and the Lucys* (1958)
- Fitzpatrick, Martin, 'Latitudinarianism at the Parting of the Ways: A Suggestion', *The Church of England c. 1689–c. 1833: From Toleration to Tractarianism*, ed. Walsh, John, Haydon, Colin, and Taylor, Stephen (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 209–27
- Fogg, Nicholas, *Stratford-upon-Avon* (Chichester, 1986)
- Foster, Joseph, *Alumni Oxonienses: The Members of the University of Oxford 1715–1886*, II, IV (Oxford, 1888)
- Gascoigne, John, 'Anglican Latitudinarianism and Political Radicalism in the Late Eighteenth Century', *History* lxxi (1986), pp. 22–38
- , *Cambridge in the Age of the Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1989)
- Gee, Austin, *The British Volunteer Movement 1794–1814* (Oxford, 2003)
- Gibson, William, *The Church of England 1688–1832: Unity and Accord* (2001)
- Goldie, Mark, 'Priestcraft and the Birth of Whiggism', *Political Discourse in Early Modern Britain*, ed. Phillipson, Nicholas, and Skinner, Quentin (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 209–31

- Goodwin, Albert, *The Friends of Liberty: The English Democratic Movement in the Age of the French Revolution* (1979)
- Goring, Paul, *The Rhetoric of Sensibility in Eighteenth-Century Culture* (Cambridge, 2005)
- Greaves, R., 'Religion in the University 1715–1800', *The History of the University of Oxford, Volume V: The Eighteenth Century*, ed. Sutherland, L. S., and Mitchell, L. G. (Oxford, 1986), pp. 401–24
- Gregory, Jeremy, 'The Eighteenth-Century Reformation: The Pastoral Task of Anglican Clergy after 1689', *The Church of England c. 1689–c. 1833: From Toleration to Tractarianism*, ed. Walsh, John, Haydon, Colin, and Taylor, Stephen (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 67–85
- , 'The Making of a Protestant Nation: "Success" and "Failure" in England's Long Reformation', *England's Long Reformation 1500–1800*, ed. Tyacke, Nicholas (1998), pp. 307–33
- , 'Homo Religiosus: Masculinity and Religion in the Long Eighteenth Century', *English Masculinities 1660–1800*, ed. Hitchcock, Tim, and Cohen, Michèle (Harlow, 1999), pp. 85–110
- , *Restoration, Reformation, and Reform 1660–1828: Archbishops of Canterbury and their Diocese* (Oxford, 2000)
- Hamilton, Elizabeth, *The Mordaunts* (1965)
- Harling, Philip, 'A Tale of Two Conflicts: Critiques of the British War Effort 1793–1815', *Resisting Napoleon*, ed. Philp, Mark (Aldershot, 2006), pp. 19–40
- Haydon, Colin, 'The Church in the Kington Deanery of the Diocese of Worcester c. 1660–c. 1800', *The National Church in Local Perspective: The Church of England and the Regions 1660–1800*, ed. Gregory, Jeremy, and Chamberlain, Jeffrey S. (Woodbridge, 2003), pp. 145–73
- , 'Rural Religion and the Politeness of Parsons: The Church of England in South Warwickshire c. 1689–c. 1820', *Elite and Popular Religion*, ed. Cooper, Kate, and Gregory, Jeremy, *Studies in Church History* XLII (Woodbridge, 2006), pp. 282–93
- Henning, Basil Duke, ed., *The House of Commons 1660–1690*, III (1983)
- Hilton, Boyd, *A Mad, Bad, and Dangerous People? England 1783–1846* (Oxford, 2006)
- Hofschroer, Peter, *1815, The Waterloo Campaign: The German Victory – from Waterloo to the Fall of Napoleon* (1999)
- Hogan, Charles Beecher, ed., *The London Stage 1660–1800. Part 5: 1776–1800*, II (Carbondale, Illinois, 1968)
- Hole, Robert, *Pulpits, Politics, and Public Order in England 1760–1832* (Cambridge, 1989)
- Holmes, Geoffrey, *Augustan England: Professions, State, and Society 1680–1730* (1982)
- Horn, Pamela, *Joseph Arch* (Kington, 1971)



- Ippel, Henry P., 'British Sermons and the American Revolution', *Journal of Religious History* xii (1982), pp. 191–205
- Langford, Paul, *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727–1783* (Oxford, 1989)
- , 'The English Clergy and the American Revolution', *The Transformation of Political Culture: England and Germany in the Late Eighteenth Century*, ed. Hellmuth, Eckhart (Oxford, 1990), pp. 275–307
- , *Public Life and the Propertied Englishman 1689–1798* (Oxford, 1991)
- Lepper, Charles, *The Crypt School Gloucester 1539–1989* (Gloucester, 1989)
- Lovegrove, Deryck, 'English Evangelical Dissent and the European Conflict 1789–1815', *The Church and War*, ed. Sheils, W. J., Studies in Church History XX (Oxford, 1983), pp. 263–76
- Macaulay, Lord, *The History of England from the Accession of James the Second*, ed. Charles Harding Firth, I (1913)
- Macleane, Douglas, *A History of Pembroke College, Oxford*, Oxford Historical Society XXXIII (Oxford, 1897)
- Macleod, Emma Vincent, *A War of Ideas: British Attitudes to the Wars against Revolutionary France 1792–1802* (Aldershot, 1998)
- Manvell, Roger, *Sarah Siddons* (1970)
- Martin, G. H., and Highfield, J. R. L., *A History of Merton College, Oxford* (Oxford, 1997)
- Mather, F. C., 'Georgian Churchmanship Reconsidered: Some Variations in Anglican Public Worship 1714–1830', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* xxxvi (1985), pp. 255–83
- , *High Church Prophet: Bishop Samuel Horsley (1733–1806) and the Caroline Tradition in the Later Georgian Church* (Oxford, 1992)
- Matthew, H. C. G., and Harrison, Brian, eds, *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004)
- Mitchell, L. G., *Charles James Fox and the Disintegration of the Whig Party 1782–1794* (1971)
- , *Charles James Fox* (Oxford, 1992, repr. Harmondsworth, 1997)
- Mitchell, Leslie, *Holland House* (1980)
- , *The Whig World 1760–1837* (London and New York, 2005)
- Money, John, *Experience and Identity: Birmingham and the West Midlands 1760–1800* (Manchester, 1977)
- Mordaunt, Sir Charles, Bart and Verney, the Hon. and Rev. W. R., *Annals of the Warwickshire Hunt 1795–1895. From Authentic Documents I* (1896)
- Naphtine, D., and Speck, W. A., 'Clergymen and Conflict 1660–1763', *The Church and War*, ed. Sheils, W. J., Studies in Church History XX (Oxford, 1983), pp. 231–51
- O'Day, Rosemary, *The Professions in Early Modern England 1450–1800* (Harlow, 2000)
- O'Gorman, Frank, 'Pitt and the "Tory" Reaction to the French Revolution



- 1789–1815', *Britain and the French Revolution 1789–1815*, ed. Dickinson, H. T. (Basingstoke, 1989), pp. 21–37
- Overton, John H., and Relton, Frederic, *The English Church from the Accession of George I to the End of the Eighteenth Century (1714–1800)* (1906)
- Philp, Mark, 'Rational Religion and Political Radicalism in the 1790s', *Enlightenment and Dissent* iv (1985), pp. 35–46
- , 'Vulgar Conservatism 1792–3', *English Historical Review* cx (1995), pp. 42–69
- , 'Introduction: The British Response to the Threat of Invasion 1797–1815', *Resisting Napoleon*, ed. Philp (Aldershot, 2006), pp. 1–17
- Pringle, Roger, 'The Rise of Stratford as Shakespeare's Town', *The History of an English Borough: Stratford-upon-Avon 1196–1996*, ed. Bearman, Robert (Stroud, 1997), pp. 160–74
- Rivers, Isabel, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment: A Study of the Language of Religion and Ethics in England 1660–1780, Volume I: Whichcote to Wesley* (Cambridge, 1991)
- Robertson, David, *The King's School Gloucester* (London and Chichester, 1974)
- Rodger, N. A. M., *The Command of the Ocean: A Naval History of Britain 1649–1815* (2004)
- Roper, Derek, *Reviewing before the Edinburgh 1788–1802* (1978)
- Rouse, W. H. D., *A History of Rugby School* (1898)
- The Rugby Register from the Year 1675 to the Present Time* (Rugby, 1836)
- Russell Barker, G. F., and Stenning, Alan H., *The Record of Old Westminster*, I (1928)
- Sedgwick, Romney, ed., *The House of Commons 1715–1754*, II (1970)
- Sibree, John, and Caston, M., *Independency in Warwickshire* (Coventry and London, 1855)
- Snape, Michael, *The Redcoat and Religion* (Abingdon and New York, 2005)
- Spaeth, Donald A., 'Common Prayer? Popular Observance of the Anglican Liturgy in Restoration Wiltshire', *Parish, Church, and People*, ed. Wright, S. J. (1988), pp. 125–51
- Sykes, Norman, *Church and State in England in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1934)
- Taylor, Miles, *Wellington's World: The Duke of Wellington and the Making of the British Empire* (Southampton, 2003)
- Thomas, Keith, 'The Place of Laughter in Tudor and Stuart England', *Times Literary Supplement*, 21 January 1977, pp. 77–81
- Thompson, E. P., *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963)
- , *Customs in Common* (1991)
- Thorne, R. G., ed., *The House of Commons 1790–1820*, IV (1986)
- Trevor-Roper, Hugh, 'History and Imagination', *History and Imagination: Essays in Honour of H. R. Trevor-Roper*, ed. Lloyd-Jones, Hugh, Pearl, Valerie, and Worden, Blair (1981), pp. 356–69
- Tyack, Geoffrey, *Warwickshire Country Houses* (Chichester, 1994)

- VCH Gloucester*, IV (1988)  
*VCH Oxford*, VII (1962), XIII (1996)  
*VCH Warwick*, V (1949)  
 Venn, J. A., *Alumni Cantabrigienses . . . Part II. From 1752 to 1900*, VI (Cambridge, 1954)  
 Virgin, Peter, *The Church in an Age of Negligence* (Cambridge, 1989)  
 Walsh, John, 'Methodism and the Mob in the Eighteenth Century', *Popular Belief and Practice*, ed. Cuming, G. J., and Baker, Derek, *Studies in Church History VIII* (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 213–27  
 Walsh, John, and Taylor, Stephen, 'Introduction: The Church and Anglicanism in the "Long" Eighteenth Century', *The Church of England c. 1689–c. 1833: From Toleration to Tractarianism*, ed. Walsh, John, Haydon, Colin, and Taylor, Stephen (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 1–64  
 Western, J. R., 'The Volunteer Movement as an Anti-Revolutionary Force 1793–1801', *English Historical Review* lxxi (1956), pp. 603–14  
 Young, B. W., *Religion and Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1998)

### Theses

- Jenkins, Nesta, 'Printing in Birmingham in the Eighteenth Century. A Bibliography with Biographical Notes on Printers', Library Association Fellowship thesis, 1972  
 Martin, J. M., 'Warwickshire and the Parliamentary Enclosure Movement', University of Birmingham PhD thesis, II, 1965  
 Murray, Nancy Uhlar, 'The Influence of the French Revolution on the Church of England and its Rivals 1789–1802', University of Oxford DPhil thesis, 1975  
 Sewter, A. C., 'The Life, Work, and Letters of William Artaud 1763–1823', University of Manchester MA thesis, II, 1951

## INDEX

- Anglican clergy, 6, 24, 35, 93, 106  
 Anglicanism, 6, 9, 55, 78, 80, 111, 113;  
     High-Church, 3, 49, 78–9, 80, 97,  
     110, 112; Orthodox, Trinitarian, 10,  
     58, 77  
 anti-war debates/campaigning, 2, 12, 55  
 anti-war sermons:  
     appraisals/reviews, 1, 2, 12, 104–5,  
     111–14, 132  
     conflict between war and religion, 101,  
     103, 113  
     contextualization with the views of  
     other writers, 106–11  
     fast-day/thanksgiving services/sermons  
     (1793/1794/1795/1802), 1, 12, 88–9,  
     91–5, 97, 98, 103, 107, 113, 122, 133  
     grounds for denunciation, 99–100  
     imagery, use of, 105  
     military language, use of, 105  
     physical suffering and spiritual effects,  
     99–100  
     *Piety, Charity, & Loyalty*, 97  
     publishing, 58, 96–7  
     reason versus emotion, 101  
     Scriptures' teachings, 102–3, 110  
     souls of the military, 100–1, 108–9  
     *Thanksgiving Sermon for the Peace*,  
     123, 132  
     *Two Sermons Preached on the Public*  
     *Fasts*, 97  
     *War the Stumbling-block of a*  
     *Christian*, 42  
 Arianism, 10, 50, 68  
*Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 125, 129–30  
 Artaud, William, 132, 148  
 Ashhurst, Elizabeth, 33, 35  
 Ashhurst, Sir William Henry, 35, 86  
 Ashhurst, Thomas Henry, 33  
 Association for the Preservation of  
     Liberty and Property against  
     Republicans and Levellers, 83, 86  
 atheism, 56, 102–3, 114  
 Aylesford, 4th Earl of, 125–6  
 Barrell, John, 86  
 Bastille, fall of see French Revolution  
 Belsham, Thomas, 77–8, 97  
 Bertie, Ann, 66, 140  
 Birmingham Dissenters see Dissenters  
 Birmingham riots see Priestley riots  
 Blackstone, William, 22  
 Bonaparte see Napoleon  
 Book of Common Prayer, 60–1  
 Bracebridge, Abraham, 129–30  
 Burdett, Sir Francis, 125  
 Burgess, Thomas, 139–40  
 Burke, Edmund, 83; *Reflections on the*  
     *Revolution in France*, 7, 74  
 Burnet, Gilbert, 48  
 Burns, Arthur, 10  
  
 Camperdown, battle of, 92  
 Cape St Vincent, battle of, 92, 123  
 Caroline divines, 3  
 Ceadel, Martin; *The Origins of War*  
     *Prevention*, 2, 98  
 Charlecote, 41, 64, 75  
 Charles I, 93  
 Chillingworth, William, 48  
 Christie, Ian R., 6  
 Church and King, 79, 80, 81, 83, 85  
 Church of England, 7, 48, 57, 60, 80, 93,  
     111, 121, 150, see also Anglicanism  
 Church-state alliance, 7, 10, 51, 91, 93,  
     148  
 Church-state relations, 27, 104, 110, 114,  
     150–1, see also Hanoverian Church  
 Clark, Jonathan, 9, 10, 12, 79  
 Clark, Peter, 81  
 Clarke, Samuel, 50, 68  
 College School, Gloucester, 14, 15,  
     19–22, 36, 111  
 Colley, Linda, 5  
 Colville, Frederick Leigh; *The Worthies of*  
     *Warwickshire who Lived between*  
     *1500 and 1800*, 1–2, 76  
 Convention of Cintra, 5

- Cookson, J. E., 112, 127; *The Friends of Peace*, 2, 5, 151, 153  
 Corfield, Penelope, 149  
 Corndean, 19, 31  
 Council of Clermont, 57, 102, 105  
 Crusades, 57, 102, 105  
 Curtis, Charles, 76, 80
- Daniel, William, 75, 84  
 Davenport, James, 75, 85, 118  
 Declaration of the Rights of Man, 73  
 Decree of Fraternity, 87  
 Derry, Warren; *Dr Parr*, 2, 134  
 Dewes, Court, 40, 66, 84  
 Dickinson, H. T., 6, 116  
 Dissenters, 10, 12, 43, 50, 57, 61, 73, 79, 80–1, 96, 104, 146, 149, 153;  
     Birmingham, 79, 82, 126; Rational, 121; Warwick, 80  
 Dormer, 8th Lord, 45, 65, 76, 125  
 Dormers, the, 65, 68  
 Dozier, Robert R., 6  
 Duffy, Eamon; *The Stripping of the Altars*, 13
- English republicanism see Republicanism  
 Enlightenment, 11, 48, 55, 56, 104, 149–50  
 Erastianism, 51  
 Erskine, Thomas, 8, 96, 137, 141  
 Estates-General see French Revolution  
 Eucharist, 49, 60  
 evangelicalism, 3, 24, 48, 50, 51, 149–50
- Fast-day sermons see anti-war sermons  
 Feathers Tavern petition, 50, 51  
 Fellowes, Robert, 141–3  
 Field, William, 1, 2–3, 39, 43, 57, 77–8, 80–1, 82  
 Fleet Marston, 33, 34, 41, 62, 63, 148  
 Fox, Charles James, 66, 72, 96, 117, 122, 128, 133, 134  
 Foxite Whigs, 66, 88, 100, 122, 146  
 France, wars against (1793–1802 and 1803–1814/15):  
     attitudes towards, 2, 7  
     costs of, 124, 127, 136  
     denunciation, 6–7  
     lack of interest in opponents by historians, 4, 5  
     patriotism, emergence of, 5, 6  
     success of, 4–5  
     see also Napoleonic wars
- France, wars against Austria and Prussia, 82, 87–8, 123; Dumouriez, Charles-François, 87; Jemappes, 87  
 French Directory, 128  
 French Jacobinism see Jacobinism  
 French Revolution:  
     Bastille, fall of, 72, 74, 79  
     Civil Constitution of the Clergy, 73  
     Constituent Assembly, 7, 73  
     Estates-General, 71  
     Flight to Varennes, 80  
     impact on English churches, 2, 81, 83, 100  
     Legislative Assembly, 82  
     Louis XVI, 7, 71, 87, 93, 94  
     National Assembly, 71  
     National Convention, 83  
     outbreak of, 116  
     overthrow of monarchy, 82–3  
     Republic, proclamation of the, 83  
     revolt of the peasantry, 72  
     Tuileries palace, 72, 82  
     Versailles, 71, 72  
 Frend, William, 7  
 Friends of the Constitution see Warwick Friends of the Constitution
- Gaches, Daniel, 44, 76, 84  
 George III, 12, 30, 88, 93, 95, 115, 117, 124, 128  
 George IV, 12, 146  
 Georgian Church see Hanoverian Church  
 Georgian parson, stereotype of, 3  
 Gibbon, Edward, 3, 35, 102, 104, 143, 154  
 Gibson, Edmund, 110  
 Gloucester cathedral, 18, 21, 22, 25, 93  
 Godwin, William, 12, 16, 43, 114, 117, 126; *Political Justice*, 97, 114  
 Graves, Richard, 22  
 Greatheed, Bertie, 76, 125, 136–7; diary, 14–16, 59–60, 86–7, 144; friendship with JHW, 2, 63, 64, 66–70, 96, 137, 140–1, 148  
 Greatheed, Samuel, 6  
 Greene, Joseph, 34, 46  
 Gregory, Jeremy, 10, 21, 149  
 Grey, 2nd Earl, 147
- Habeas Corpus, 115–16  
 Hall, Robert, 108  
 Hammond, John see Lucy, John

- Hanoverian Church:  
    condemnation by Victorian writers, 3  
    lack of interest by historians, 3  
    pecuniary attitude/tithes, 3–4, 41, 72, 147  
    pluralism of parsons, 3, 9, 73, 147–8  
    study of/appraisal by historians, 3–4, 9–10  
    sub-national studies of, 10–11  
    subservience to the state, 4, 10, 51, 104, 109–10, 147
- Hanway, Jonas; *Soldier's Faithful Friend*, 108–9
- Hardy, Thomas, 115, 117–18
- Harmer, John, 42
- Hartley, David, 111
- Hatton, 42, 44, 80
- Hippisley, John, 25, 31
- Hoadly, Benjamin, 49
- Hofschröer, Peter, 5
- Hole, Robert, 2, 5, 74, 152
- Holmes, Geoffrey, 149
- Horsley, Samuel, 93–4, 101–2, 110, 129
- Howell, James, 75
- Hughes, Joseph, 108
- Hurd, Richard, 41, 57, 60, 74–5, 76, 120–1
- Ireland, Samuel; *Picturesque Views on the Upper, or Warwickshire Avon*, 39
- Irish rising (1798), 119, 122–3
- Jacobinism, 83, 86, 110, 116, 129
- Jacobitism, 13, 80, 91
- Jago, Richard; *Edge-hill*, 39
- James, Thomas, 70
- Jeremiad, 91
- Johnson, Joseph, 114, 123
- Johnson, Samuel, 22
- Johnson, Selina, 142
- King, Erasmus, 25–6, 31
- Knox, Vicesimus, 107, 110, 121
- Landor, Walter Savage, 128
- Langford, Paul, 12, 74
- Latitudinarianism, 6, 10, 48–9, 50–1, 58, 121, 149
- Laugharne, Hugh, 75, 81
- Leamington, 39, 45, 47, 64
- Leamington Spa Courier*, 1
- Lindsey, Theophilus, 7, 68
- Locke, John, 48
- Loughborough, 1st Baron, 87
- Louis XVI see French Revolution
- Loyal Warwickshire Volunteers, 118
- loyalism, 6, 100, 116
- loyalist associations, 12, 83–5, 95
- Lucy, John, 16, 41, 64, 75–6, 118, 128–9, 149
- Mackintosh, James, 16; *Vindiciae Gallicae*, 72
- Macleod, Emma Vincent, 2, 104, 106, 152
- Malmesbury, 1st Baron, 128
- Martin, James, 110
- Mathews, Marmaduke, 34, 75, 84
- Mavor, William, 75, 85, 94–5
- Melbourne, 2nd Viscount, 112
- Merton College, Oxford, 26, 64, 139
- Methodism, 6, 55, 68
- Miller, Robert, 75, 78, 80–1, 84
- Mills, John, 34, 41, 66
- Moore, John, 83–4
- Mordaunt, John, 71
- Mordaunt, Sir Charles, 40, 65, 119
- Mordaunt, Sir John, 65, 71, 76, 82, 84, 118, 125–6
- Morley, John, 15, 42–5, 120, 123, 124–5, 128–9, 135–6, 143
- Murray, Nancy Uhlar, 2
- Napoleon, 4, 5, 76, 122, 133
- Napoleonic wars, 14, 101, 127, 133–8
- Naphine, David, 91
- Nares, Edward, 121
- Naval and Military Bible Society, 108–9
- Nelson, Horatio, 92, 133
- Newbold Comyn, 41
- North, Brownlow, 34
- O'Day, Rosemary, 149
- Orthodox Anglicanism see Anglicanism
- Orthodoxy, 51, 58, 77, 121
- Overton, J. H. and Relton, F., 3
- Oxford Movement, 3
- Oxford University see Merton College, Oxford, and Pembroke College, Oxford
- pacifism, 8, 98, 107–8, 111
- Paine, Thomas/Paineite, 6, 86, 116; *Letter . . . to the Addressers*, 97; *Rights of Man*, 97
- Palmer, Thomas Fyshe, 7–8

- Parr, Samuel, 1, 8, 42–4, 74, 80, 87–8, 97, 114, 124, 133–4, 144, 150
- Parsons, John, 25, 31
- Peace of Amiens (1802), 5, 92, 96, 97, 98, 101, 113, 133, 136
- Peckard, Peter, 7, 50–1, 107, 110, 111
- Pembroke College, Oxford, 21–4, 25, 36
- Pitt, William, the Younger/Pitt  
government, 14, 87–8, 95, 106, 116, 122, 124, 127, 152
- Pittite, 10, 82, 86, 112, 125–6, 131, 149
- pluralism see Hanoverian Church
- Poland, 2nd partition of, 88
- Popery, 27, 57, 73
- Porteus, Beilby, 121
- Presbyterian, 77, 78
- Price, Richard, 10
- Priestley, Joseph, 10, 43, 77, 78, 79, 86, 96; *A View of Revealed Religion*, 77
- Priestley riots, 12, 79, 80, 81, 86, 97
- Protestant Dissenters see Dissenters
- Protestantism, 5, 29, 48, 49, 57, 73, 150
- radicalism, 6–7, 10, 83, 86, 112, 114, 115, 116
- Raikes, Charles, 21
- Raikes, Robert, 21
- Raikes, Thomas, 21
- Rational Dissenters see Dissenters
- Reeves, John, 83–6, 95
- Reform Act (1832), 146
- religious history, interest in, 3, 9–10
- Republicanism, 114; English, 86
- Rice, Edward, 42
- Rippon, John, 108
- Robespierre, Maximilien, 86
- Robinson, George, 97–8, 113, 114, 123
- Rodger, N. A. M., 5
- Roman Catholicism, 10, 49, 57, 79, 146
- Routh, Martin, 74
- Rudder, Samuel; *A New History of Gloucestershire*, 18
- Ruding, Walter, 136–8
- Rugby School, 70–1, 120, 140
- Russell, William, 80
- sacerdotalism, 51
- sacrament, 49, 60
- St George's church, Hanover Square, London, 25, 120
- St Leonard's church, Waterstock, 34
- St Peter's church, Wellesbourne, 1, 38, 40, 146
- St Peter's church, Winchcombe, 19, 31
- Say, William, 132
- Seditious Meetings Act, 115
- Selwyn, Charles Jasper, 84
- Seven Years' War, 91, 93, 111
- Seward, Anna, 40
- Shenstone, William, 22
- Smith, Mark, 10
- Snape, M. F., 10
- Socinianism, 6, 10, 50, 68
- sola scriptura*, 10, 30, 48, 50, 58, 149
- Spaeth, Donald, 10
- Sparkes, Edward, 20
- Speck, W. A., 91
- Stone, Francis, 7, 74, 121, 151
- Stratford-upon-Avon, 37, 45, 84, 86, 118
- Sykes, Norman; *Church and State in England in the Eighteenth Century*, 3
- Talents ministry, 57, 96, 138
- Test and Corporation Acts, 73, 80, 104, 114, 146
- The Analytical Review*, 106, 109, 112, 114, 128
- The Anti-Jacobin Review*, 114
- The British Critic*, 112, 113
- The Clergyman's Intelligencer*, 32
- The Critical Review*, 112, 113
- The Edinburgh Review*, 45, 46, 57, 66
- The English Review*, 12, 20, 104–5
- The Evangelical Magazine*, 106
- The Gentleman's Magazine*, 1, 45, 132
- The Gloucester Journal*, 20, 21
- The Lawfulness of Defensive War upon Christian Principles Impartially Considered*, 107–8, 109
- The Monthly Review*, 112, 113
- The Orthodox Churchman's Magazine*, 113
- The Regent*, 68–70
- The Sun*, 115
- The True Briton*, 115, 129
- Thelwall, John, 115
- Thirty-Nine Articles, 25, 37, 50
- Thirty-Seventh Article, 91, 150
- Thompson, E. P.; *The Making of the English Working Class*, 6, 7
- Thompson, John, 96–7
- Throckmorton, Sir John, 125
- Tillotson, John, 48
- Tooke, John Horne, 7, 115, 117
- Toryism, 23, 76, 110, 125, 126, 128, 131
- Townsend, Gore, 71

- Townsend, Henry, 71  
 Tracy, 6th Viscount, 31–2  
 Trafalgar, battle of, 4, 5, 133–4  
 transubstantiation, 49  
 treason trials (1794), 117  
 Treaty of Amiens see Peace of Amiens  
 Trevor-Roper, Hugh, 13  
 Trinitarian Anglicanism see Anglicanism  
 Trinitarianism, 10, 50, 78
- Unitarianism, 7, 10, 50, 77, 78, 79, 114  
 United Provinces, 87, 88
- Vatican, the, 57, 73  
*Veni Creator*, 26  
 Versailles see French Revolution  
 Vienna settlement, 14  
 volunteer movement, 118–19
- Wade, John, 3  
 Wakefield, Gilbert, 7–8, 97, 109, 123, 151–2  
 Walcheren expedition, 5  
 Walton Deyville, 34, 40, 41, 60, 62, 65, 139  
 War of American Independence, 93, 110, 119  
 Warburton, William, 20, 25, 26, 27–9, 75, 111  
 Warner, George, 33  
 Warner, John, 33, 34–5, 36  
 Warner, Mary, 34  
 Warner, Richard, 8, 134  
 Warner, Sarah see Williams, Sarah  
 Warwick, 37, 45–6, 63  
 Warwick Dissenters see Dissenters  
 Warwick Friends of the Constitution, 84  
 Warwick, 2nd Earl of, 63, 76, 84, 118, 125–6  
 Waterloo, battle of, 4, 5, 14  
 Watson, John, 145  
 Watson, Richard; *Address to the People of Great Britain*, 7, 73, 122–3, 133, 150  
 Wellesbourne, 1, 3, 11, 34, 37–40, 41, 60, 63, 95–6, 118; book club, 46, 81–2  
 Wells, Roger, 6  
 Wesley, John, 3, 109, 150  
 Westmorland, 7th Earl of, 23  
 Whig petitions (1797), 124–8, 131  
 Whigs, 8, 13, 23, 42, 74, 76, 96, 106, 131, 133, 146–7, see also Foxite Whigs  
 Whistler, Anthony, 22  
 Whitefield, George, 3, 22
- Wilberforce, William, 99  
 Willes, Edward, 41, 43, 45, 64, 74, 84, 124  
 Williams, Grace – elder daughter of JHW, 24, 28–9, 47–8, 140–1, 145  
 Williams, Gwyn A., 6  
 Williams, Henry/Harry – son of JHW, 15, 28–9, 47–8, 62, 64, 70–1, 139, 143  
 Williams, John – father of JHW, 18, 19  
 Williams, John Henry (JHW):  
     anti-war sermons see anti-war sermons  
     (main heading)  
     appraisals by contemporaries, 1, 16, 42, 57, 59–60  
     attitude to self-defence, 8, 98–9, 111, 133  
     baptism, 18  
     curacy at Cherington, 33  
     curacy at Lower Guiting, 25–6  
     day of judgment, 52, 53, 101, 145, 154  
     death and burial, 1, 62, 145  
     dilemma of justifying the war, 89–90  
     education/legal studies, 19–20, 22, 23–4  
     family life, 18–24, 28–9, 47–8  
     financial/property matters, 12, 63–4, 72  
     general neglect by historians, 1–3  
     last years, 139–45  
     lifestyle/social life, 12, 20, 22–3, 30, 35, 37, 45–6, 63–71, 148  
     lineage, 18–19  
     marriage, 34–5  
     matriculation and graduation (LLB), 22, 26  
     ordination, 24–30  
     parish priest, 3, 11, 28, 58  
     politics/‘political clergyman’, 12–13, 16, 17, 131  
     records of life, 8–9, 11, 14–16, 36  
     rector of Fleet Marston, 33  
     superstition, 44, 56  
     theology, 10, 11, 24, 27, 48–52  
     vicar of Wellesbourne, 1, 29, 33–6, 62, 114, 123, 136, 138, 139  
     vicar of Winchcombe, 31–2  
 Williams, Mary – mother of JHW, 18  
 Williams, Richard, 23  
 Williams, Sarah (*née* Warner) – wife of JHW, 34–5, 46, 144  
 Williams, Sarah/Sally – younger daughter of JHW, 47–8, 132, 141–2  
 Williams, Sir David – founder of JHW’s family, 18, 19, 24



## INDEX

- Williams, Sir Edward, 19  
Williams, Sir Henry, 19  
Williams, Thomas, 19, 31–2  
Willoughby de Broke, 14th Lord, 65  
Wilmot, James, 45  
Winchcombe, 19, 31–2, 120  
Windham, William, 124  
Woodforde, James, 4, 11  
Woodward, Josiah; *The Soldier's Monitor*, 108–9  
Wyvill, Christopher, 7, 99, 123  
Yorkshire Association, 7

STUDIES IN MODERN BRITISH RELIGIOUS HISTORY

*Previously published volumes in this series*

I

Friends of Religious Equality  
Non-Conformist Politics in mid-Victorian England  
*Timothy Larsen*

II

Conformity and Orthodoxy in the English Church, c.1560–1660  
*edited by Peter Lake and Michael Questier*

III

Bishops and Reform in the English Church, 1520–1559  
*Kenneth Carleton*

IV

Christabel Pankhurst  
Fundamentalism and Feminism in Coalition  
*Timothy Larsen*

V

The National Church in Local Perspective  
The Church of England and the Regions, 1660–1800  
*edited by Jeremy Gregory and Jeffrey S. Chamberlain*

VI

Puritan Iconoclasm during the English Civil War  
*Julie Spraggon*

VII

The Cult of King Charles the Martyr  
*Andrew Lacey*

VIII

Control of Religious Printing in Early Stuart England  
*S. Mutchow Towers*

IX

The Church of England in Industrialising Society  
The Lancashire Parish of Whalley in the Eighteenth Century  
*M. F. Snape*

X

Godly Reformers and their Opponents in Early Modern England  
Religion in Norwich, c.1560–1643

*Matthew Reynolds*

XI

Rural Society and the Anglican Clergy, 1815–1914  
Encountering and Managing the Poor

*Robert Lee*

XII

The Church of England and the Holocaust  
Christianity, Memory and Nazism

*Tom Lawson*

XIII

Religious Politics in Post-Reformation England  
*edited by Kenneth Fincham and Peter Lake*

XIV

The Church of England and the Bangorian Controversy, 1716–1721  
*Andrew Starkie*

XV

Martyrs and Martyrdom in England, c.1400–1700  
*edited by Thomas S. Freeman and Thomas F. Mayer*

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

# The Church of England in the 20th Century

THE CHURCH COMMISSIONERS AND THE POLITICS OF REFORM, 1948-1998

ANDREW CHANDLER

This is the first comprehensive historical account to be published of the life and work of the Church of England in the second half of the twentieth century. It traces the evolution of the Church in a period of immense upheaval, giving not only a detailed portrait of the work of its archbishops and bishops, but also exploring the Church's relationship with the State, the changes within its central institutions, and the response of the wider community to those changes. Andrew Chandler examines the parochial reforms which arose in response to the realities of domestic and international migration, multi-culturalism and secularization; other themes explored are the administration of its property, 'ethical investment', and the recent crises which are still the subject of argument, including the financial speculations of the late 1980s and early 1990s.

# The Church of England and the Bangorian Controversy, 1716-1721

ANDREW STARKIE

The Bangorian Controversy was the most bitterly fought ideological battle of eighteenth-century England. Benjamin Hoadly, the low-church Bishop of Bangor, brought the wrath of his fellow churchmen upon himself when he preached his sermon 'The nature of the Kingdom, or church, of Christ' before George I in 1717. It denied the spiritual authority of the church, and was a call for a further Reformation. The book shows the relationship between the controversy and the 'Whig schism', highlighting an important aspect of the early career of Robert Walpole. The controversy illustrates well the theological and political tensions within English society during this era.

*www.boydell.co.uk*  
*www.boydellandbrewer.com*

BOYDELL & BREWER Ltd  
PO Box 9, Woodbridge IP12 3DF (GB) and  
668 Mt Hope Ave, Rochester NY14620-2731 (US)