TRUE RELIGION:

CHRISTIANITY AND THE MAKING OF RADICAL IDEOLOGY IN ENGLAND, 1816-1834

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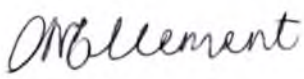
This thesis is my own work. All sources have been acknowledged.



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ABBREVIATIONS

BD	Black Dwarf
BDMBR	Biographical Dictionary of Modern British Radicals
BPU	Birmingham Political Union
CO	Christian Observer
DM	Deists' Magazine
DNB	Dictionary of National Biography
MO	Manchester Observer
NT	New Times
NUWC	National Union of the Working Classes
PM	The Political Magazine
PMG	Poor Man's Guardian
PP	Penny Papers
PR	(Cobbett's) Annual Political and Weekly Register
PT	Political Tracts
RR	Hone's Reformists' Register and Weekly Commentary
Sherwin's PR	Sherwin's Weekly Political Register
SPCK	Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge
SWR	Shadgett's Weekly Review of Cobbett, Wooler Sherwin and Other Democratical and Infidel Writers

Introduction

INTRODUCTION

Noting the importance of religion to the lives of many leading radicals of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Edward Royle and James Walvin remarked: "The religious dimension to secular affairs is probably one of the most unfamiliar aspects of the period under consideration".[1] The early nineteeenth century saw the enormous growth of evangelical non-conformist denominations and sects. A debate has raged for many years over the nature of the impact upon the common people of this religious revival, and over the social and political effects of Methodism in particular. While Elie Halevy's famous thesis that it was Methodism which prevented the outbreak of a French-style revolution in Britain has usually been regarded as at best an overstatement, it has become an axiom of modern historiography that Methodism was a stabilising influence in early-industrial England.[2] On the one hand there is E.P. Thompson's caustic characterisation of the attraction of Methodism to working-class people as the "chiliasm of despair".[3] On the other, Alan Gilbert argues that the inherent social deviance of Methodism and Dissent produced a moderate radicalism which acted as "the political equivalent of the safety valve".[4]

In the longer term working-class people were probably

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1. Edward Royle and James Walvin, English Radicals and Reformers 1760-1848 (Brighton, 1982), p.185.
2. For a useful summary of the debate up to 1974 see Malcolm I. Thomis, The Town Labourer and the Industrial Revolution (London and Sydney, 1974), chapter 9.
3. See E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class (Harmondsworth, 1968), pp.411-40.
4. Alan D. Gilbert, "Methodism, Dissent and Political Stability in Early Industrial England", The Journal of Religious History, Vol.10, No.4 (Dec. 1979), pp.381-99.

becoming indifferent, if not hostile, to organised religion. This was the impression of many observers around mid-century, and seemed to be confirmed by the census of 1851.[5] But hostility to the Church did not generally produce atheism; a multitude of popular Christian sects sought to rediscover "true" Christianity.[6] An emphasis of labour historiography, nevertheless, has been the essentially secular inspiration and character of modern working-class movements - of Jacobins, Owenites, socialists and Marxists. Even the "labour sects", such as the Primitive Methodists and the Labour Church, have been seen as anomalous: "the achievement or penalty of the social pioneer" (one suspects Hobsbawm thinks the latter), a product of England's early bourgeois and industrial revolutions. Thus:

> The declaration of the Rights of Man established itself among the British people, not in the Roman toga and the illuminist prose of the late 18th century, but in the mantle of the Old Testament prophets and in the biblical language of Bunyan: the Bible, the Pilgrim's Progress and Foxe's Book of Martyrs were the texts from which English labouring men learned the A.B.C. of politics, if not the A.B.C. of reading.[7]

While acknowledging the magnetic power of Biblical language, Hobsbawm discounts Christian theology as inherently unsuited to "the construction of a consistently social-revolutionary

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5. Thomis, The Town Labourer, pp.181-2. For a discussion of the religious census and the conclusions drawn by its architect, Thomas Mann, see Owen Chadwick, The Victorian Church, Part 1 (London, 1966), pp.363-9.
6. Edward Royle, Radical Politics 1790-1900: Religion and Unbelief (London, 1971), pp.9-11.
7. E.J. Hobsbawm, Primitive Rebels: Studies in the Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries (Manchester, 1959), p.145. See the whole of chapter 8.

doctrine".[8]

E.P. Thompson similarly points to the ambivalence of the Puritan legacy, epitomised by Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, which, along with Paine's Rights of Man, he considered "one of the two foundation texts of the English working-class movement".[9] While it undoubtedly contributed to the pabulum of anti-aristocratic and libertarian ideas which nourished nineteenth-century radicalism, its concern with personal salvation and the after-life militated against collective social and political activism.[10] Yet Thompson allows for a much wider and more significant legacy than does Hobsbawm. Their discussions of the use of Biblical language/imagery illustrate the difference. Hobsbawm refers to the labour sectarians' "clothing the social protest of the workers in the familiar and powerful language of the Bible".[11] Thompson, discussing the millenarian dimension of Dissent, perceives the inadequacy of the clothing metaphor:

> ...when we speak of "imagery" we mean much more than figures of speech in which ulterior motives were "clothed". The imagery is itself evidence of powerful subjective motivations, fully as "real" as the objective, fully as effective...in their historical agency. It is the sign of how men felt and hoped, loved and hated, and of how they preserved certain values in the very texture of their language.[12]

Thompson's observations have not been the subject of detailed investigation. They deserve closer scrutiny. Hobsbawm's discussion of the labour sects in the context of

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8. Ibid., pp.148-9. Hobsbawn seems to believe that this was the "preordained" end towards which nineteenth-century working-class movements were evolving.
9. Thompson, The Making, p.34.
10. Ibid., pp.34-8.
11. Hobsbawm, Primitive Rebels, p.148.
12. Thompson, The Making, p.54.

the ultimate secular character of the modern labour movement (and of politics generally) is flawed by its teleological perspective. It is a Marxist equivalent of the Whig view of history.[13] This thesis aims to scrutinize the language used by radicals, in an attempt to render the religious strand of their ideology in its contemporary proportions.

By the early nineteenth century Christianity was being seriously challenged by the critical resources of freethought. Any analysis of the connections between religion and radicalism must take account of the profound impact of the Enlightenment upon European societies. Thomas Paine ignited the torch of anti-Christianity among English plebeian radicals in the 1790s, and handed it on to Richard Carlile, the pre-eminent infidel-radical publisher of the post-war years and luminary of the Zetetic societies of the 1820s.[14] Militant freethought initially failed, however, to attract a majority following among working-class radicals. Carlile's preoccupation with ideological purity was, numerically, the loser in the split among radicals which followed in the wake of the collapse of the mass

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13. This remark was inspired by the introduction to J.C.D. Clark's English Society 1688-1832: Ideology, Social Structure and Political Practice during the Ancien Regime (Cambridge, 1985), a trenchant revisionist account of the long eighteenth century, which places religion and politics at the forefront of the main conflicts and developments of the period. See p.1 especially.

14. See I.D. McCalman, "Popular Radicalism and Freethought in Early Nineteeth-Century England: A Study of Richard Carlile and his Followers, 1815-32" (Australian National University MA thesis, 1975), and Joel H. Wiener, Radicalism and Freethought in Nineteenth-Century Britain: The Life of Richard Carlile (Westport, Connecticut, 1983). Edward Royle gives Carlile a distinctive place in the history of the British secularist movement; see Victorian Infidels: The Origins of the British Secularist Movement 1791-1866 (Manchester, 1974), pp.31-43.

agitation of 1819.[15] The struggle between Carlile and Henry Hunt in the early 1820s has been described as "a major controversy over religion".[16] Carlile was indisputably a vigorous and uncompromising opponent of Christianity, while the Huntite leadership has been denominated "openly Christian".[17] At the same time it has been said that religion played "only a minor role in Huntite agitations for reform".[18] It would seem that, rather than signifying an ideological espousal of Christianity, Hunt's attack upon Carlile's avowed determination to destroy the Christian religion was directed towards unifying radicals on the basis of toleration of all religious beliefs. He was aware that infidelity was "an outrage upon popular opinions", and in response "articulated a popular, unsophisticated religious libertarianism".[19]

A possible implication is that Christianity, although privately valued by many working-class people, was prevented from making a constructive contribution to popular radicalism because of religious differences among the rank-and-file of the reform movement. Lacking effective organisation, ideology was the central uniting element of early nineteenth-century popular radicalism: "Remembered and republicized ideas were all that maintained the concentration of collective attention from peak to peak of

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15. See John Belchem, "Orator" Hunt: Henry Hunt and English Working-Class Radicalism (Oxford, 1985), pp.151-7.
16. J.R. Dinwiddy, From Luddism to the First Reform Bill: Reform in England 1810-1832 (Oxford, 1986), pp.39-40. This is not to discount the central importance of differences over political goals and methods.
17. Robert Glen, Urban Workers in the Early Industrial Revolution (London, 1984), p.268.
18. Ibid.
19. Belchem, "Orator" Hunt, pp.154-5.

activity".[20] If popular radicalism were to achieve its aims, the building of mass support was essential. As one historian has written:

> Effective social movements are constructed as alliances - a problem within the working class, given its fragmentations of skill, gender, occupation, region, etc., as much as in its relations to other groups - in which different languages of mobilization have to be articulated together, very often around some kind of language of popular democracy and radical humanism.[21]

The fragmentation of religion might also have been mentioned. It should be noted too, that popular radicalism was not an exclusively working-class phenomenon. It was conceived as a struggle for political representation by the unrepresented, and alliances between middle-class and working-class reformers were forged at times, particularly during the reform crisis of 1830-2. The language of radicalism was essentially one of political exclusion.[22] Ideology thus served an inter-class, as well as an intra-class, mobilisational purpose.

The potential to create strife among reformers must somehow have been obviated (or was disregarded by some propagandists), for several studies of the last decade indicate that Christianity probably did inform radical ideology. It has been demonstrated that radical Christian beliefs were an important element of Chartist ideology,

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20. Craig Calhoun, The Question of Class Struggle: Social Foundations of Popular Radicalism during the Industrial Revolution (Oxford, 1982), p.79.
21. Robert Gray, "The Deconstructing of the English Working Class", Social History, Vol.11, No.3 (October 1986), p.373. Gray argues that Chartism was such a movement.
22. On the language of radicalism as "a vocabulary of political exclusion" see Gareth Stedman Jones, "Rethinking Chartism", in his Languages of Class: Studies in English Working Class History 1832-1982 (Cambridge, 1983), chapter 3, esp. pp.102-7.

acting in concert with its dominant constitutionalist rhetoric.[23] Given that Chartism was arguably the apogee of the political radicalism which originated in the 1760s and 1770s, and deployed the language of that radicalism, might not Christianity have similarly informed the popular struggles of the post-war years and the early 1830s? A strong Scriptural component is certainly evident in the ideas of the Spenceans, reflecting both genuine religious faith and "a desire to buttress opinion by recourse to widely recognized authority".[24] Rationalist ideas undoubtedly permeated the thought of Spence and his followers and successors, but far from displacing the Biblical elements, they were fused with them.[25] Biblicism was successfully used to influence the courts in 1819 by the ultra-radicals Waddington and Wedderburn, prompting Iain McCalman to remark:

> Much has been written about constitutionalist rhetoric as part of the tactical and ideological armoury of popular radicalism, but historians have been less disposed to acknowledge the similar function of scriptural symbols.[26]

This thesis aims to explore this neglected area of research as a contribution towards enlarging our understanding of the religious dimension of popular radicalism between the end of the wars with France and the beginning of Chartism.

A vital consideration in undertaking this task is that radical ideas were articulated in the context of discursive

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23. Eileen Yeo, "Christianity in Chartist Struggle 1838-1842", Past and Present, 91 (1981), pp.109-39.
24. Malcolm Chase, "The People's Farm": English Radical Agrarianism 1795-1840 (Oxford, 1988), p.81.
25. See Iain McCalman, Radical Underworld: Prophets, Revolutionaries and Pornographers in London, 1795-1840 (Cambridge, 1988), pp.63-72.
26. Ibid., p.143.

struggles with conservatives. John Belchem, writing of the challenge of the mass platform in early nineteenth-century England, considered the populist political rhetoric of radicalism appropriate because it contested the language used by the ruling class:

> ...hegemonic values were still phrased in terms of history, law, and the constitution, territory which the radicals sought to appropriate as their own. On the constitutional mass platform the radicals did not articulate some counter-hegemonic ideological alternative, Paineite, Spencean, Owenite, or otherwise: instead, they contested the very language of the ruling class, confronting the establishment with the popular interpretation of the dominant value system. By summoning up the myth and folklore of "people's history," the radicals appeared in heroic guise as the true loyalists and patriots, upholding the constitution which had been "won by the valour and cemented with the blood of our ancestors." Through the emotive language of popular constitutionalism the radicals hoped to outmaneuvre and coerce the government, "peaceably if we may, forcibly if we must."[27]

Ideology thus served a tactical as well as a mobilisational purpose. Other historians have demonstrated how radicals attempted to appropriate the languages of patriotism and constitutionalism.[28] In her article on Christianity and Chartism, Eileen Yeo remarked that both religious and labour historians "have taken too little account of Christianity, not as the possession of any one social group, but as contested territory".[29] Did radicals attempt to

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27. John C. Belchem, "Radical Language and Ideology in Early Nineteenth-Century England: The Challenge of the Platform", Albion, Vol.20, No.2 (Summer 1988), pp.255-6.
28. See, for examples, Hugh Cunningham, "The Language of Patriotism, 1750-1914", History Workshop, 12 (Autumn 1981), pp.8-33; James Epstein, "Understanding the Cap of Liberty: Symbolic Practice and Social Conflict in Early Nineteenth-Century England", Past and Present, 122 (Feb. 1989), pp.75-118; James Epstein, "The Constitutional Idiom: Radical Reasoning, Rhetoric and Action in Early Nineteenth Century England", Journal of Social History, Vol.23, No.3 (Spring 1990), pp.553-74.
29. Yeo, "Christianity", p.109.

appropriate the language of Christianity in their struggles with governments? Did they assume the guise of the true Christians as well as the true loyalists and the true patriots? One might expect so, given that Christianity was an integral component of the dominant value system, arguably even its final authority.[30] Or did differences among radicals over religion dilute such an overt championing of Christianity?

To answer these questions it is necessary to understand the ways in which conservatives cast hegemonic values in religious terms. In arguing the importance of analysing the discursive structure of political languages, Gareth Stedman Jones suggested that these languages need to be mapped out "laterally in relation to the rival political languages with which they are in conflict".[31] An attempt to do this - with respect to the religious component of radicalism - is made in this thesis. The rival language may in part be gleaned from radical sources (especially where they give some account of the ideas they are contesting), but in order to render a more complete and coherent account, a discrete study of anti-radical discourse is also undertaken. The thesis examines selected radical and anti-radical discourse published during the two main peaks of activity in our period: the agitations of the immediate post-war years (1816-20) and the reform crisis and its aftermath (1830-4).

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30. Epstein argues that to abandon constitutionalist rhetoric and fully embrace Paineite republicanism would have meant "vacating important cultural and political terrain", and he suggests that the same argument could be advanced to explain the greater relative importance to radical rhetoric of popular Christianity over freethought, "The Constitutional Idiom", p.567.
31. Stedman Jones, Languages of Class, pp.21-2.

A comparison and contrast of the two affords an assessment of the development of radical ideology over the time.

In what ways did the religious dimension of radical ideology change in relation to the events of the 1820s and early 1830s? Did freethought, promoted among the Zetetic societies of the 1820s, have a greater discernible impact upon radical ideology in the 1830s than it did in the post-war years? The growing popularity of Owenism among the working classes may also have contributed to a decline in the influence of Christianity among radicals. Does radical discourse of the thirties suggest that this was so? Did the uneasy and partial alliance between working-class and middle-class reformers during the reform crisis affect the use of religious language in the radical press? What about the new economic analysis which, it has been argued, signified a revision of, even if it failed to supersede, the post-war attribution of distress to Old Corruption?[32] Was religious language used to sanction the new analysis, or was religion left behind with the attacks on priests, who had featured in the old demonology? Finally, how are we to understand Richard Carlile's new allegorical interpretation of the Bible, which he announced to the world in 1832 in terms of a personal conversion to Christianity?

One of the most important developments after the war was the emergence of a virile working-class press which survived the government's imposition in 1819 of a crippling four-pence stamp duty on periodicals. It was of course

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32. This is the argument of Patricia Hollis, The Pauper Press: A Study in the Working-Class Radicalism of the 1830s (London, 1970), ch.VII. Hollis's thesis is outlined and discussed in ch.2 and 4 below.

William Cobbett's celebrated publication of a two-penny weekly radical paper in 1816 which paved the way for this development. By means of such papers radical ideology was disseminated around the country, each copy being read (or heard read aloud) by a number of people. Many anti-radical papers were also published, often with government financial assistance. These papers, along with the pamphlet literature of the time, comprise the main sources of this study. In addition to containing journalists' comments on current events, radical periodicals published accounts of reform meetings (and meetings of working-class organisations), readers' letters, poems, and extracts from (or complete reprints of) various kinds of works such as sermons and tracts. All of these constitute what is here called "discourse", and are used to reconstruct radical and anti-radical "ideology".

It must be conceded that these ideologies are the constructs of the historian. The mass of speeches and writings examined are not equivalent to a definitive work by a single political philosopher. They do not express identical ideas, nor are they unyielding to further amendment. They are ideologies in the making, characterised by internal diversity and flexibility. Thus these constructs are not offered as monoliths. Furthermore, an attempt shall be made to render apparent to the reader much of that diversity and flexibility, by identifying the purpose(s) of the various authors and speakers in relation to the occasions and audiences of their "works", and

considering their rhetorical strategies.[33] To structure this potentially very unwieldy task, the two primary purposes of radical ideology identified above - the mobilisational and the tactical - shall be invoked as analytical tools: that is, the religious elements of radical and anti-radical discourse shall be considered principally in relation to these (overlapping) purposes.

It is hoped that by doing these things it will be possible to avoid the idealist-reductionism for which the work of Stedman Jones has been criticised. John Foster believes this to be implicit in Jones's non-referential conception of language, which, he alleges, results in the problem of the meaning of words being solved "quite arbitrarily, by linking specific words into a wider, subjectively constructed language system".[34] This is not, however, a defect of the non-referential theory of meaning per se, but a failure to pay sufficient attention to the contextual factors mentioned above. A non-referential theory of language use is one of the assumptions upon which this thesis, too, is based. No attempt is made here, however, to draw conclusions about the chronology of radicalism's peaks and troughs in the period under discussion, something which Stedman Jones's less

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33. "Discourse analysis" - in the strict materialist sense initiated by the work of Michel Foucault - is not undertaken here, although this study does generate conclusions about popular radicalism which transcend the intentions of individual "authors" and may therefore suggest something about the "mentality" of the time. For a discussion of Foucault, in the context of an account of historians' analyses of language and discourse, see Peter Schöttler, "Historians and Discourse Analysis", History Workshop, 27 (Spring 1989), pp.37-65. For the sake of theoretical clarity, the assumptions about language which inform this thesis are outlined below.

34. John Foster, "The Declassing of Language", New Left Review, 150 (1985), p.40.

specialised analysis of Chartist language claimed to have achieved.[35]

The particular formulation of non-referential linguistic theory which underpins the present analysis is the "reality construction" view of language as expounded by George W. Grace. Grace's book The Linguistic Construction of Reality complements the thesis of the well-known work by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality. Both are founded on the premise that the "reality" which shapes our everyday lives is, effectively, a model of reality which is culturally formulated, rather than "actual" reality. Since this model is constructed by means of language, and is transmitted from person to person and generation to generation in its linguistically encoded form (and in fact does not exist apart from its encoding in language), Grace believes it is appropriate to refer to the linguistic construction of reality.[36] This view of language is distinguished from an alternative model, the mapping view, which sees the relationship between language and actual reality as much more direct, analogous to the relationship between a map and the territory it represents.[37] Because of this very close correspondence between language and reality, the mapping view assumes linguistic expressions to be like "autonomous text": that is, they may be understood entirely without reference to contextual information. As a proponent of the reality

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35. See Stedman Jones, "Rethinking Chartism", in Languages of Class, pp.168-78.
36. George W. Grace, The Linguistic Construction of Reality (London, 1987), p.3.
37. Ibid., p.6.

construction view, Grace believes, by contrast, that "we cannot understand the relation between a linguistic expression and a real-world situation to which it refers unless we recognize the mediating roles played by the speaker and the context of the speech event".[38]

Each speech act, as well as each entire language (such as English or Japanese), reflects a constructed reality. In fact, as one speaks one constructs reality. To say something, one begins with purposes. Satisfying these purposes entails (among other things) the incorporation of an expository strategy: "a deliberate strategy which is designed to influence the process of understanding by the hearer".[39] So, far from excluding sociolinguistic factors from consideration, an analysis of discourse based on a non-referential theory of meaning confers upon them great significance. The term "non-referential" alludes to the belief that human perceptions of the real world (which vary among different cultures) mediate between actual reality and language. Language does not refer directly to reality, but to cultural (embodied in linguistic) constructions of reality. In this sense it may be said that language refers to itself (or that linguistic expressions are meaningful only in relation to each other) and not to an external

38. Ibid., pp.26-7.
39. Ibid., pp.64-5.

reality. Hence it is non-referential.[40] Contextualisation is fundamental to language use - contextual clues are even built into single sentences. These clues place each conceptual event (a linguistically structured unit of reality, as the speaker - constrained by his/her linguistic repertoire - conceives of it) within an ongoing discourse.[41] Context resides within discourse rather than within the real world.

The notion of context residing within ongoing discourse is crucial to this thesis. What an individual speaker says, can be understood only by placing it within the context of what other speakers (radical and conservative) have been saying. This can be done by interpreting the contextual clues within each discourse. As a result, the attempts of people to find ways of talking about the problems which confront them can be apprehended.[42] The ways in which they talk about them are highly significant, reflecting

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40. This is what Stedman Jones refers to as the "broader significance of Saussure's work": that is, the belief in "the materiality of language itself, the impossibility of simply referring it back to some primal anterior reality, "social being", the impossibility of abstracting experience from the language which structures its articulation". It was this conception of language which informed his work on Chartism. Stedman Jones, Languages of Class, pp.20-1. Early this century Ferdinand de Saussure, by observing that the relationship between a sign and what it signifies is an arbitrary one, showed that in a system of signification (such as a language) the elements are invested with meaning only in relation to the other elements of the system. See Rosalind Coward and John Ellis, Language and Materialism: Developments in Semiology and the Theory of the Subject (London, Henley and Boston, 1977), pp.12-15.

41. Grace, The Linguistic Construction of Reality, pp.35-7.

42. Grace sees the whole of language as composed of ways of talking about things. New subjects require that speakers find new ways of talking about them. This is achieved by extending the use of existing linguistic expressions to those new things, on the basis of perceived analogical relations. Ibid., ch.7.

self-constructed models of reality. In the discursive struggles between radicals and conservatives (and indeed among radicals, and among conservatives) different models come into conflict and vie for recognition as "the truth". Radical discourse is "a field of debate, marked by shifts in register, elements of parody and the ironic quoting in of phrases which are then turned against their originators".[43] By listening to the ongoing discourse we can hear (in Thompsonian terms) the working class taking part in its own making. The language people use is indicative of their assumptions about the world, their feelings and their aspirations. The religious elements of that language are integral to those assumptions, feelings and aspirations, and therefore demand the serious attention of the historian.

So it is proposed to identify religious language in radical discourse and, as far as possible, to contextualise its deployment, thereby elucidating (to recall the phrase of Royle and Walvin quoted above) the "religious dimension to secular affairs". At the outset it should be suggested that the categories of "religious" and "secular" are fluid, referring more to people's attitudes than actions. This may be briefly illustrated by the campaign to abolish slavery. To the evangelical this was a sacred task, and so no less religious than attending church or praying, acts which are conventionally thought to be religious. To the utilitarian, equally dedicated to the same cause, anti-slavery had no

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43. Gray argues that radical discourse ought to be seen in this way. He considered that Stedman Jones's account of Chartism communicated little sense of such debate. See Gray, "Deconstructing the Working Class", p.370.

religious implications. It has been cogently argued that it is wrong to view abolitionism as part of a process of "secularization" - "as a bridge between purely spiritual reform and later secular struggles for social justice" - for to do so "obscures the complex and dialectical relation between Christianity and the Enlightenment".[44] Davis's argument has obvious resonances for this thesis, raising the possibility of popular radicalism, for some of its personnel at least, being a religious cause. It also points to the co-existence, and moreover, the mutually enriching and reinforcing blend of Christian and secular ideas, which informed the social and political struggles of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

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44. David Brion Davis, Slavery and Human Progress (New York, 1984), p.143.

Part 1: The Post-War Mobilisation, 1816-20

CHAPTER 1: CHRISTIAN RADICALISM: THE CAREER OF WILLIAM HONE

On the title page of the anti-radical squib of 1819, The Dorchester Guide, is a set of scales. On the left of the balance is a Bible, on the right Paine's Age of Reason and Palmer's Principles of Nature. The caption reads "Truth and Falsehood", and a quotation attributed to Milton describes the event: "The latter quick up flew, and kicked the beam".[1] The picture points to the ubiquitous claim of conservatives that radicals were infidels, whose sources of ideas and doctrines were anti-Christian publications. Anti-radical propaganda asserted that radicals were attempting to destroy Christianity: in a parody of Hone's The Clerical Magistrate, for example, a candidate for admission to radicalism promises not only to "neglect all prayers", but also to "subvert...the Christian religion".[2] The anonymous writer of another riposte to the same work argued that the role of the priest was to combat radicalism:

> Against these blasphemers and hollow deceivers,
> This "Priest of the Temple," warns all true believers,
> Exhorting the poor to hold fast by the Bible,
> And leave all the rest to the children of libel;
> To look up to Him to whom mercy belongs,
> To protect them from ill, and redress all their wrongs;
> Assur'd of this truth, that we read in the word:
> "They shall ne'er be forsaken who trust in the LORD."[3]

Political radicalism and Christianity were seen as antithetical, and the practice of Christian precepts enjoined as the right response for the poor to make to the

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1. [Anon.], The Dorchester Guide, or, a House that Jack Built, 4th ed. (London, 1819).
2. M. Adams, "The Radical Pulpit", printed at the end of A Parody on The Political House that Jack Built (London, 1820).
3. [Anon.], The Real or Constitutional House that Jack Built (1819), reprinted in Edgell Rickword, Radical Squibs and Loyal Ripostes: Satirical Pamphlets of the Regency Period, 1819-1821 (Bath, 1971), p.82.

economic distress they were experiencing in 1819.[4]

It has been suggested that the study of Hone's career as publisher and bookseller is a potentially fruitful approach to understanding early nineteenth-century London radicalism. J. Ann Hone demonstrated its value in helping one appreciate the links between the radicalism of the 1790s and the post-war resurgence of popular reformist activity, and also in raising awareness of "the wide range of issues available for exploitation in the radical cause".[5] The relationship between religion and radicalism she saw as problematic:

> The strong connection between Dissent and radicalism has long been recognised as has the importance of anticlerical and atheist attitudes. However, Hone's experiences do suggest something of the complexity of the religious responses found amongst London's radicals, an aspect of radicalism which perhaps has not received the attention it deserves. There were extremes of unbelief represented by Place, Carlile and Eaton and extremes of belief represented by John Bone and Thomas Hardy, and there were men like Hone who wavered from one position to the other. It is obvious that Hone, in strong contrast to Richard Carlile, had no desire to be a martyr for the cause of free thought.[6]

In his time Hone was maligned as an anti-Christian blasphemer. Dr Stoddart, for example, referred to him as "Pimp general to this blasted age of reason,/ Huckster of lechery, blasphemy and treason".[7] Yet, as Ann Hone noted, he was not a militant freethinker like Carlile. What were Hone's religious beliefs in 1816-20? Is he more accurately characterised as a Christian or an infidel? What

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4. For an extensive analysis of the religious arguments of post-war anti-radical discourse see chapter 3 below.
5. J. Ann Hone, "William Hone (1780-1842), Publisher and Bookseller: an Approach to Early 19th Century London Radicalism", Historical Studies, XVI (1974), pp.56, 64.
6. Ibid., p.66.
7. John Stoddart, Slop's Shave at a Broken Hone (London, 1820), p.6. Stoddart (1773-1856) was editor of the conservative New Times.

connections were there between Hone's religion and his political radicalism? The present study pursues these questions, not only to solve an enigma about William Hone, but also to help elucidate the complex relationship between Christianity and popular radicalism in post-war English society. Is it legitimate to speak of the existence of Christian Radicalism?[8]

Although born in Bath, Hone grew up in London where he attended schools for short periods. From the age of ten he worked as a clerk in several solicitors' offices - until 1800 when he opened his first bookstore. As a businessman he was unsuccessful, suffering two bankruptcies by 1811. Hone's foray into the world of political writing was virtually confined to 1816-22, stimulated by the post-war economic recession and the government's repression of expressions of discontent.[9] During these years Hone wrote, edited and published a number of radical pamphlets, many of which were illustrated with woodcuts by George Cruikshank.[10] In 1817 Hone published his Reformists' Register, a weekly radical paper which ran for only six months. Largely ignoring politics during the 1820s, he

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8. A case study of Hone published very recently establishes the essentially Unitarian nature of Hone's religious beliefs around 1817. See Robert Hole, Pulpits, Politics and Public Order in England 1760-1832 (Cambridge, 1989), ch.15. In some respects - detailed below - its characterisation of Hone is, however, inadequate and misleading.

9. Joseph O. Baylen and Norbert J. Gossman (eds), Biographical Dictionary of Modern British Radicals, Vol.I (Hassocks, Sussex, 1979), pp.239-40. (Hereafter the abbreviation BDMBR is employed.)

10. George Cruikshank (1792-1878) was an artist and caricaturist with populist and reformist sympathies. He was later associated with Charles Dickens, and was a staunch advocate of temperance. For a brief biographical sketch see BDMBR, II, pp.165-6.

again produced a few squibs during the reform struggle in 1832.[11]

Hone achieved notoriety in December 1817 when he was tried and acquitted of three counts of blasphemous libel for having published parodies of parts of the Book of Common Prayer. The parodies ridiculed members of the government, but their use of the form and language of the Church services could be - and was - construed as also intending to bring into contempt the services themselves. The conservative writer, William Shadgett, declared that the parodies could not have been written by anyone with a "reverence for the doctrines of Christianity".[12] Their publication in December 1816 - following the Spa Fields riots, and prior to the disturbances of 1817 - was critical, particularly as conservatives often saw discontent and violence as the direct results of radical propaganda, and reverence for religion as productive of peace and order. Early in 1818 Shadgett asserted that the parodies had

> increased that insubordination to the constituted authorities which had been so long prevalent; they strengthened that contempt for religion, which was but before too conspicuous; and they destroyed in many individuals that reverence they till then have ever felt for the solemn services of the Church.[13]

The parodies were certainly popular among working-class people around the country, as they were suited to being read

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11. On Hone's life see (in addition to the article in BDMBR) DNB, IX, pp.1137-41, and the book-length biography by Frederick William Hackwood, William Hone: His Life and Times (1912; rpt. New York, n.d.).
12. SWR, 15 Mar. 1818, p.50.
13. Ibid., p.52. See chapter 3 below for discussions of both Shadgett and the conservative belief that the publication of cheap radical propaganda produced disaffection and rebellion.

aloud at tavern gatherings.[14] Hone's acquittal was cited by a number of speakers in parliamentary debates about the Six Acts in 1819 as evidence that stricter and more effective laws were required.[15] The parodies and trials established Hone's reputation as an irreligious radical.

The imputation of blasphemy embarrassed and troubled Hone, and he quickly withdrew the parodies from sale after being charged, allegedly as a concession to his father and others.[16] It is likely that the charges against him would have been dropped had not Richard Carlile (against Hone's stated wish) reprinted the parodies, precipitating "a bitter rift with the Liverpool government".[17] At the time of his trials Hone claimed to be a Christian, and he reaffirmed the sincerity of the claim twenty years later in his autobiography. The profession of Christianity at his first trial he made "with a reverence for the doctrines of Christianity which could not be exceeded by any person in that Court".[18] At his third trial he claimed to have "intimate acquaintance" with Scripture, which he read with delight, and he referred to Christ as "that Divine Being".[19] Of course the context of these claims must be considered in assessing their sincerity: it was in Hone's

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14. McCalman, Radical Underworld, pp.122-3.
15. For examples see the debate on the Blasphemous and Seditious Libels Bill on 21 Dec. 1819, T.C. Hansard (ed.), The Parliamentary Debates from the Year 1803 to the Present Time, vol. XLI, pp.1414ff.
16. Hone later stated this as his reason. See the autobiographical fragment in Hackwood, William Hone, pp.60-1.
17. Wiener, Radicalism, p.22.
18. William Hone, First Trial of William Hone, Ninth ed. (London, 1817), p.14.
19. William Hone, The Three Trials of William Hone (London, 1818), pp.31, 18-19.

interest to establish for the court his attachment to Christianity. And his retrospective claim that in 1817 he genuinely believed himself to be a Christian is similarly open to the objection that he was protecting his reputation.[20]

Whatever Hone's intention respecting the services of the Church might have been, it need not be doubted that Christianity exerted a powerful influence upon his life and career during the immediate post-war years, and there is no compelling reason for disputing his appropriation of the epithet Christian. Further study of the nature and uses of Hone's religious beliefs at this time, although the evidence is limited and its interpretation debatable, is useful, and indeed productive of a more complex and subtle picture of the relationship between religion and radicalism than has hitherto emerged. Hone's trials, "autobiography", Reformists' Register, the parodies and his other satirical pamphlets, together illuminate this difficult problem.

Olivia Smith's insightful analysis of Hone's trials provides an invaluable starting point.[21] Smith observed that Hone's defence, particularly in the third trial, relied on models he had acquired from his reading of Pilgrim's

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20. Ann Hone avoids making a judgement on the question of whether Hone's intention in publishing the parodies was blasphemy (in part) for this reason. See J. Ann Hone, For the Cause of Truth: Radicalism in London 1796-1821 (Oxford, 1982), pp.332-6. For Hone's retrospective claim see the autobiographical fragment published in Hackwood, William Hone, p.61.

21. The importance of Smith's study was not recognised by Hole, who suggested that it merely "places Hone and the trials in a literary context"; Hole, Pulpits, p.214, n.1. In documenting the literary provenance of the rhetorical strategies and language Hone deployed in his trials, Smith's analysis points to a major link between Christianity and popular radicalism. See below.

Progress, Foxe's Book of Martyrs and The Tryal of John Lilburn. By relying on these

> Hone finds a language and an imagery which enables him to make sense out of an intense and dangerous situation, a language which his audience was apt to recognize and apparently appreciated....The biblical allusions, the colloquial language, and the allegorical imagery...fabricate a new fiction -- an entire imaginative portrayal which finally reduces the judge and others to the status of characters in a setting which Hone defines.[22]

A good example of this strategy is Hone's demonstration of government hypocrisy. George Canning had apparently once published a scriptural parody for which he was not prosecuted. Hone tells the gospel story of Jesus and the woman caught committing adultery. The Jewish law stipulated stoning as the punishment for this crime. Christ's compassionate and effective response was to suggest that the person who had never sinned should cast the first stone. Hone then indicts his accusers for failing to heed Christ's injunction.[23] In this application of the roles of the Biblical scenario to the "players" in the courtroom, Hone becomes the object of Christ's compassion, and his persecutors are reproved for their hypocrisy. Turning to the jury, Hone asks them to follow Jesus's command "to do unto others as you wish others to do unto you".[24]

Like Zachariah Coleman, the main character of Mark Rutherford's novel The Revolution in Tanner's Lane, who recalled the struggles of Christian in Pilgrim's Progress when experiencing personal difficulties, it could be said of Hone that his recollection of the ordeals of Christian

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22. Olivia Smith, The Politics of Language 1791-1819 (Oxford, 1984), p.189.
23. Hone, The Three Trials, pp.18-19.
24. Ibid., p.19.

heroes allowed him to "connect his trouble with the trouble of others; he could give it a place in the dispensation of things, and could therefore lift himself above it".[25] The three consecutive days of court appearances fatigued him, and he accused the government of hoping that his strength would fail on the third day. Admitting his weakness, Hone attributed his endurance to the intervention of God in "protecting a helpless and defenceless man against the rage and malice of his enemies".[26] He drew strength from a conviction of being right and a sure sense of the worthiness of the cause for which he was fighting:

> I have a spark of liberty in my mind, that will glow and burn brighter, and blaze more fiercely, as my mortal remains are passing to decay. There is nothing can crush me, but my own sense of doing wrong...but...when I know I am right, I am as an armed man; and in this spirit I wage war with the Attorney-General....The consciousness of my innocence gives me life, spirits, and strength, to go through this third ordeal of persecution and oppression.[27]

Like Christian, Hone was engaged in a fight, the outcome of which (he imagined) was dependent upon the moral and spiritual qualities of the combatants and the righteousness of their respective causes.

The comparison between Hone and Christian had been made several months before the trial by a correspondent to the Reformists' Register. Having read about Hone's arrest, he commented: "Your situation reminds me of BUNYAN'S Pilgrim, treading with extreme caution over the enchanted ground, where gins, and traps, and pitfals, [sic] were planted

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25. Mark Rutherford, The Revolution in Tanner's Lane, 10th ed. (London, n.d.), pp.137-8.
26. William Hone, The Third Trial of William Hone (London, 1818), p.16.
27. Ibid., p.22.

through the whole of his way".[28] No doubt the comparison appealed to Hone's imagination, for he was prone to making such comparisons himself. He addressed two articles in his Register to the MP for the borough of Yarmouth, A. Maconochie, who had supported the Habeas Corpus Suspension Bill of March 1817. This "dialogue" with Maconochie Hone compared to Christian and Faithful who, having passed through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, talked of the terrible things they had seen along the way. He goes on to relate an account of the execution of John Cashman for his part in the Spa Fields riots the previous December, he describes contemporary examples of poverty among English working people, and recounts the arrests of the Blanketeers.[29] It is clear that Hone saw the post-war plight of the English working people in the terms of the narrative of Pilgrim's Progress; his own ordeal he identified with their cause, and it was natural that he should draw on the same stories, language and imagery to give meaning to his personal struggle.

Like most boys of working-class Dissenting families of the time, Hone had received an education which was based substantially on the Bible: his father used it to teach him to read, and it featured centrally in the lessons of his other teachers, whom he liked and respected. (Mr Perry, for example, he remembered as "a kind, religious man".)[30]

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28. RR, 9 Aug. 1817, col.78.
29. RR, 15 Mar. 1817, cols.228-34. Yarmouth, on the Isle of Wight, was a rotten borough: it had a total of 343 inhabitants, 13 of whom elected two members of parliament. For a similar allusion to Pilgrim's Progress see RR, 29 Mar. 1817, col.314.
30. Hone, "Autobiographical fragment", rpt. in Hackwood, William Hone, pp.24-5, 33-4.

Pilgrim's Progress was a source of great pleasure for the young Hone; his admiration for it among books was unrivalled. On first reading it he understood it literally and saw the real world through its lens.[31] On reading Bishop Watson's Apology for the Bible at the age of twelve, Hone first became aware that the Bible could be doubted.[32] Although convinced by Watson's argument, he too began to doubt. At the age of fifteen he worked for a short time for a Unitarian with whom he discussed religion. Soon, through the agency of an older boy, he became a convert to Deism and rejected the authority of the Bible. However, on reading through the New Testament at this time, he admired the character and teaching of Jesus - "the character of Christ stood out as an example of inimitable virtue" - and he despaired about the possibility of himself ever attaining like virtue. He thought his father was the only real Christian he knew. At the end of his teens he began to question the value of his new knowledge, which provided freedom, but neither happiness nor virtue. Seventeen years later, by the time of his trials, Hone believed himself to be a Christian. He had worked out a rational Christianity.[33]

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31. On visiting the Royal Exchange with his father, for example, he imagined he was in Vanity Fair "and, clapping my hands shouted out, "Father! Vanity Fair! This is Vanity Fair"", ibid., pp.28-30.
32. Watson's Apology (1796) was one of at least thirty published Christian responses to Thomas Paine's Age of Reason. See Franklyn K. Prochaska, "Thomas Paine's The Age of Reason Revisited", Journal of the History of Ideas, 33 (1972), pp.567-9.
33. Hone, "Autobiographical fragment" in Hackwood, William Hone, pp.51-3, 59, 61. Manuscript evidence cited by Hole suggests that this rational Christianity was Unitarian; Hole, Pulpits, p.216.

The foregoing account of Hone's religious development is potted and relies entirely upon his own retrospective autobiography. On 1 January 1832 he had experienced an evangelical conversion to Christianity, and the story of his life is told from the perspective of that seeming fulfilment of his religious quest.[34] As evidence of Hone's religious beliefs in 1817 it is not thereby rendered completely unreliable. Following such a conversion, people often exaggerated the degree of their earlier "waywardness" rather than fabricating a blameless past: for a conversion was by definition a radical change of direction, salvation from a life ravaged by the deleterious consequences of sin. So when Hone claimed that he thought himself to be a Christian at that time, it is probably true; and it is corroborated by the testimony of his brother, Joseph, a barrister, who, in spite of losing many clients because they thought he shared his brother's political and religious beliefs - which he did not - supported William's public claim in 1824 that he had been a Christian at the time of

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34. For an account of his conversion see the letter to his brother of 22 Apr. 1834, in Hackwood, William Hone, pp.304-6, where he claims that thereafter "everything appeared changed - the world and its pleasures, literature and its choicest works, had lost their charms - in short, I found that I myself was changed, and the mystery of salvation, through the blood of Christ, God made manifest in the flesh, is to me, through the eye of faith, and by the power of grace, a precious truth, by which my rebellious will has been subjugated, and my heart reconciled to God".

his trials.[35] And, unlike the older evangelical Hone, the historian ought not judge that rational Christianity to be any less "Christian" than evangelical Christianity.

There is some contemporary evidence which might suggest that Hone was sympathetic towards freethought. In 1820 he published the Apocryphal New Testament, a collection of gospels and epistles which were rejected by the Church council which determined the canon of Scripture. In so doing he "underscored the fortuitous nature of religious orthodoxy".[36] Carlile hailed the publication with delight, commending it as a book "above all others, calculated to open the eyes of the British public, to the imposition now practising upon them under the name of Christianity".[37] The Deists' Magazine reviewed it

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35. In 1824 Hone published a reply to the various aspersions which, since 1817, had been cast about his religious beliefs, emphatically denying the frequent assertion that he was irreligious. The occasion for writing the pamphlet was the publication of a circular letter addressed to the legal profession (dated 18 August 1823), appealing for financial contributions to assist Joseph Hone to emigrate, his legal career in England having been ruined by his brother's notoriety. William objected to the implication of the circular's statement that Joseph did not share his brother's religious opinions: that is, that Joseph was religious and William irreligious. William wrote to his brother asking for assistance in clarifying this question. In his reply - printed verbatim in William's pamphlet - Joseph supported his brother's claim that he believed in Christianity in 1817. In part, he wrote: "In our former familiar conversations, you have sometimes questioned parts of the text of the Old and New Testament, and controverted certain doctrines; this led to the differences which usually arise on discussions between persons of opposite theological principles: however, I did not understand you to reject Christianity, or to deny or impugn the genuineness or authenticity of the Old or New Testament as a whole". Quoted in William Hone, Aspersions Answered: an Explanatory Statement, Addressed to the Public at Large, and to Every Reader of the Quarterly Review in Particular (London, 1824), p.11.
36. Wiener, Radicalism, p.64.
37. Republican, 11 Aug. 1820, pp.549-53.

favourably and reprinted extracts from it.[38] The Quarterly Review, asserting that the object of the work was "to destroy the credit of the New Testament, and to show that the most silly and driveling [sic] forgeries can be supported by the same evidence which we use to establish the authority of our Scripture", cited its publication as evidence that in 1817 Hone had lied about the intention of his parodies. It branded him "a wretch as contemptible as he is wicked".[39] Several years after his evangelical conversion Hone himself repudiated the apocryphal gospels as "contemptible forgeries", having "long felt deep remorse for having produced that work" which was "justly offensive to pious minds".[40]

These responses do not, however, singly or collectively, substantiate the allegation that the publication of the Apocryphal New Testament in 1820 was intended to attack Christianity by undermining the authority of Scripture. In his Aspersions Answered, which refuted the arguments of the Quarterly Review, Hone claimed that he published the apocryphal gospels solely "for the use of the curious in old literature, the drama, and the arts", having fortuitously found them while doing some research at the British Library.[41] He denied the Quarterly Review's assertion that he did not believe the New Testament documents to be genuine, and professed never to have thought "that any person can possibly entertain the least favourable notion of the apocryphal Gospels in comparison with the genuine

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38. See the Deists' Magazine, pp.167-71, 183-5, 264-6, 302-4.
39. Quarterly Review, Vol.XXV, No.L. (July 1821), p.348.
40. Hone, "Autobiographical", in Hackwood, William Hone, p.62.
41. Hone, Aspersions Answered, pp.54-9.

Gospels".[42] That Hone held such views, however, could be inferred from the preface to the second edition of the Apocryphal New Testament, where he quoted very unfavourable opinions about the members of the Council which determined the canon, and he conceded the charge made by critics in response to the first edition, that he expressed "too little veneration for the councils of the Church", declaring that he felt none.[43] This is a sure indication of Hone's anti-clericalism, but it does not prove that he was attempting to undermine Christianity. Rather, by attacking the authority of the Church, he sought to separate genuine Christianity - embodied by the teachings of Christ - from the accretions added by self-interested clergymen over many centuries. True Christianity was, he believed, "gradually emerging from the mystifying subtleties of fathers, councils and hierarchies, and the encumbering edicts of soldier-kings and papal decretals".[44] The result of this would be that,

> Charmed by the loveliness of its primitive simplicity, every sincere human heart will become a temple for its habitation, and every man become a priest unto himself. Thus, and thus only, will be established the religion of Him, who, having the same interest with ourselves in the welfare of mankind, left us, for the rule of our happiness, the sum and substance of his code of peace and good will - "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."[45]

Such declarations must be juxtaposed with Hone's anti-clerical statements in order properly to understand his beliefs and motives.

One other action of Hone's might also be misconstrued as

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42. Ibid., pp.34-6, 59.
43. William Hone, The Apocryphal New Testament, 2nd ed. (London, 1820), pp.xiii-xv.
44. Ibid., p.xv.
45. Ibid.

directed against Christianity. In 1819 he helped Richard Carlile prepare his defence for his trial for blasphemous libel in October. Evidently he supplied authorities to support arguments against the Bible.[46] Rather than signifying a commitment to the cause of anti-Christianity - for which other evidence is lacking - this action ought to be understood as an expression of Hone's commitment to the cause of freedom of opinion. It was a contribution towards thwarting an attempt of the government and the Society for the Suppression of Vice to punish a person merely for publishing ideas. The struggle for the freedom of the press was an item on the radical agenda, a cause to which Hone had already made a contribution in his own trials of 1817. Many Christians, particularly Unitarians, although disagreeing with Carlile's religious beliefs, opposed his prosecution, believing it to be inconsistent with the spirit of Christianity. They also contended that Christianity would win the struggle with infidelity because it was true; truth would ultimately prevail.[47] Carlile and other freethinkers used the latter argument to their own advantage, claiming that the use of force indicated that Christianity was not true.[48]

The most fruitful test the historian can apply to determine Hone's religious stance is the one Hone himself urged his critics to perform: "to adduce a single line of

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46. Although Hone later dissociated himself from Carlile, in the Carlile papers is part of a draft of Carlile's defence in Hone's handwriting. See Wiener, Radicalism, pp.47, 50, 54.
47. See Ursula Henriques, Religious Toleration in England 1787-1833 (London, 1961), pp.206-16, and chapter 2 below.
48. Ibid., p.214.

mine, tending in the least degree to degrade religion".[49] Examination of Hone's writings and publications of 1816-20 fails to discover any attack on Christianity per se. Rather, Hone often contested doctrines said by their proponents to be Christian, but which he argued were misconstructions or misapplications of Biblical passages. Moreover, Hone's arguments for radical reform were often supported with reference to Christian principles, and in this sense his claim is true that he had acted to promote, rather than to discredit, Christianity.[50]

Hone's brand of anti-clericalism is perhaps most incisively expressed in the conclusion to Rev. James Murray's third Sermon to Asses, which Hone reprinted in his Register. Murray (1732-82), a Scottish Dissenting minister, for much of his life resided in Newcastle, where he was an important political figure. He has been considered a significant influence on the young Thomas Spence, alerting him to "the possibility of achieving a synthesis of Reason and revelation with profoundly radical implications".[51] Hone recommended several of Murray's works as comprising an "excellent manual of civil and religious liberty", and his reprinting of them made them readily available to his post-war contemporaries.[52] In the Sermon on Asses, which

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49. Hone, Aspersions Answered, pp.64-5. This challenge was originally issued in court in 1817, and here reiterated.
50. Ibid., p.65. Hone cited his publication of the Spirit of Despotism (1821) as an example. Robert Hole's analysis of this work (written in 1795 by Vicesimus Knox) demonstrates its radical Christian tenor. See Hole, Pulpits, pp.222-5.
51. Chase, "The People's Farm", pp.42-4. For a brief biographical sketch of Murray see DNB, XIII, pp.1269-70.
52. See RR, 26 July 1817, col.26. For a discussion of the volume of Murray's works printed by Hone see Hole, Pulpits, pp.220-2.

supports freedom of conscience and the separation of Church and State, people who submit to the impositions of the clergy are likened to Balaam's ass, which complained about having to serve the prophet, but obeyed him nevertheless.[53] Murray argued that the clergy ride upon the backs of the people, controlling them by means of creeds, which enslave their minds and consciences:

> Were once the people to receive nothing as their creed but the scriptures, the clergy would soon have no more authority than what their good services and good conversation procured them. They would then be obliged to be helpers of the joy of Christians, but should no longer be Lords of their faith. Good men will always respect their teachers, as long as they are examples of goodness, and condescend to men of low degree: but such as understand the New Testament will reject all dominion over their consciences, but the lordship of Jesus Christ: they will laugh at clerical jurisdiction, and reject all religious dictators. When men have not the exercise of private judgment allowed them as their natural privilege, but are marked down for heretics for every deviation from the national creed, they are much in the same situation with the prophet's ass.[54]

It is in the context of this statement that Hone's support of Carlile's defence in 1819 and his publication of the Apocryphal New Testament in 1820 are best explained: both affirm freedom of thought and reject clerical authority (upon which the received canon of the New Testament rested).

The Sermon goes on to argue that an increase of both civil and religious liberty would attend the separation of Church and State. Government based upon arbitrary power rather than moral principles requires that people's minds first be enslaved: hence the "blending of civil and religious offices, or sacred and secular things". The alliance between the priesthood and the magistracy makes people

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53. The story of Balaam and his ass is from the Old Testament book of Numbers, chapter 22.
54. RR, 26 July 1817, col.28.

doubly afraid to speak the truth, for if it differs from what the established religion authorises, they may invoke either the curse of heaven or civil punishment.[55] The hostility of Hone and many other radicals towards the Church did not arise from their rejection of the doctrines of Christianity, but from the Church's role in preserving the political status quo. Some radicals, such as Richard Carlile, chose to attack the Bible as the ostensible foundation of the Church's authority, while others, like Hone, chose to use the Bible to expose the acts of the clergy and government which were inconsistent with its precepts, and they contested the Church's interpretation of Biblical texts which were used to enjoin quietism.[56]

In two consecutive editions of his Register Hone responded to a sermon preached by the Rev. Daniel Wilson, Minister of St John's Chapel, Bedford Row, London, on 9 and 16 March 1817, entitled "The Duty of Contentment under Present Circumstances".[57] Hone charged Wilson with having quoted "the Bible partially, for political purposes", and he issued a rejoinder to "show that you have as much misrepresented real Christianity as you have political liberty".[58] He objected particularly to a passage in Wilson's sermon which invoked the Biblical injunctions to fear God, honour the king and submit to rulers.[59] To counter Wilson's

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55. Ibid., cols.30-1. On clerical magistrates see chapter 2 below.
56. These different stances of course reflect genuine religious beliefs as much as tactical strategies.
57. St John's Chapel was known as the headquarters of the Evangelical party in London during Wilson's 12-year incumbency (1812-24). See DNB, XXI, pp.558-60.
58. RR, 26 Apr. 1817, col.418.
59. Commands to be found in Romans 13:1-7 and 1 Peter 2:13-18.

contemporary applications of these injunctions, he quoted Rev. James Murray's exposition of Romans 13, which argued that the word "authority" in the original Greek text referred only to "such as protect men in the enjoyments of their just rights and privileges"; it could not be used of tyrants. Authorities, he claimed, are not appointed by God "if they are a terror to good works, and a praise to evil".[60]

In his second letter to Wilson, Hone said that since Wilson had ventured into the arena of politics, he would venture into that of theology. Hone argued that it was not sinful to fight for "our just rights, our inalienable privileges".[61] Developing further Murray's interpretation of Romans 13, he represented resistance to bad governments as the reverse side of the coin enjoining obedience to good governments:

> Every GOOD government is of God....But if the powers that be should attempt what they have no authority...to be...ministers for evil, the very same reason binds us to a resistance of them, as would otherwise engage us for conscience-sake to obey them.[62]

Hone implicitly accepted the Bible's authority in choosing this line of argument, and he made this explicit in his rhetorical questions addressed to Wilson at the end of this "epistle":

> Do you tell the People, that the Bible is the rule of life? Do you implore them not to rely on what you say, but to try your sayings by the Bible? Do you tell them that it is their duty not to be satisfied with what they

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60. RR, 26 Apr. 1817, cols.425-32. The latter quote alludes to verse 3: "For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil".
61. RR, 3 May 1817, col.453. Hone acknowledges his debt to Samuel Rutherford's Lex Rex (1644) for ideas developed in this article.
62. Ibid., col.460.

> hear, but that meditating and reflecting thereon, they ought, with all patience, to turn over and search the Scriptures, and diligently inquire are these things so?[63]

The Bible was an authority superior to the clergy, and it could be interpreted in a way which favoured the common people and sanctioned their struggle for reform in post-war England.

In the letter to Wilson of 3 May, while acknowledging that all power came ultimately from God, Hone insisted that particular forms of government came immediately from the people, to whom governors were accountable. This is a conservative theoretical statement about political authority, one which had come to be accepted by virtually all Anglican clergymen during the eighteenth century (although it was qualified in different ways). Indeed the legitimacy of 1688-9 was predicated upon it.[64] However, Hone's invocation of this axiom of Anglican political theory, when seen in the contexts of unitarian beliefs about human nature, and post-war distress and unrest, is decidedly radical. In support of his contention he quoted from Richard Price's Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty, which in turn found support in the doctrines of Locke and Priestley.[65] The same idea was known to Hone through Rev. Robert Hall's Apology for the Freedom of the Press, the

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63. Ibid., cols.466-7. Hone alludes to Acts 7:1 in this passage.
64. See Hole, Pulpits, pp.14-15.
65. Ibid., cols.461-2. On Price and his Observations (1776) see Caroline Robbins, The Eighteenth Century Commonwealthman: Studies in the Transmission, Development and Circumstance of English Liberal Thought from the Restoration of Charles II until the War with the Thirteen Colonies (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1959), pp.335-44.

publication of which in 1793 he remembered.[66] The roots of the political philosophies of Price and Priestley may be found in their heterodox religious beliefs. Both rejected the doctrine of the trinity, Price being an Arian, Priestley a Socinian.[67] If Christ were not part of the trinity, the doctrine of the atonement was void, and thus humanity did not stand in need of redemption. The concept of inherited original sin was rejected, and superseded by the belief that human beings were basically good. The special authority of the Anglican clergy was similarly rendered invalid:

> A consequence of a denial that Christ exercised divine authority was that He could not institute a priesthood descending by apostolic succession and exercising its mediatory powers by virtue of that divine right: the Anglican clergy were thus on a par, in point of authority, with Dissenting clergy (or even with the private individual). If even the Church could not claim divine institution, the State was still more obviously secular. "No bishop, no king" was once more a relevant challenge, if mankind was free to amend or reject its ecclesiastical and political hierarchy in the name of reason, conscience or utility.[68]

Price's political philosophy "derived from a moral theory of the autonomy of the individual".[69] Rejecting original sin as incompatible with free will, he would not concede the right of any authority to prescribe what one should believe. Civil liberty was the concomitant of religious liberty. The independence of the individual's conscience meant that all individuals were equal and ought not be imposed upon by

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66. RR, 12 Apr. 1817, cols.361-6. Hall was a Baptist minister and admirer of Priestley. His Apology is discussed in chapter 4 below. See the DNB article on Hall, VIII, pp.969-71.
67. An Arian believed the doctrine of Arius (c.250-c.336) that Christ, although divine, was created by the father and was subordinate to him. Faustus Socinus (1539-1604) denied the divinity of Christ altogether. See Clark, English Society, p.281.
68. Ibid.
69. Ibid., p.330.

inherited authority.[70] In Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty Price insisted that legislative authority resided in the people. That authority was entrusted to parliaments, which were to represent the people fairly, and be of short duration (in order to avert their almost inevitable corruption). A parliament which abused its authority - by perpetuating itself or accepting bribes, for example - forfeited that authority. Constant vigilance on the part of the people was required in order to prevent a government from losing its original character.[71]

Price's ideas underpinned Hone's articulation of the radical demands for annual parliaments and universal suffrage. The result of annual parliaments, he projected, would be

> an end to corruption....intellect would receive a new stimulus; integrity, and honest dealing, and uprightness in every possible way would then be countenanced where they are now despised. ANNUAL PARLIAMENTS would do more good in a MORAL view than all the TEACHING and PREACHING and WHIPPING, and TRANSPORTING and HANGING can remove...[72]

Price and his like-minded contemporaries used the language of natural rights to speak of the God-given autonomy of the individual.[73] So too did Hone and his fellow radicals. When the Whig MP Henry Brougham argued that universal suffrage was not a right because there was no law granting it, Hone retorted that laws had deprived people of their rights:

> We say, LET A LAW BE MADE to allow us the exercise of our RIGHT....If no law had been made to prevent us

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70. Ibid.
71. Robbins, Commonwealthman, pp.337-9.
72. RR, 8 Feb. 1817, p.41.
73. The language of natural rights replaced that of Christian obligation. See Clark, English Society, p.330.

> exercising our right, none would now be necessary to restore it to us.[74]

Such a right is clearly a natural, rather than (necessarily) an historical right, although both were frequently invoked by Hone and others to give authority to their demands. Indeed the object of the people in the post-war reform agitation, according to Hone, was "the restoration of their rights, the restoring of liberty and happiness to their country".[75] Historical rights were a constitutional embodiment of natural rights.[76] Reform - the remedy to economic distress and political corruption - Hone defined as the "reinstatement of those indisputable rights which were given you by God himself, and secured by the laws of your ancient constitution".[77]

By denying people the exercise of their natural rights the government had usurped the prerogative of God. This belief is inscribed in Hone's parodies of the Book of Common Prayer, for which he was arraigned. In A New Form of Prayer, for example, there is a fundamental irony in making

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74. RR, 8 Feb. 1817, p.43.
75. Ibid., p.36.
76. On this "structured interdependence" in radical rhetoric between arguments based on natural and historical rights see Epstein, "The Constitutional Idiom", p.564.
77. RR, 14 June 1817, col.670. Many radicals, most notably Major Cartwright, believed in a mythical ancient constitution under which monarchy and government were uncorrupted, and thus they frequently called for the restoration of ancient liberties adapted to modern conditions. See R.J. White, Waterloo to Peterloo (Harmondsworth, 1957), pp.128, 130-1. This was the Whig version of the old Norman Yoke theory, which held that William the Conqueror was the originator of absolute monarchy in England, the Anglo-Saxons having possessed greater liberties than the generations after the Norman conquest. See Christopher Hill, Puritanism and Revolution: Studies in the Interpretation of the English Revolution of the 17th Century (Harmondsworth, 1968), ch.3, esp. pp.92, 103.

the people pray:

> That it may please ye to give unto all people all their rights as citizens, whatever may be the mode on which their consciences may impel them to worship their Creator, and whatever the creed to which their judgments assent, We beseech ye to hear us, O Rulers![78]

They are praying not to God, but to their earthly governors who have impeded the exercise of a basic human right granted by God to all people. That the people pray to their rulers suggests that such authorities stand, self-appointed, in the place of God, with whose liberality their tyranny is implicitly contrasted. The irony is expressed in a humorous and incisive manner in the benediction: "The Grace of our Lord GEORGE the Prince Regent, and the Love of Louis XVIII, and the Fellowship of the Pope, be with us all evermore. Amen".[79]

Defined as the struggle for the recovery of God-given rights, the reform cause could be identified with the will of God, and its ultimate triumph anticipated with confidence. Joseph Priestley had applied to society the determinism implicit in the operation of natural laws. For him this had been the basis of "a philosophical justification for mutual improvement and social reform" and a guarantee that activity in the cause of reform would not be in vain (an argument with millenarian implications not lost to post-war radicalism.)[80] Hone used Biblical imagery and language to construct a complementary (if not identical) thesis, based on an analogy between religious

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78. William Hone, A New Form of Prayer; or, The Political Litany, Diligently Revised (London, 1817), p.6.
79. Ibid., p.8.
80. Royle, Victorian Infidels, p.22. On post-war radicalism and millenarianism see chapter 2 below.

and political salvation. Commending the work of Cobbett's Political Register in disseminating knowledge among the common people, Hone remarked:

> He has imparted...many valuable truths to you, of which you were ignorant; he has made you wise unto political salvation; he has sown amongst us the seeds of Reform, which have taken deep root, which all the harpies of corruption can never eradicate, and which in good time will bring forth good fruit.[81]

The allusion is to Jesus's parable of the sower, the seed representing the word of God, which takes root and produces fruit only in good soil - that is, where the word is not only heard, but understood and applied.[82] The language of the Bible was more accessible to the common person than Priestley's philosophical language, and it pointed to a powerful and benevolent superintending deity.

Hone was convinced of the righteousness of reform, and enjoined active, persistent pursuit of its objectives by legal and peaceful means. Probably alluding to Jesus's promise to Peter that the gates of hell would not prevail against his church (Matthew 16:18), he advised:

> Let them but be peaceable yet ACTIVE - patient, yet RESOLUTE - let them hold to their purpose - let them HOLD TO THE LAWS - and the powers of sin and death shall not prevail against them.[83]

In response to Sidmouth's letter of 27 March 1817 expressing the government's determination to prosecute the publishers and vendors of blasphemous and seditious writings, Hone declared:

> We are legally and constitutionally...seeking to obtain Reform, and therefore are the last men likely to be seditious libellers. We are political dissenters from

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81. RR, 5 Apr. 1817, cols.337-8.
82. The parable of the sower and its interpretation may be read in Matthew 13:1-23.
83. RR, 8 Feb. 1817, col.59.

> the establishment, "more sinned against than sinning." We bear and forbear. We are compelled to bear with the taunts and abuse of those who, being within the pale of privilege, smite us upon one cheek; and we forbear, whilst they insist on smiting us on the other. We are struggling for emancipation, and they for power; we for right, and they for might; but as unconstitutional power, and illegal might, must in the end be overcome by knowledge and wisdom, so we patiently persist, with the sure and certain hope of victory.[84]

The central Biblical allusion casts the struggle between government and reformers in terms of good versus evil, and attributes to reformers the practice of Christian virtue.[85] Elsewhere Hone claimed that "the Reformers dread revolution, because they love Order, and the Liberty with which the Constitution hath made them free".[86] Eschewing violence, he worked both to persuade people to use only peaceful tactics to obtain their rights, and to establish a good reputation for reformers: because disorder - such as had occurred at Spa Fields - was used by the government as a warrant for suspending Habeas Corpus and enacting other restrictions on personal liberty.[87]

Thus Hone worked to mobilise support for the cause of reform and attempted to mould the character of the burgeoning movement. Without exaggeration it could be said that he conceived of the task as a sacred one. To execute

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84. RR, 12 Apr. 1817, col.358.
85. Jesus's words in Matthew 5:39 are recalled: "I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also".
86. RR, 11 Oct. 1817, col.354. Here there is an allusion to Galatians 5:1: "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free".
87. For further instances where Hone insisted on the exclusive use of peaceful methods see RR, 8 Feb. 1817, p.59, and 5 Apr. 1817, p.339; also Hone's The Riots in London (London, 1816), Part 1, p.2, and Part 2, p.2. Ann Hone notes that Hone abhorred violence and believed that its use "strengthened the hand of government". Ann Hone, "William Hone", p.68.

it successfully he needed to challenge Anglican orthodoxy, and particularly to counter the quietism enjoined by clergymen and others. His response to Rev. Daniel Wilson's sermon should be seen in this context. Robert Hole noted that, while this sermon was concerned largely with social theory (a characteristically modern emphasis), Hone's reply, by concentrating on a brief passage on political authority, was old-fashioned.[88] This observation may be accurate, but the conclusion Hole draws is misleading:

> Hone's reply...failed to provide a radical response to the critical new argument. His position was, in fact, characteristically Unitarian. He had little interest in the education of the poor, little desire to stir up discontent among the lower orders. His interest, like Priestley's had been, was bourgeois and intellectual; his concentration upon political theory and abstract argument reflected the position of earlier "rational Christians", not the new area of debate.[89]

It should be understood first that Wilson's invocation of Romans 13 in the context of a sermon enjoining contentment in difficult circumstances served the purpose of social order. Hone's concentration upon this passage served the purpose of countering the quietism which Wilson preached. This purpose can legitimately be denominated mobilisational, especially given Hone's view of the function of popular political journals.[90] He did indeed deploy an older theoretical argument about political obligation, but he was not merely engaging in abstract debate. These older arguments still appeared frequently in anti-radical

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88. Hole, Pulpits, pp.216-17. For an outline and examination of Hole's thesis that the emphasis of Christian political thought changed during the 1790s - from a preoccupation with theoretical arguments about political obligation to a pragmatic concern with social control - see chapter 3 below.
89. Ibid., p.217.
90. Note his praise of Cobbett cited above.

discourse in the post-war period - see chapter 3 below for abundant examples - and it was vital to combat them because they enlisted what was arguably the highest authority on the side of conservatism: the word of God. And so the meaning of Romans 13 needed to be disputed.

Further, Hone's mobilisational effort was predicated on an optimistic view of human nature. Once enlightened to the cause of their distress, Hone anticipated that people would work for legal, peaceful constitutional change - and that change would put an end to corruption in government, corruption which was institutionalised rather than residing in an incorrigible human nature. Hone's own political publications were directed towards educating the poor - not indeed to stir up discontent, but to direct the expression of discontent which already existed among the lower orders. When he argued that God permitted particular forms of government to be determined by men, he hoped to help clear the way for radical reform of the constitution. The particular form of government he had in mind was representative democracy. This was no theoretical discussion. It was tactically clever to invoke an axiom of Anglican political theory and deploy it in the popular struggle for radical reform. Hole failed to put Hone's argument into this wider context (in which it belongs) and did not appreciate the essentially populist tenor of his

post-war career.[91]

Hone's populism is most evident in his best-selling political squib, The Political House That Jack Built, a work which encapsulates his radical ideology, including its religious dimension. The pamphlet's religious subtext has never been noticed by historians. Published in 1819 after Peterloo, it articulates the radical analysis of the reasons for the suffering of the common people - taxation imposed by an illegitimate, corrupt and oppressive government - and posits constitutional reform - an inevitable consequence of the dissemination of knowledge - as the panacea. The pamphlet parodies the children's tale The House that Jack Built. In Hone's fable the house that Jack built is the English constitution as originally (it is imagined) established. The tripartite government of King, Lords and Commons embodied and championed the people's liberties. However, the wealth which lay inside the house - Magna Carta, the Bill of Rights, Habeas Corpus and (probably) the Bible - was plundered by appointees of the government. The plunderers ("vermin") would inevitably be foiled ("poisoned"), however, by the printing press ("the thing"), the attempts of government to restrict its output notwithstanding. Reform would inexorably follow.

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91. English populism of this period was the ideology of "the people". It was characterised by a veneration of traditional values, and aimed to combat corruption in order to restore society to a past golden age. In this sense it was conservative. Hunt and Cobbett were its most popular exponents, and the Queen Caroline Affair evoked its strongest public expression. It is to be distinguished from the intellectual, rationalist rhetoric of Carlile, and the theoretical analyses of class and political economy which began to develop in the 1820s. See Calhoun, The Question of Class Struggle, pp.95-126, and McCalman, Radical Underworld, pp.162-77.

Reform seems to have been invested with religious significance in Political House by its being called the "word", a well-known Biblical term referring to Jesus: the Word who "was with God, and...was God" and "was made flesh and dwelt among us...full of grace and truth" (John 1:1, 14).[92] The analogy between political and religious salvation discussed above is evident. The role of reform was something like that of Christ the saviour, represented emblematically by the reform banner in the shape of a cross.[93] The religious dimension of the pamphlet is also implicitly, but unmistakably - especially to its contemporary middle-class readers - present in the quotations which support the text, selected from William Cowper's poem, The Task.

Cowper (1731-1800) was a Christian poet, liked especially by middle-class evangelicals, and clearly on the side of orthodoxy in the late eighteenth century when freethought was emerging among the lower orders.[94] The Evangelical and anti-radical Christian Observer, which published a series of articles on The Task in 1818 and 1819, referred to Cowper as "our favourite bard".[95] It might seem, a priori, that the appearance of quotations from The Task in

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92. William Hone, The Political House that Jack Built (1819), in Rickword, Radical Squibs, p.51.
93. Ibid.
94. See J.M. Robertson, A History of Freethought in the Nineteenth Century (London, 1929), p.6., and Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850 (London, 1987), pp.162-7. Cowper was the most popular named author among Davidoff and Hall's sample of middle-class people in Birmingham and East Anglia, and The Task was his most popular work. Ibid.
95. CO, June 1818, p.379. The articles on The Task appeared in May and June 1818, and January, February and March 1819.

the pre-eminent radical pamphlet of 1819 was a case of mischievous misappropriation of Christian sentiments. Tactically clever it certainly was. A deliberate misuse of Christian doctrine and a total perversion of Cowper's ideas and convictions it was not. The quotations are most often, in a general sense, faithful to their original contexts (metaphorically if not always literally). For example, the quotation which appears under the reform banner in Political House - "I could endure/ Chains nowhere patiently; and chains at home,/ Where I am free by birthright, not at all" - does indeed refer to English political liberty. The poem goes on to invoke the memory of seventeenth-century heroes, referring to liberty as "the blessing.../For which our Hampdens and our Sidneys bled".[96] Cowper was an eighteenth-century Whig who supported political reform, for he believed that the reign of George III was characterised by "Stuartism". He once wrote that "the hour is come when power founded on patronage and corrupt majorities must govern this land no longer".[97]

And he believed that illegitimate authority must inevitably yield to a righteous challenge. In The Task he averred that an attempt to win freedom is not often lost because "Power usurp'd/ Is weakness when oppos'd; conscious of wrong,/ 'Tis pusillanimous and prone to flight" (V.371-3). The words here quoted also appear beneath the reform banner in Political House, and they are obviously in harmony with Hone's firm belief in the ultimate triumph of

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96. William Cowper, The Task, V.477-9, 485-6, rpt. in Hugh I'anson Fausset (ed.), Cowper's Poems (London, 1931), p.394.
97. Cited by T.R. Glover, Poets and Puritans (London, 1915), p.166.

truth. Yet the kind of reform desired by Cowper was not identical to that desired by Hone, and Hone's use of quotations from The Task contests Cowper's political and religious philosophies. Cowper was an advocate of limited, as opposed to absolute monarchy; the monarch was to exercise power circumscribed by law:

> ---------- He is ours,
> T' administer, to guard, t' adorn the state,
> But not to warp or change it. We are his,
> To serve him nobly in the common cause,
> True to the death but not to be his slaves. (V.341-5)

Like Hone, Cowper opposed the doctrine of Divine Right.[98] There is no suggestion in Cowper, though, that the franchise be extended to the entire adult male population, which to Hone and his fellow radicals was an essential means of eliminating corruption and ensuring just government.

Davidoff and Hall wrote of Cowper that he "offered a serious critique of many aspects of gentry life and, like many Evangelicals, sought a regeneration of the social and political world".[99] Moral and spiritual change, rather than political reform per se, was at the heart of such regeneration. The contrast between the different kinds of reform desired by Hone and Cowper may be effectively apprehended by considering the contexts of the quotations from The Task which Hone juxtaposed with his description of

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98. This was not a dead doctrine by the early nineteenth century. Radicals developed arguments against it, derived from Scripture as well as the theory of natural rights. For example, see Hone's The Right Divine of Kings to Govern Wrong! (London, 1821), which is comprised of selections from Daniel De Foe's Jure Divino (1706), with amendments and additions. Its argument that monarchy is not of divine institution, but that the crown is the possession of the people and may be withdrawn by them from a tyrant, is based upon Old Testament passages.

99. Davidoff and Hall, Family Fortunes, p.163.

THE PEOPLE
all tatter'd and torn,
Who curse the day
wherein they were born,
On account of Taxation
too great to be borne,
And pray for relief,
from night to morn.[100]

Oppression of other peoples, particularly through the institution of slavery in the British empire, is the subject of the following question:

---------- What man seeing this,
And having human feelings, does not blush,
And hang his head, to think himself a man? (II.26-8).

While Cowper asserted that "We have no slaves at home" (II.37), Hone, by his application of the quotation above to the common people of England, insisted that the working classes at home were as degraded and oppressed as the slaves in the empire, and their plight demanded equally strident expressions of moral outrage as were expended by evangelicals in the cause of outlawing slavery. The context of the other quotation used of the people in Political House, is a criticism of the government for making money out of drunkenness (a moral concern) - by means of excise on alcohol:

---------- I cannot rest
A silent witness of the headlong rage,
Or heedless folly, by which thousands die---
Bleed gold for Ministers to sport away. (IV.508)

Hone, of course, had in mind the regressive excise taxes on a wide range of basic commodities, held by radicals to be the primary reason for the indigence of the working class.[101] Social justice was Hone's concern.

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100. Hone, Political House, in Rickword, Radical Squibs, p.46.
101. On the radical response to post-war taxation see chapter 2 below.

Implicit in Hone's use of quotations from The Task is a criticism of evangelical religion: not a spurning of evangelical religious beliefs and practices as such, but a challenge to its diagnosis of social ills and the corresponding remedies it prescribed. The message is: Christian compassion and moral outrage should extend to the suffering of the common people, Christian judgement applied to the oppressive and unjust use and distribution of political power in contemporary England, and Christian energy expended in calling for reform. Christianity should be on the side of the people. In the final analysis The Task turns the reader's attention away from earthly concerns which fade and are transient, towards spiritual values and blessings, which are eternal. "There is paradise that fears/ No forfeiture, and of its fruits he sends/ Large prelibation oft to saints below" (V.572-4). It is "liberty of heart.../ Bought with HIS blood" which alone cannot perish (V.545-6). Hone turns his readers' attention to the prevailing economic and political conditions, not as an alternative to religious concern, but as an appropriate, indeed essential, locus for its expression. Among Christians, evangelicals were to prove the most resistant to the claims of social radicalism throughout the nineteenth century.[102]

This interpretation of the subtext of Political House is consistent with the nature of the evidence used here to make a case for calling Hone a Christian radical - in the sense that he used Christian writings, especially the Bible, but

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102. See K.S. Inglis, Churches and the Working Classes in Victorian England (London and Toronto, 1961), p.304.

also the works and ideas of Christian thinkers (such as Price and Murray) - to contest what he believed were false or inadequate representations of Christian doctrine and to validate the agenda of post-war popular radicalism. Hone chose to use concepts and language familiar and dear to himself and his generation, concepts and language which helped give meaning to his experiences, and nourish hope and fortitude. In the Bible he located an authority superior to that of the priest and the magistrate, the very book which the priest and the magistrate said was the word of God, and was widely venerated among all classes of English society. It thus had rhetorical power, which was tactically productive in court in December 1817, and which Hone also directed towards mobilising support for the popular cause.

The account Hone gave of his religious beliefs in 1824 may stand as a fitting conclusion:

> I was brought up in religious habits, but these are surfaces, not principles. They were worn off by circumstances in early youth, when "chewing the cud of sweet and bitter fancy" I wondered at the world and at myself, and theory after theory arose as the waves, weltering and disappearing. Ardently seeking for truth, I conversed with books rather than men, and hewed out principles as I could, "here a little and there a little." It is said, that "many persons commence religious at first, they don't know why, and with a blind zeal persist in a religion which is they know not what." I am not among that number; for it was by patient research and painful process that I arrived at that clear evidence for the truth of Christianity, which, if sincerely and diligently sought, is found to be irresistible. My religion is the religion of the New Testament. As taught and exemplified by Christ himself, it is the perfection of all knowledge, "which is, and which was, and which is to come." It is infinite wisdom. It is a pure principle, a mental illumination, which, however dimmed by the cares and conflicts of the world, shines out in the solitude of the closet, when the eye turns inward. As regards conduct in life, it is being held in a bond to do justice, love mercy, and practise universal charity. There is no release from this obligation, though the disregard of it is a stumbling-block to thousands, whose conceptions of

Christianity, being derived from the uncharitableness of nominal Christians, disincline them to explore the springs from whence vindictiveness and persecution seem to flow. In the words of Erasmus, "Christian charity extends itself to all; and he that does no hurt to any body though he be bad, and would rejoice if he would grow better, in my opinion, loves all as becomes a Christian to do."[103]

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103. Hone, Aspersions Answered, pp.66-7.

CHAPTER TWO: "TO DO JUSTLY AND LOVE MERCY": RADICALISM AND TRUE RELIGION

The post-war career of William Hone shows that Christianity could be pressed into the service of popular radicalism. But was this unusual? Can Hone be considered representative of something appropriately styled Christian radicalism? Robert Hole offered his case study of Hone as evidence that "men from a wide religious spectrum could share the same radical views"; the government was wrong to identify reform with infidelity.[1] Yet Hole goes on to assert that the use of religious arguments was uncharacteristic of reformers generally. Major Cartwright, the veteran Unitarian reformer, he regards as exceptional. In response to the emergence of infidelity among radicals towards the end of the war, Cartwright, "anxious to show that reform could have a Christian face", began to articulate Christian arguments. The new generation of reformers, however, typified by Henry Hunt, used secular arguments, and only occasionally would radicals take to task conservative Christians who condemned parliamentary reform.[2] One of the aims of this chapter is to show that religious arguments - often embedded in the language which structured radical discourse - were characteristic of the rhetoric of popular radicalism in the post-war years.

This aim is pursued by examining a large sample of the extant radical periodicals and pamphlets of 1817-20 - representative of the full gamut of religious views. The two major enduring periodicals which were published during

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1. Hole, Pulpits, p.228.
2. Ibid., pp.229-32.

the whole of our period (and beyond) - Cobbett's Annual Political and Weekly Register (1802-31) and Wooler's Black Dwarf (1817-24) - expounded no particular religious viewpoint, and professed to discuss religion only insofar as it impinged upon politics.[3] The Manchester Observer (1818-20) and Sherwin's Political Register (1817-19) similarly claimed to avoid religious controversy.[4] There were several ephemeral periodicals which were overtly Deist: the Medusa, London Alfred, Deists' Magazine, Cap of Liberty (all published, although not edited, by Thomas Davison), Robert Shorter's Theological Comet, and William Mason's (now extremely rare) Radical Reformer, or People's Advocate. There was also Richard Carlile's more enduring Republican (1819-26).[5] Two short-lived radical Christian periodicals were also published in 1819: Christopher Teulon's White Hat

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3. For Wooler's insistence on this as an editorial principle see the BD, 24 Nov. 1819, p.772, and 2 Feb. 1820, p.117. Cobbett was almost always the sole author of his Register; his religious beliefs and affiliation are discussed below.
4. For explicit statements of this claim see MO, 26 Feb. 1820, p.936 (the letter to Cobbett), and Sherwin's PR, 22 Aug. 1818, p.256 (the notices to correspondents).
5. Middle class intellectuals and entrepreneurs such as William Mason and George Cannon (who wrote under the pseudonym Rev. Erasmus Perkins) were behind the periodicals published by the plebeian Davison. Cannon probably edited the Deists' Magazine. See McCalman, Radical Underworld, pp.73-7, 152-62. Carlile's Republican was the successor to Sherwin's PR.

(perhaps Unitarian) and the Briton, published by J. Turner.[6] Finally, there was The Gorgon, which espoused philosophical radical ideas and criticised corruption in Church and State.[7]

While acknowledging that there were significant theological differences between Deists and Christians (discussed below), this chapter argues that in radical discourse religious elements functioned very similarly, whether the writer or speaker was a Christian or an infidel. Both appealed to religious principles and authorities in order to validate their claims. Enormous tactical advantage could be derived from demonstrating that one's views were consistent with Christianity, moreover that one was championing God's cause. James Epstein's statement about the function of constitutionalist rhetoric in post-war radical discourse is equally applicable to religious rhetoric: that it was a ""shared" language of political legitimation", and to use it was to "participate in a powerful national myth structure, to evoke the authoritative force of a "master fiction" of British society".[8] A similar claim has been made with respect to the instinctive

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6. For information about the White Hat see William H. Wickwar, The Struggle for the Freedom of the Press 1819-1832 (London, 1928), p.65. The Briton is listed by Halevy as one of the "revolutionary newspapers" which appeared after Peterloo, Elie Halevy, A History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century, II, Second ed. (London, 1949), p.66. Its first issue declared the paper's opposition to atheism and Deism and its advocacy of the rights of man in accordance with Biblical principles; it was dedicated to the cause of civil and religious liberty. See the Briton, 25 Sept. 1819, p.1. The spy J. Shegog described "Turner" as one of the main blasphemous and seditious writers operating in London, HO 40/16, 17 Feb. 1821, fo.22. (I am indebted to Dr Iain McCalman for this reference.)
7. Wickwar, The Struggle, pp.60-1.
8. Epstein, "Understanding the Cap of Liberty", pp.84-5.

use of "a vocabulary of patriotism" by radicals in the early nineteenth century: that it was "a constantly reforged tool of opposition, and a means of possessing the past".[9] Such appeals to traditional values had the potential to serve mobilisational as well as tactical purposes.

Eileen Yeo's caveat, made with reference to Chartism, is apropos: "A wedge must not be driven too far between radical Christians and infidels, who shared common religious enemies, treated them with equal sarcasm and aggression and sometimes worked amicably together, even if Christians, unlike infidels, gave a special authority to the Bible and Christ".[10] Although Christians were more strongly attached to Christ and the Bible than were Deists, it will be seen below that both groups founded their propaganda, in part, upon them. For the infidel this was not merely a cynical exploitation of Christian authority symbols for political advantage, but a reflection of the genuine similarity between one defensible interpretation of the Bible (espoused by radical Christians) and the Deist's understanding of the nature of God and the world. Religious duties, as conceived by both the radical Christian and infidel, were identical. Practical Christianity was true religion.

DEISM, THE BIBLE AND POPULAR RADICALISM

Deists rejected the traditional Christian claim that the Bible was God's revelation of himself to humanity. The

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9. Cunningham, "The Language of Patriotism", p.9.
10. Eileen Yeo, "Christianity in Chartist Struggle", p.111. Hole makes the same point in the conclusion of his case study of Hone, Pulpits, p.227.

pre-eminent Deist text was Thomas Paine's Age of Reason, which was reprinted by Carlile in December 1818. It challenged the credibility of the Bible by exposing a plethora of alleged errors, inconsistencies and immoral passages, and demonstrated that in many cases the books of the Bible could not have been written by their putative authors. The Christian doctrine of redemption, said by Paine to be the invention of priests who linked the story of the temptation of Adam and Eve with the death of Jesus, was singled out as the object of supreme derision: it offended the principles of moral justice and caused people to despise "the choicest gift of God to man - the GIFT OF REASON".[11] Paine desired to free humanity from the chains of original sin.[12]

Deists lamented the effects upon society of belief in the Bible. The logic of Carlile's assertion in 1820 that the Bible was the "main cause" of current distress and that it "hath produced general misery wherever it hath been acknowledged to be a sacred and divine book", is easy to understand given the Established Church's role in defending the political status quo.[13] As well as preaching against radical reform, the clergy identified themselves with an oppressive regime by occupying the magistrate's bench. Between 1761 and 1831 the proportion of magistrates who were clergymen doubled, and the clerical magistrate's administration of the game laws and poor law assessments

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11. Thomas Paine, The Age of Reason (London, 1908), pp.5-13.
12. For an account of this "destructive" side of Deist theology, and of its construction of an alternative based on observation of nature, see McCalman, "Popular Radicalism and Freethought", pp.45-9.
13. Republican, 14 July 1820, p.414.

undermined his respect in the village community.[14] The most notorious action of clerical magistrates was to sanction the actions of the yeomanry at Peterloo. In Christianity's collaboration with an intransigent, unjust social and political order lies the primary motive for the public attack upon the Bible by Deists, why, in post-war English society, they were "competing with Evangelicalism for the minds of literate working men".[15]

This struggle was between different conceptions of God and religious duties; Deism was not necessarily any less "religious" than evangelicalism or any other variant of Christianity.[16] A correspondent to the Republican praised Carlile's efforts in countering Christianity, on the following grounds:

> ...if we are to suppose that correct notions of the Deity and of his attributes, as well as of our duty to each other, are at all essential to the happiness and well-being of society, and that incorrect notions of either tend to have an opposite effect, surely it becomes an imperative duty on our part to use every effort, and to employ every means that pure adoration of omnipotence, infinite wisdom, and benevolence, and love of our neighbour can dictate, in order to impress such correct notions on the minds of our fellow-men...[17]

Such correct notions were to be found by observation and reflection upon the natural world: God had revealed himself

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14. On the rise of the "squarson" see Eric J. Evans, "Some Reasons for the Growth of English Rural Anti-Clericalism, c.1750-c.1830", Past and Present, 66 (1975), pp.101-5.
15. McCalman, "Popular Radicalism and Freethought", p.42. Of course the question of the truth of Christianity was also of great importance to Deists.
16. During the 1820s Deism in London even assumed a sectarian structure and religious worship services were held. See McCalman, Radical Underworld, pp.188-90.
17. Republican, 7 July 1820, pp.379-80.

to humanity through his creation.[18] The rights of man were derived from contemplation of Nature, which led to the formulation of the concept of God as a benevolent being who treated all people alike. But such a view of God could also be derived from the Bible. The problem, as Deists saw it, was that the Bible required careful and judicious interpretation in order to separate the good from the bad. One Deist, having in mind the Christian notion of the Bible as the "bread of life", contrasted it with physical bread, in that "the spiritual bread...which is to nourish the soul, is mixed up with the chaff, husks, and bran, all together; and this is the reason that it sticks in some people's throats".[19]

Some radical Christians recognised the similarity of Deist beliefs and their own. A correspondent to the White Hat listed these: belief in one God, the equality of man, and that religious duties consist in doing justice, loving mercy and making our fellow human beings happy. These are essentially Paine's articles of religious belief as stated in the Age of Reason, to which the Christian apologist, Rev. James Rudge, declared that he could assent.[20] The

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18. See Republican, 24 March 1820, p.337, DM, pp.34-5, and Paine, Age of Reason, pp.13-18. Such a view was consonant with Christian apologists' argument from design, which was most notably presented in William Paley's Natural Theology (1802); see Royle, Victorian Infidels, pp.11-12.
19. Theological Comet, 28 Aug. 1819, p.48. On the value of the Bible if reason is applied to interpret it (in contradistinction to the interpretations of priests), see also 21 Aug. 1819, pp.36-7. Even Carlile could agree with the Christian apologist Dr Rudge that some good moral precepts were to be found in the Bible (although he far preferred the Age of Reason). See the Republican, 14 Jan. 1820, p.34.
20. White Hat, 16 Oct. 1819, pp.8-11, Republican 14 Jan. 1820, pp.25-6.

linguistic formulation of Paine's statement of religious duties is, in fact, derived from the Bible - Micah 6:8.[21] The basic tenets of Deism, then, as articulated by their exponents among popular radicals in post-war England, were considered by some Christian contemporaries to comprise a subset of Christian doctrines, Deists' hostility towards the Bible notwithstanding. Deism resembled a simple, practical form of Biblical Christianity.

Conversions to Deism were probably facilitated by this resemblance, which was made apparent by the use of Biblical language in Deist texts. This seems to have been true of at least one correspondent to the Republican. Brought up by Calvinist parents, he did not find a personal faith, although he had searched anxiously for truth for many years. As soon as he read the Age of Reason, however, "the path of duty appeared plain: to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly before God. It was then that the congregated clouds of wrath, said to be ready to burst on my devoted head, were dispersed, and I was able to look up and say, my Father and my God".[22] While being reluctant to generalise from a single example, one is compelled at least to speculate that Deism may have provided a psychological sanctuary for many a person of Dissenting background tormented by anxiety about personal salvation. This would be especially likely

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21. Micah 6:8 reads: "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the law require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" Paine's statement reads: "I believe that religious duties consist in doing justice, loving mercy, and endeavouring to make our fellow-creatures happy". (Age of Reason, p.1.)
22. Republican, 4 Feb. 1820, pp.101-2. The correspondent certainly identified Paine's statement of religious duties with the Biblical text: his last clause is from Micah 6:8.

for strict Calvinists whose doctrine of election specified that that there was nothing one could do to effect salvation. The case in question fits the typical "pattern of conversion" of rank-and-file atheists later in the century.[23]

Throughout the post-war years the Bible was circulated and its quietist doctrines preached as an antidote to radical propaganda. In response, the radical press directed its readers to the Bible in order that they might see, contrary to what they had heard from clergymen, that it condemns tyranny and oppression, and sanctions resistance to bad governments. A mobilisational purpose was served by this advice. The strength of the radical movement was sapped by the disrepute and repression which followed the farcical Pentrich "revolution" of June 1817, not to be regained until 1819. In May 1818 William Sherwin urged his readers to resist the present government, citing the Bible as an authority for doing so:

> There is not any historical work in which the right of resistance to tyranny is more forcibly admitted and inculcated than the Bible; and the silence which priests observe towards these anti-despotic examples, is a proof of the shameful subservience of the church, and the little attention that ought to be paid to its professions, in favour of scriptural truth. It shews that the Bible only furnishes the creed of the Bishops, as far as its doctrines can be construed to promote contentment, under present circumstances, and that as a work recommending resistance to despotism, which it certainly does, they wish it to be considered a dead letter. Thus, between the silence of priest-craft and the violence of state-craft, mankind are hood-winked in ignorance, or crushed into submission by the arm of

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23. This pattern is described by F.B. Smith, in his article "The Atheist Mission 1840-1900", in Robert Robson (ed.), Ideas and Institutions of Victorian Britain: Essays in Honour of George Kitson Clark (London, 1967), pp.205-36. For another example from 1819 see the Republican, 1 Oct. 1819, pp.86-8.

authority.[24]

A few months later a correspondent observed that the clergy must be mad to promote the circulation of the Bible, for its principles are "in every respect the reverse of monarchy and its universal circulation will inevitably do away with priestcraft".[25]

At the height of the renewed radical agitation in 1819 Christians were urged to rally to the cause of reform. The Deist, Josiah Fitch, appealing to Christians to support Carlile against government persecution, advised scrutiny of the Bible in order that readers might attest that Carlile's publications were not blasphemous.[26] In other radical literature the government was said to regard the Bible as an enemy, and was imagined as outlawing its publication.[27] A correspondent to the Manchester Observer, citing a string of scripture references in support of his claim that it is the duty of both poor and rich Christians to be reformers, urged "all true reformers to study their bibles, for by so doing they will be able to confront all their enemies

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24. Sherwin's PR, 23 May 1818, pp.18-20. Sherwin goes on to cite an example from the Old Testament in support of his case: the resistance of eleven of the tribes of Israel to David when he was made King (pp.20-1).
25. Sherwin's PR, 19 Sept. 1818, p.318.
26. Republican, 3 Sept. 1819, p.32. Fitch later obtained a preacher's licence and conducted Deist religious services. See Iorwerth Prothero, Artisans and Politics in Early Nineteenth-Century London: John Gast and his Times (Folkestone, 1979), pp.260-1, McCalman, Radical Underworld, pp.190-1.
27. Briton, 16 Oct. 1819, pp.25-7, BD, 3 Nov. 1819, p.717. See also The Siege of Manchester, that was to be a very pretty poem of the last century (London, 1820), pp.33-4, where a member of the government is imagined saying that the the scriptures were "never meant for vulgar use/ Or, so far only, as we think it fit/ For power, as lawful, to interpret it".

with the laws of heaven itself".[28] As a potentially formidable offensive weapon in the struggle against the people's oppressors, the Bible could be deployed for tactical purposes.

TRUE RELIGION

Radical Christians and Deists alike articulated the concept of "true religion", the standards of which they used both to attack corruption in Church and State, and to validate reform. There were two Biblical texts frequently cited for tactical advantage by the radical press, which may be said to encapsulate the nature of true religion. Micah 6:8 was used to condemn religious persecution, justify resistance to bad governments and instruct the government in its duties.[29] The "Golden Rule" was also often invoked: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets".[30] A correspondent to the Republican claimed that Deists were "the great professors of this golden rule of life", which he cited as a warrant for giving financial assistance to the family of Carlile during his imprisonment.[31] True religion emphasised above all the obligation to act with sympathetic kindness and impartial justice towards all people.

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28. MO, 6 Nov. 1819, p.801.
29. For examples see Theological Comet, 24 Jul. 1819, p.6, 21 Aug. 1819, pp.39-42, Republican, 3 Sept. 1819, pp.31-2, BD, 19 Jan. 1820, pp.46-7.
30. A command of Jesus recorded in Matthew 7:12 and Luke 6:31. The last phrase of the quotation would give good reason to regard this injunction as a sufficient formulation of religious duty. Chartist sermons often used this text too. See Yeo, "Christianity", p.112.
31. Republican, 10 Dec. 1819, pp.247-8.

Christ was represented as the teacher of true religion. The northern radical and Freethinking Christian, Joseph Brayshaw, made this connection in his address to a public meeting at Yeadon on 28 June 1819:

> I think true religion the greatest blessing ever conferred on man. I am a believer in Christianity. I think it the most rational system of Religion ever taught to man. Jesus Christ, the Founder of the System, was one of the greatest Reformers that ever appeared on earth; he died a martyr to the cause, and I am not afraid to follow his example.[32]

Deists often concurred with the notion of Christ as a political radical, and many, including Carlile, claimed that he was a teacher of Deism.[33] He was said to be an uncompromising opponent of corruption and tyranny in Church and State, and even "an ancient Republican".[34] In thus lionising Jesus, Deists followed Paine, who believed that the moral teaching of Christ was consistent with Deism. It was the religion professedly erected upon the life and

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32. Joseph Brayshaw, Proceedings of the Meeting held at Yeadon, on Monday 28th June, 1819...and a defence of the reformers... (Dewsbury, 1819), p.12. The context of the quotation is a speech advocating universal suffrage and annual parliaments as a remedy to the "boroughmongering system". Brayshaw was a schoolteacher and a preacher of the Freethinking Christians at Yeadon. Shortly after Peterloo he became a Paineite and, under Carlile's influence, he soon renounced religion altogether. See John Belchem, "Republicanism, Popular Constitutionalism and the Radical Platform in Early Nineteenth-century England", Social History, Vol. 6, no. 1 (Jan. 1981), pp.17-28. The Freethinking Christians, while believing in revelation and opposing Deism, denied the divinity of Christ, rejected the doctrines of the fall and the immortality of the soul, and held that parts of the New Testament were spurious. For a succinct account of the sect's early history see McCalman, Radical Underworld, pp.73-4. The connections between the Freethinking Christians and popular radicalism will be discussed in chapter 4 below.

33. For examples see Republican, 12 Nov. 1819, p.180, Medusa, 2 Oct. 1819, p.263, and Theological Comet, 6 Nov. 1819, pp.124-5.

34. Theological Comet, 24 July 1819, p.10, BD, 4 Aug. 1819, p.510, DM, pp.102-3, Republican, 11 Feb. 1820, p.144.

doctrines of Jesus to which he had objected.[35]

Jesus's humble social rank was significant. It enabled working men to identify with him, helped dignify and give meaning to their own struggles, and engendered hope and confidence; thus it served a mobilisational purpose. A correspondent to the White Hat, for example, insisted that the poor and humble were the best agents of civil and religious freedom, recalling that the son of a carpenter and "a few poor fishermen" were the founders of Christianity.[36] An anonymous pamphlet made an extensive comparison between the radicals and the early Christians, who were able to overcome their oppressors "merely by their zeal, concert, and unanimity": the mighty Roman Empire was "sunk at last before the followers of the fisherman and the tentmaker, before the ragged radicals of those ancient times".[37] On the occasion of Hunt's "triumphal entry" into London after Peterloo, the ultra-radical Wedderburn recalled that Jesus "was born of very poor parents who like

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35. Paine asserted that Jesus was not the founder of a new system of religion: "He called men to the practice of moral virtues and the belief of one God. The great trait in his character is philanthropy", Age of Reason, pp.3, 10. Such a favourable view of Jesus was not universal among Deists. The American Deist, Elihu Palmer, whose Principles of Nature Carlile reprinted in Britain in January 1819, insisted that, according to the New Testament, Jesus was guilty of duplicity, theft and incitement to hatred and violence. See Elihu Palmer, Principles of Nature; or, a Developement [sic] of the Moral Causes of Happiness and Misery among the Human Species (1802; rpt. London, 1819), pp.165-6. It was Paine's view, however, which was dominant among English Deists around 1819-20.
36. White Hat, 30 Oct. 1819, p.48.
37. See Roger Radical (pseud.), Why Are We Poor? (London, 1820), pp.19-23.

us felt with him the same as we now feel".[38]

Identification with Christ could also serve a tactical purpose. In his summary of the prosecution's case at Hunt's trial following Peterloo, the King's Counsel, Mr Scarlett, took the opportunity of deriding Deism by asking (with reference to Carlile), "What are we to take our religion from a tinman?".[39] Carlile was probably sensitive to such a cutting remark, being a believer in "artisanal virtues" and having worked hard at personal improvement for a number of years in order to gain the respectable status of a journalist and publisher.[40] He responded in an article in the Republican by pointing out that Jesus came from a poor family and worked as a carpenter, and his disciples were fishermen; George Fox, the founder of the Quakers, was a shoemaker; the Puritan writer John Bunyan was himself a tinman.[41] When Carlile himself was found guilty of blasphemous libel in October 1819, he appealed against the verdicts, presenting himself "as a modern Jesus shunned and persecuted by those in power yet with his integrity

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38. Cited by McCalman, Radical Underworld, p.142. The styling of Hunt's welcome into London as a "triumphal entry" of course alludes to the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, today celebrated as Palm Sunday.
39. At the trial the government attempted to associate radicalism with infidelity, using Carlile's presence at Manchester on 16 August to insinuate that the defendants shared his theology, a suggestion which Hunt vehemently rejected. See The Trial of Henry Hunt, Esq...for an alledged [sic] conspiracy to overturn the Government, &c. by threats and force of arms (London, 1820), pp.148-9, 165, 271-2, 277.
40. See Wiener, Radicalism, p.11, Republican, 2 Mar. 1820, pp.226-7.
41. Republican, 7 Apr. 1820, pp.402-3. For a similar example of this kind of use of the lowly status of Christ and his disciples see BD, 3 May 1820, p.603.

unchallenged".[42] He was "turning the tables" on his critics and persecutors, claiming for himself the role of champion of true religion, and maligning his opponents as hypocrites.

True religion was practised by obeying the commands of Jesus. The letter of a Quaker correspondent to the Examiner in 1820 - and reprinted by the Deist Polemical Magazine - made this point. The letter asserted that God would judge people not according to their beliefs, but rather according to their works. One's conduct was considered paramount: "whether we have shewn love to our Master, by keeping his commandments."[43] The writer suggested that Deists would be unlikely to object to Christianity in its unalloyed form as taught by Jesus, lamenting that it had been "swelled out with chaff and stubble" by "unskilful workmen".[44] He believed that the "refining fire of ridicule" ignited and stoked by Deists would be of service to Christianity as a purifying agent.[45] We have seen above that Deists could concur with such a simplified form of Christianity, centred on the life and teachings of Jesus.

The reprinting of the Quaker's letter by a Deist

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42. Wiener, Radicalism, p.48. A correspondent to the Republican made the same comparison, 5 Nov. 1819, p.170.
43. Polemical Magazine, pp.279-80. (The successor to the Deists' Magazine.) The purpose of the letter was to object to the prosecution of people for blasphemy; the trial of Davison is specifically mentioned. The quoted statement alludes to Christ's injunction to his disciples, recorded in John 14:15, "If ye love me, keep my commandments". As scriptural authority for the doctrine of judgement according to works the writer cited Jesus's account of the judgement in Matthew 25.
44. Ibid., p.281. For similar views expressed by Christians see the White Hat, 27 Nov. 1819, p.108, and the Republican, 14 Apr. 1820, p.440.
45. Polemical Magazine, p.281.

periodical underscores the affinity between infidels and "rational Christians" (such as Quakers, Unitarians and Freethinking Christians). This is similarly indicated by the Deists' Magazine's reporting of the anniversary meeting on 25 May 1820 of the Unitarian Fund Society, a body founded in 1806 to preach true Christianity to the poor. The society represented God as a paternalistic being who acted to promote the happiness of all people.[46] Of course there were differences between Deists and rational Christians vital to the distinctive identity of each. Carlile went as far as to assert that Unitarians and Freethinking Christians were as dominated by priestcraft as any other Christian sect.[47] But given that these denominations had obtained legal toleration, it was politically prudent to cite their articulation of religious opinions which Deists, too, expounded, yet for which they were liable to be prosecuted. In the common struggle against the government, the broad concept of true religion helped forge a significant degree of unity between radical infidels and rational Christians.

Was it also able to embrace radicals of more orthodox theological persuasions? What about the pre-eminent radical journalist and Churchman William Cobbett? Cobbett's personal religious beliefs are ambiguous. He was a lifelong

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46. See DM, pp.97-101. John Seed has shown that Unitarianism was "one of the institutional forms through which radical discourse was mediated", "Theologies of Power: Unitarianism and the Social Relations of Religious Discourse, 1800-50", in R.J. Morris (ed.), Class, Power and Social Structure in British Nineteenth-century Towns (Leicester, 1986), pp.118-19.
47. The Freethinking Christians had sent him a copy of the Freethinkers' Creed which he declined to publish for this reason. See the Republican, 21 Apr. 1820, p.477.

member and regular attender of Sunday services of the Church of England, and a supporter of uniformity of religion. However, he was evidently sceptical of the miraculous and did not sincerely believe everything in the creeds, articles and prayer book of the Church. There is even some evidence of his being sympathetic - at least for a time - to freethought.[48] Publicly he denied any imputation that his writings were blasphemous, and he insisted that he believed the doctrines prescribed by the Church of England.[49] There is no doubt, however, that Cobbett could have assented wholeheartedly to the concept of true religion as outlined above. Cobbett's personal faith was predominantly ethical and social in orientation, and he was critical of the Church's opposition to reform, and abuses such as plural livings. He tells the anecdote of a parson who once suggested to him that his religion seemed to be entirely political, to which he replied "I...like a religion, any religion, that tends to make men innocent and benevolent and happy, by taking the best possible means of furnishing them with plenty to eat and drink and wear".[50] Regular

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48. On Cobbett and religion see John W. Osborne, William Cobbett: His Thought and His Times (New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1966), Chapter 11, especially pp.196-8, 204-6, and George Spater, William Cobbett: the Poor Man's Friend, Vol. 2 (Cambridge, 1982), pp.544-9. On Cobbett's sympathy with freethought see J.R. Dinwiddy, "William Cobbett, George Houston and Freethought", Notes and Queries (July-August 1977), pp.325-9. Dinwiddy comments on the tactical wisdom of Cobbett's failing to pursue his inclination towards freethought: "A penchant for freethought...would, if publicly known, have been difficult to reconcile with his image as an upholder of traditional values, and would have distanced him from a considerable number of his readers". Ibid.

49. PR, 19 July 1817, cols. 480-9, and 25 Apr. 1818, cols. 475-7.

50. William Cobbett, The Autobiography of William Cobbett, ed. William Reitzel (1933; rpt. London, 1967), p.186.

attendance at Church or chapel was not ipso facto evidence of piety, which he held to inhere in the execution of one's duties towards one's own family and the whole community.[51] Above all, Methodist sermons and religious tracts could not achieve the objectives of true religion.[52]

Cobbett was a trenchant critic of Methodism. Methodist clergy were castigated for preaching against reform and living comfortably on the pennies collected from their indigent congregations. His utter contempt for them is evident in his use of the epithet "a great company of fundholders".[53] Methodism is therewith consigned to the ranks of Old Corruption. Elsewhere Cobbett contended that Methodists were "the main prop of the Pitt system".[54] The point to be emphasised is that Cobbett primarily condemned the politics of the Methodist clergy, not the religion of Methodism. That he could conceive of such a distinction is evident in his advice to the rank-and-file Methodists who were readers of his Register: "If I were a Methodist, I would take care of my pennies: I would give them in the shape of food and raiment to my own wife and children: I would interpret my Bible myself, or go to hear a man that did not want to be paid.[55]

Some Methodists did just that. There were large

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51. PR, 22 Jan. 1820, col.654. The context of the statement is his expression of disapprobation of a mother teaching her son to drink.
52. Cobbett, Autobiography, p.187.
53. PR, 27 Jan. 1820, cols.744-57.
54. Cobbett, Autobiography, p.94.
55. PR, 27 Jan. 1820, col.753. Cobbett had initially criticised the "enthusiasm" of Methodist preachers, but his attacks were later directed exclusively towards the social and political policies of the Methodist Church. See Osborne, Cobbett, pp.218-20.

secessions from Methodist Churches in Newcastle and environs early in 1820.[56] A correspondent to the Black Dwarf claimed that about ten newly formed places of worship of "Independent Methodists" existed by early March. The preachers were said to "dispense the doctrines of the gospel in the way in which it was first promulgated by the disciples and first teachers of Christianity, "without money and without price," not making a gain of godliness, or coveting any man's gold or silver".[57] There is no evidence that Cobbett's advice was consciously being followed, although it is likely that it was known, given the legendary circulation of his Register among working people throughout the country.[58] The secession was a response to the official repression of radicalism among members of the Connexion following Peterloo; indeed reformers faced imminent expulsion after a central directive to circuit preachers was promulgated in November 1819.[59] E.P.

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56. The episode to be discussed below was symptomatic of a serious crisis within Methodism in the north around the time of Peterloo. For general accounts of the crisis see Donald Read, Peterloo: the "Massacre" and its Background (Manchester, 1958), pp.26-30, 201-4, P. Stigant, "Wesleyan Methodism and Working-class Radicalism in the North, 1792-1821", Northern History, vi (1971), pp.98-116, and W.R. Ward, Religion and Society in England 1790-1850 (London, 1972), pp.88-97.

57. BD, 8 March 1820, pp.322-3. The correspondent only identified himself as "J.L."

58. For figures of the Register's sales see George Spater, William Cobbett, Vol. 2, pp.347-9.

59. BD, 8 Mar. 1820, pp.322-3. "A.B.", a correspondent to the Manchester Observer, in response to the expulsion order, contested the notions that religious people cannot be reformers, and that all reformers must be blasphemers because a few have published blasphemous writings. "Thousands there are," he asserted, "and I class myself among them, who are decided friends to reform, and yet we are not Deists - some of us are Methodists in heart and life, and all of us firm believers in Divine Revelation". MO, 11 Dec. 1819, p.839.

Thompson acknowledges the contribution to political radicalism made by such breakaway Methodist sects, explaining the phenomenon in terms of a "reactive dialectic": Methodism was a politically conscious religion wherein a libertarian strain developed in response to the predominant authoritarian ethos.[60]

Thompson failed to appreciate, however, that radical social and political ideas could easily be derived from Methodist theology, its official political conservatism notwithstanding. The soteriology of Wesleyan Methodism was Arminian, emphasising both the sinfulness of all people (of whatever social rank) and the willingness of God to save all who would repent of their sins and believe in Jesus Christ as saviour and lord. If all people were of equal value in God's estimation, why were they not all equally invested with political rights in English society? Further, Wesley, militantly hostile to the speculative antinomianism of Calvinism (with its potential for practical application), stressed the necessity of good works as the means of sanctification; thus practical Christianity became a hallmark of Methodism. And Wesley's view of human nature was optimistic. The Methodist doctrine of perfection was predicated on the ability of people, albeit with the assistance of God's grace, to achieve sinless living. The related doctrine of assurance - the consciousness of salvation which the believer could attain - entailed a

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60. See Thompson, The Making, pp.430-40.

mystical experience, especially accessible to the lowly.[61] The democratic implications of Methodist theology were certainly apprehended by Alexander Kilham, who, objecting to the authoritarian character of the Conference, was expelled in 1796 and went on to found the New Connexion. Kilham's opponents associated him with Tom Paine.[62] Perhaps the potential of Methodism to contribute to the making of a political radical was realised more frequently among transient Methodists - who imbibed the rudiments of Evangelical Arminianism but did not remain subject to Methodism's institutional discipline for long - than among longstanding adherents.[63] In either case, the working man did not compartmentalise his life; he naturally melded his religion with his social aspirations.[64]

It is thus not surprising that the breakaway sects contested Methodism's political conservatism on theological grounds, and, as exponents of and adherents to a politically radical form of Christianity, they claimed to be professors

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61. For a discussion of all these points see Bernard Semmel's account of the development of Methodist theology (which he denominates Evangelical Arminianism), in The Methodist Revolution (London, 1974), esp. pp.35-55, 81-109. Semmel likens the Arminian God to the Deist God: "a benign God who countenanced considerable freedom of action, called all to serve him and offered his blessings to all, equally, who would avail themselves of them". Ibid., pp.93-4.
62. Ibid., pp.121-4.
63. See Iain McCalman's insightful account of Robert Wedderburn's journey from Methodist convert to ultra-radical leader, Radical Underworld, pp.50-63.
64. J.F.C. Harrison makes this observation in arguing that popular reform movements assimilated Methodist thought and attitudes. See Harrison's Learning and Living 1790-1960: A Study in the History of the English Adult Education Movement (London, 1961), pp.165-6.

of "true Christianity".[65] The quietist interpretation of Romans 13, for example, was contested by a member of Rev. Mr. Rigg's Newcastle congregation, whose letter to the Black Dwarf was signed "a sincere lover of Liberty, and A METHODIST". The letter was occasioned by Rigg's counselling his congregation not to attend a meeting on Newcastle Town-moor to enquire into the Peterloo massacre. The correspondent insisted that Romans 13 (which was Rigg's text) enjoined obedience only to good rulers, and he referred his readers to a lecture given by the late Rev. James Murray, whom we encountered in the previous chapter as one of Hone's sources of theological arguments, and an important influence upon Thomas Spence.[66] (The same interpretation of Romans 13 was advanced by "Y.Z." of Suffolk, "in the name and on behalf of the Radical Reformers in the Methodist Connexion".[67]) Christ was exalted as the ultimate authority and example for Christians, and to whom, even for Methodists, John Wesley was subordinate: "I would...ask you, my Christian friends, whether we are Wesley's disciples, or Christ's? If we are indeed Christ's disciples, let us not follow Wesley, Mr. Rigg, or any one

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65. Stigant acknowledges the attempt of radicals to contest the official Methodist doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance on Biblical grounds, but he pays only passing attention to it, "Wesleyan Methodism", p.108.
66. BD, 29 Mar. 1820, pp.429-31.
67. See "TO THE COMMITTEE, Or Guardians of the Religious Liberties of the Wesleyan Methodists", MO, 1 Jan. 1820, p.872 (incorrectly numbered 856). Other correspondents to the Manchester Observer also contested the understanding of Christianity embodied by the Connexion's circular. See the issues of 15 Jan. 1820, p.886, and 12 Feb. 1820, pp.916-17.

farther than they follow Christ."[68]

The climax of the letter is a retelling of Jesus's parable of the Good Samaritan, which was used to counter the prevalent belief among Christians (propagated by popular conservative journalists) that reformers were infidels:

> As John Bull travelled over the isle, he fell among thieves; and after they had robbed him, and stripped him of his clothes, they left him weltering in his blood upon the plains of Peterloo. By chance there came a certain priest; probably it was either H--y oy E--n; but he passed by on the other side. Next came by a certain Levite; (now who can tell but this was the celebrated Mr.R--g, though he is a kind of priest too;) but he looked on him and saw that he was distressed; yet he says to him, "lie still John, and be subject to the powers that be." At length Mr.Hunt came where he was, and had compassion on him; and after pouring in oil and wine into his wounds, endeavoured to remove him to some place of safety; but found his power alone inadequate to the arduous task, and now calls upon you to assist him.[69]

This rendering of the famous parable casts the ordinary Englishman in the part of the "neighbour" whom Christ commanded his followers to love. The authorities of Church and State are both the perpetrators of the crime, and those who fail to render assistance to the victim. The hero of the story is the popular radical orator, Henry Hunt, who is seen as having fulfilled Christ's injunction to love one's neighbour. The language of the gospel is hereby appropriated by English working people to conceptualise and articulate their criticism of contemporary politics and

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68. BD, 29 Mar. 1820, pp.429-31. Rigg had said that as Wesley's followers they should follow his example of loyalty to the government. The subordination of the clergy to Christ was, as noted above, a major emphasis of the concept of true religion.
69. Ibid., p.432. The clerical magistrates who sanctioned the yeomanry's actions at Manchester on 16 August are named: Rev. W.R. Hay and Rev. C.W. Ethelston. See Read, Peterloo, pp.75-7. Rigg, of course, also appears in the parable.

society, and validate their attempts to redress injustice.[70] In terms of rhetorical strategy it may be compared to Hone's courtroom performance. As a call to Christians, epecially Methodists, to rally to the cause of reform, the letter served a mobilisational purpose.

An evangelical religion like Methodism - fundamentally trinitarian - was potentially as compatible with popular radicalism as was Deism and rational Christianity. The life and doctrines of Jesus (as related by the gospels of the New Testament) emphasised God's concern for the temporal welfare of all people, particularly the poor, and took an unequivocal stand against oppression. They helped people who were suffering privation to construct an ideology which invested their call for reform with mobilisational and tactical power - given the reverence and esteem which Christ and the Bible were accorded by the establishment as well as by those excluded from political representation. In the process of combating the words and acts of an oppressive Church-State alliance, there was forged a "true religion" which helped mitigate the potentially destructive effects of doctrinal differences among working-class reformers. The appeal to the teachings of Jesus as constitutive of genuine Christianity is analogous to the appeal to Britain's ancient constitution as the paragon of just government. Reform was consequently styled as the restoration of tried

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70. The Peterloo massacre was typically characterised by the radical press as an offence against God which he was certain to avenge. For examples see BD, 6 Oct. 1819, pp.659-60, 17 Nov. 1819, p.747, London Alfred, 6 Oct. 1819, p.53, Theological Comet, 28 Aug. 1819, p.41, Medusa, 4 Sept. 1819, p.226, Radical Reformer, 29 Sept. 1819, pp.19-20, and MO, 25 Sept. 1819, p.724, 6 Nov. 1819, p.806, and 19 Feb. 1820, p.926.

and true principles rather than an experiment fraught with great risk and fundamental error. The Christianity of the Church was implicitly identified with the debased and corrupted constitution, the religion of the reformers with the pure Saxon constitution and benevolent, democratic government of King Alfred.

THE RADICAL ANALYSIS[71]

True religion functioned in radical discourse as a standard of righteousness against which the members of the ruling class in Church and State were shown, in multifarious ways, to be perpetrators of evil. Taxation (which included tithes) was held to be the cause of poverty and suffering among the lower classes. Indirect taxes continued to be levied after the war in order to service the national debt. Commonly consumed products such as soap, sugar, malt, tea and coffee were taxed, placing an extreme burden on working people, up to half of whose wages may have been thereby sequestered.[72] The radical press exonerated God of blame for their plight: God had blessed the earth, but people were "starving in the midst of plenty" because of grinding

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71. This is an examination of what Patricia Hollis called the "old analyses" - to distinguish it from the "new" ideology propounded by some radical theorists and journalists in the 1830s. As stated in the introduction above, one of the purposes of this thesis is to characterise and assess the functions of the religious elements of radical ideology as it changes between the post-war years and the early 1830s. (The new ideology is discussed in chapter 4 below.) It should be emphasised at the outset, however, that "old" analyses continued to exist alongside "new" in the 1830s; indeed they remained more influential than the new and persisted into the 1850s. See Hollis, Pauper Press, ch.VI.

72. On post-war taxation and its place in radical rhetoric see Thompson, The Making, pp.336-7, 600-1.

taxation.[73] Taxes levied on the fruits of the earth were said to constitute an interception of "the bounties of Providence".[74] The fact that it was the labourer through whom the providential bounty was appropriated underlined the injustice of such taxes. A meeting of the inhabitants of Ashton-under-Lyne on 15 May 1818 resolved to cease paying taxes (presumably by abstaining from the consumption of taxed products), exclaiming that it would be "a sinful neglect of the gifts of Heaven, if we permit ourselves to be enslaved and robbed by those who are beholden to the labourer for their daily bread".[75]

Oftentimes the term "blasphemous" was applied to various indirect taxes. For example, the window tax was condemned as blasphemous because it would deny light and air - the free gifts of God to all - to those who could not afford to pay it. The salt tax was viewed similarly. The Corn Bill, too, was seen as "that blasphemous interdiction of the

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73. Cap of Liberty, 20 Oct. 1819, p.102. The same claim was made at a public meeting at Leigh on 11 Aug. 1819. See MO, 14 Aug. 1819, p.674. Conservative writers often attributed the harsh post-war economic conditions to God's judgement upon the nation. See chapter 3 below.
74. MO, 19 June 1819, p.24. (Editorial)
75. Sherwin's PR, 6 June 1818, pp.61-3.

benevolence of God".[76] The government's definition of blasphemy as bringing into contempt the doctrines, liturgy and/or officers of the Church is implicitly being contested. The allegedly blasphemous nature of radical propaganda had been a consideration in the government's restricting freedoms of speech and association in 1817 (and was again in 1819 - the Six Acts), and Hone's and Carlile's trials focused public attention on the subject.[77] Sherwin contested the application of the term blasphemy to parodies of the litany and church service, which, he argued, were the works of men, not of God. He charged the government with using the cry of religion as a tactic to divert and disunite reformers.[78] Sherwin offered a counter-definition of blasphemy:

> I conceive it to be one of the greatest offences which can be committed by Man against his Creator. There may be more acts than one classed under this head, but I believe the principal of them to be, first, the indecent profanation of religion, to answer the purposes of

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76. BD, 10 Mar. 1819, p.151, PR, 23 Jan. 1819, cols.537-8, BD, 10 Nov. 1819, p.726. The Corn Law of 1815 - a protectionist measure - was not a tax; it prohibited the sale of foreign grain while the price of British grain was below 80s per quarter. Foreign grain could be warehoused in Britain at all times, and no duty was levied. Hilton claims that the main consideration behind the law was fear of scarcity. See Boyd Hilton, Corn, Cash, Commerce: The Economic Policies of the Tory Governments 1815-1830 (Oxford, 1977), chapter 1. For a condemnation of the Corn Bill as the main cause of post-war distress by one who claimed to be a sincere Christian see Sherwin's PR, 14 Nov. 1818, p.26. The correspondent castigated the government for looking to the distribution of religious tracts and Bibles and the provision of Sunday schools for children as responses to discontent. When the children taught to say "Give us this day our daily bread" read the Bible for themselves, he asked, "will they not read with emphasis the woe-denouncing judgments of Jesus Christ, hanging over the heads of the canting hypocrites who are starving them?"

77. On the government's concern about the effects of blasphemous publications in 1817 and 1819 see Halevy, A History of the English People, II, pp.23-4, 74-5.

78. Sherwin's PR, 17 May 1817, pp.102-6.

wicked men to blast the benevolent intentions of the deity, by making his creation miserable.[79]

Under this definition the members of the government are implicated as blasphemers as Sherwin proceeds to urge them to review the past year (1817) - to consider the ways they had oppressed the people and infringed their liberties.[80] The conception of true religion as right conduct is inherent in Sherwin's tactical definition and use of "blasphemy" in the context of post-war economic conditions and government legislation.

Religious authority was invoked to censure the extreme inequality of wealth blasphemously created by the imposition of regressive indirect taxes. One pamphleteer opined that if the Bible's condemnation of oppressing the poor were heeded by members of the legislature, "a reformation in the condition of society could not long be avoided".[81] Radical reform was the only remedy, however, in the face of a government which instituted rather than relieved oppression and distress. The mobilisation of large numbers of people was necessary to overcome the self-serving conservatism of the legislature on the question of parliamentary reform. In an appeal to the women of the middle and upper classes to persuade their husbands to

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79. Sherwin's PR, 3 Jan. 1818, pp.99-100. The context of this declaration is an article professedly occasioned by a report that Sidmouth was about to introduce into the House of Lords a bill for the suppression of blasphemous publications.
80. Ibid., p.100.
81. John Ovington, The Sin and Danger of Oppressing the Poor... (London, 1819), pp.xiv-xv. At least sixty-five different Biblical passages are excerpted in support of Ovington's contention. See also the Black Dwarf's insistence that Christian precepts demand that the government act to alleviate distress, 31 Dec. 1817, p.805.

sponsor constitutional reform, the Manchester Female Reformers described the misery of the lives of their families, and, alluding to Jesus's triumphal entry into Jerusalem, exclaimed that "if we hold our peace, the very trees of the forest, and stones of the valley, would justly cry out!"[82] This was a very emphatic and authoritative way of expressing the justice and urgency of their cause, one which challenged the legitimacy of class interests.

The basic anomaly existing in society was expressed by one correspondent in his observation that "industrious and honest men appear in rags and misery, while the slothful and dissipated roll in luxury".[83] The Black Dwarf distinguished between the "idle poor" - dependents of government (such as holders of pensions and sinecures) - and the "laborious poor" - the working people of the country, lamenting that

> In a Christian Country...the vicious must be kept in idleness and vice at the expence [sic] of the virtuous and industrious, who are kindly permitted to offer all the produce of their labour...to their "superiors."[84]

Implicit in such comments is an ironic appeal to the

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82. BD, 4 Aug. 1819, pp.508-10. The allusion is to the incident recorded in Luke 19: some Pharisees told Jesus to rebuke his disciples, for they were loudly praising God and acclaiming Jesus as a King, but Jesus replied "I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out" (verse 40).
83. Medusa, 27 Feb. 1819, pp.13-15.
84. BD, 31 Dec. 1817, p.806. The context of the quote is a mock letter of the Black Dwarf to the Yellow Bonze (of Japan), in which England is described as a Christian country in which Christianity is not practised. On Wooler's creation of a series of imaginary correspondents for the purpose of ironic political comment see Richard Hendrix, "Popular Humour and "The Black Dwarf"", Journal of British Studies, XVI (1976), pp.124-5. The use of the term "poor" with reference to holders of government offices is probably an allusion to the poor laws, under which the extremely destitute may become dependent upon outdoor relief.

Protestant work ethic, which was used by employers to inculcate discipline in factory workers.[85] But Wooler does not have his tongue in his cheek. Artisan and bourgeois ideology alike stressed the value and importance of work. The dignity and independence of the hard-working labourer were prized by radicals, who at this time generally rejected Owen's paternalistic plan of settling labourers in co-operative communities.[86] The Black Dwarf addressed Owen: "LET THE POOR ALONE. The working bee can always find a hive....Do not take from them what they can earn, to supply the wants of those who will earn nothing". Fair wages and low taxes were all the working man required.[87]

Radicals commonly turned the arguments outlined above against priests, who, as beneficiaries of Old Corruption, featured prominently in the demonology of the "old" analysis. An application by the London clergy early in 1819 for a salary increase occasioned criticism in the radical press. The Medusa asserted that the wages of "rich lazy priests" should not be increased "when many poor

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85. See Thompson's discussion of the Weber-Tawney thesis vis-a-vis Methodism and the factory system, The Making, pp.390-98.
86. Owen's communitarian ideas were opposed by many radicals - Hunt, Cartwright, Wooler and Hone among them - at a meeting at the City of London Tavern in August 1817. See Hone, Cause of Truth, pp.320-1. On the consonance of artisan and bourgeois values see Thomas Walter Laqueur, Religion and Respectability: Sunday Schools and Working Class Culture, 1780-1850 (New Haven and London, 1976), pp.214-8. Although they stressed the value of labour, working-class journals (with the exception of the Gorgon) did not develop a labour theory of value during the post-war years. Exploitation was seen as the product of factors (mainly political) exogenous to the economic system. See Noel W. Thompson, The People's Science: The Popular Political Economy of Exploitation and Crisis 1816-34 (Cambridge, 1984), pp.111-21.
87. BD, 20 Aug. 1817, pp.468-72. See also RR, 16 Aug. 1817, cols.156-60.

industrious weavers with large families" receive such a paltry income by comparison, and the Gorgon described priests as "a set of idle, illiterate vagabonds, who live on the just rewards of industry...without promoting the virtue and happiness of the community".[88] The use of charity funds to pay large salaries to administrators was exposed, and condemned on religious grounds. The Bishop of Lincoln was one offender whose actions in this regard were found (in a mock trial for robbery of the poor) to violate the basic principles of Christianity, which are to "do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly before God".[89] The use of the trial form is significant: petty thieves among the lower classes were tried (not uncommonly by clerical magistrates) according to the laws of England (which were perceived as class-based); a Bishop is here indicted by the transcendent laws of God.

The radical press revelled in exposing the hypocrisy of priests guilty of vices such as gluttony, alcoholism and fornication, and often likened them to the Scribes and Pharisees who were responsible for Jesus's death.[90] Contrary to the claims of conservatives that reformers were undermining religion, it was said to be the moral failings of the clergy which brought religion into contempt and precipitated the transfer of many people from Church to

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88. Medusa, 27 Feb. 1819, pp.12-13, Gorgon, 13 Feb. 1819, pp.311-12. See also Medusa, 6 Mar. 1819, p.20, and PR, 19 July 1817, cols. 490-1.
89. BD, 3 Feb. 1819, pp.55-8. The Gorgon devoted many articles to the subject. See numbers 2, 4, 15, 18, 21, 22, 23, 33.
90. For examples see the Republican, 16 June 1820, p.275, and 7 July 1820, p.381, Briton, 16 Oct. 1819, pp.26, 29-30, BD, 14 Apr. 1819, pp.233-6, and the Censor (an anonymous single issue periodical of 1 April 1820), p.13.

chapel.[91] As disciples of Jesus it was the duty of the clergy to champion the rights of the people, a duty which was neglected because of the financial benefits of co-operating with oppression.[92] Anti-clericalism is usually considered by historians to be characteristic of radical rhetoric; that Christianity was invoked to indict the clergy and instruct them in their duties, has not, however, been accorded its due importance.[93]

The only remedy the radical analysis considered adequate to eliminating corruption and thereby ameliorating the condition of the common people was the representation in the House of Commons of all adult males. In January 1817 the Black Dwarf upheld universal manhood suffrage (against the lesser demand of household suffrage advocated by Cobbett and Cartwright at a recent meeting of Hampden Club delegates at the Crown and Anchor), as being in accordance with the will of God in whose sight "all created beings are equal".[94] Similarly, in 1819, the Manchester Observer argued that popular sovereignty was "the gift of heaven"

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91. MO, 18 Sept. 1819, p.718; Sherwin's PR, 3 May 1817, pp.75-6. (Sherwin's article is a response to the Courier's suggestion that the insufficient number of Churches in some areas may partly account for the reception of blasphemous and seditious publications among some sections of the population.)
92. MO, 23 Oct. 1819, p.785 (the letter signed "S.", of Hulme, probably Rev. James Scholefield, discussed below), 13 Nov. 1819, p.812 ("A LAY SERMON, Addressed to the Ministry of the Christian Religion"). S. is attacking the clergy who signed the Prince Regent's address in support of the actions of the magistrates at Manchester on 16 August.
93. See, for example, Hollis, Pauper Press, pp.206-7.
94. BD, 29 Jan. 1817, pp.7-8. In accordance with the wish of Sir Francis Burdett (absent from the Crown and Anchor meeting) Cobbett initially supported the proposal to demand household suffrage, but he changed his mind and supported Hunt's declaration for manhood suffrage, allegedly having been converted by the argument of Samuel Bamford. See Thompson, The Making, pp.697-8.

lost through human neglect.[95] Such claims are founded on the doctrine of natural rights, the religious origins of which were discussed in chapter 1 above.

Universal suffrage was also declared by some radicals to be the teaching of revealed religion. Praising Henry Hunt for his public advocacy of the rights of all men, a Liverpool reformer claimed that Jesus preached universal suffrage. The "Borough tyrants and their myrmidons", by contrast, "affect obedience to Christ's laws and commands, and by every action of their lives treat him and his doctrine with contempt".[96] A pamphleteer asserted that "Universal Suffrage...is ordained of God", a conclusion proceeding from his demonstration from Mosaic law that it is the duty of the whole community to punish evil-doers. The implication is that laws themselves are to be made by the whole community.[97] Alluding to the analogy Saint Paul used of the Church, Andrew likened the functioning of society to that of the human body, where the principle of interdependence operates: "It is the union of the whole parts acting in concert with each other, that makes the whole body happy".[98] Andrew's purpose was to persuade his Christian readers that it was one's God-given duty to become

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95. MO, 6 Feb. 1819, p.462.
96. Ibid., p.460.
97. William Andrew, A Masterpiece on Politics (London, 1819), pp.19-21. Death by stoning, a punishment for some offences under Mosaic law, is his main example: the whole community had the right to participate in administering the punishment. The institutions of public executioner and the jury in England were said to be applications of the same principle.
98. Ibid., pp.42-3. This argument was used to counter Wesley's doctrine that the monarch is subject only to God. For St Paul's likening of the Church to the human body, see 1 Corinthians 12: 12-26.

actively involved in the struggle for reform.[99]

THE STRUGGLE FOR REFORM

The radical analysis held that reform would be an inevitable consequence of the advance of knowledge among the unrepresented. This has been documented above in relation to Hone's beliefs and career as a radical publisher. And the mobilisational power of the press was recognised by the government, which attempted to suppress the publication of works it deemed seditious or blasphemous. The struggle for the freedom of the press was, therefore, an integral and vital aspect of post-war radicalism, and one which had a religious dimension. The government's persecution of reformers on political and religious grounds was held by radicals - by both Christians and Deists alike - to be contrary to the tenets of Christianity. It was considered a breach of Christ's commands to love one another (even one's enemies) and to forgive those who sinned against you.[100] One Christian writer advocated the right of private judgement in matters of faith on the ground of Christ's injunction to "Judge ye of yourselves what is right". The

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99. Ibid., pp. 22, 29. The writing of A Masterpiece was professedly occasioned by the Methodist New Connexion's disciplining of one of its ministers, G. Beaumont (of Norwich), for publishing a pamphlet (entitled The Beggar's Complaint), which blamed the government and the monopolisers of land for the suffering of the poor. The form of A Masterpiece is a series of letters on religion and politics addressed to Beaumont. Ibid., pp.1-3.

100. For examples see the pamphlets [Anon.], View of Patriotism; or Freedom, Civil and Religious;... (Dublin, 1820), pp.5-7, 25, J.W., Thoughts on the Inconsistency of Religious Persecutions (London, 1819), pp.15-16, and The Speech of John Gale Jones..on the Following Question: "Ought the conduct of Mr. Carlile...in continuing to publish Paine's Age of Reason...be censured...or approved" (London, 1819), p.6.

present civil and religious liberties of England, he claimed, were the product of Dissenters' adherence to this doctrine.[101] Another Christian suggested that persecution was a sure sign of wickedness, given Jesus's statement "He that doeth good, cometh to the light; that is, he seeketh to be made known. But he that doeth evil, loveth darkness".[102] The clear implication of such examples is that the prosecutors of publishers of freethinking works were held to be nominal Christians only, professors but not practitioners of Christianity. As one self-declared well-wisher to Christianity expressed it:

> I cannot bring myself...to believe, that those who manifest a zeal to crush the enemies of Christianity by the arm of the law, are themselves acquainted with that religion. I imagine them, on the contrary, to be men whose time and attention have been completely engrossed by secular affairs, and who believe the Christian religion as they would believe the Mohammedan, merely because their fathers believed it before them.[103]

The laws against blasphemy, wrote "A PILGRIM" (after parliament had passed the Six Acts), "although framed by Christian legislators...are not in the spirit of Christ, but

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101. Censor, p.14. The writer is probably alluding to Luke 12:57, although it is certainly misquoted and perhaps misapplied.
102. Andrew, A Masterpiece on Politics, p.48. The verse was considered applicable because persecution signified opposition to inquiry. The allusion is to John 3:19. A Deist used the same verse as an explanation for the failure of priests to promote intellectual and religious enlightenment. See the Republican, 7 July 1820, p.380.
103. Letter to Sir S. Shepherd, upon the subject of his prosecutions of Richard Carlile for publishing Paine's Age of Reason (London, 1819), pp.27-8. A Christian correspondent to the Manchester Observer claimed that the persecution of Deists was evidence of atheism: "...if they themselves believed the word of God," he asserted, "oppression would cease and justice be fairly administered, therefore if it does not cease, but justice administered with partiality, we are led to conclude, they are no better than infidels". MO, 18 Dec. 1819, p.849.

of his enemies and persecutors".[104]

Much of the discussion in the radical press on the subject of religious freedom was occasioned by Carlile's indictment, trial, conviction and imprisonment for blasphemous libel, and served a tactical purpose.[105] Christian correspondents to the White Hat and the Republican declared their opposition to the persecution of Carlile. The individual's conscience was considered independent of dictation: Christian faith was the product of scrutiny of the scriptures and the arrival at a genuine conviction of their truth; people must be allowed to think about religion whatever they wished because they could do no other.[106] Deists pointed to the hypocrisy of the government's action: it was deemed to have no Biblical warrant and was compared to Roman Catholic persecution of Protestants in earlier times. Carlile likened his position to that of Luther.[107] Thomas Davison used the same argument in his trial for blasphemous libel in October 1820.[108] The class-based action of the government was exposed and derided by Carlile in his observation that the scepticism of respectable people was not subject to prosecution, but "sceptics among the

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104. MO, 22 Jan. 1820, p.893.
105. On the importance of Carlile's trial to Deists and Dissenters alike see McCalman, "Popular Radicalism and Freethought", pp.49-53.
106. White Hat, 23 Oct. 1819, pp.28, 31, 27 Nov. 1819, pp.105-9, Republican, 24 Dec. 1819, pp.279-80, and 17 Mar. 1820, p.297. A satirical mock trial of Carlile (published by Wooler) came to the same conclusion, and the "court" ordered that suitably qualified Christians write a refutation of the Age of Reason which Carlile was to be compelled to read. See [Anon.], A Dialogue on the Approaching Trial of Mr Carlile for Publishing "The Age of Reason" (London, 1819).
107. Republican, 3 Sept. 1819, p.31, Medusa, 6 Mar. 1819, p.18, 16 Oct. 1819, p.276, DM, pp.103-4.
108. See DM, pp.215-16.

lower orders...are to be imprisoned, fined, and ruined, and their wives and children thrown upon the dunghill like hogs, as an example to the swinish multitude".[109] Cobbett had similarly noted, in response to the speech of the Bishop of Llandaff in the House of Lords on 10 December 1819 during discussion on the bill to prevent the publication of blasphemous and seditious libels, that the works of Hume and Gibbon were published with impunity, while the publisher of the Age of Reason was incarcerated.[110]

One index of the success of radical publications in mobilising support for the cause of reform was the growing attendance at public meetings during 1819. The radical analysis held that as knowledge increased, the numbers demanding parliamentary reform would swell to the point where the government would have to concede their claims. And the mass platform itself was a venue for the dissemination of knowledge. Hence there was a struggle between government and reformers over the right to hold mass public meetings, which came to a head at Manchester on 16 August. It was noted above that at Hunt's trial the government attempted to associate reform with infidelity. The defence of the Peterloo conspirators was carefully managed in order to deny the allegation of infidelity, and an attempt was made to connect the cause of reform with true Christianity. Two Dissenting clergymen gave favourable evidence of the peaceable nature of the gathering on 16 August. The evidence of Rev. James Scholefield is

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109. Republican, 15 Oct. 1819, p.119.
110. PR, 27 Jan. 1820, col.732. Llandaff had expressed his concern that blasphemous works had lately been written "in a style suited to the lowest capacity". Ibid., col.722.

especially interesting in this respect. Scholefield identified himself as minister of the Bible Christians, who, he claimed, acted according to the Scriptures. His sympathy with the cause of reform is unambiguous, although carefully phrased. He stated his disagreement with the local clergy - mostly Anglican - who had signed a declaration in support of the police at the Manchester meeting, adding, "The Scriptures were my guide". At the time, he had made his view public in a letter to the Manchester Observer.[111] In the letter he branded the clergy as "modern Judases" who "unite in endeavouring to crucify, or stifle, that spirit of Truth which still comes from Christ, rather than submit to its government".[112]

Despite the intention of Scholefield's testimony, its sincerity need not be doubted. Scholefield worked for the cause of political reform for many years, later playing a role in Chartist agitation, while maintaining his clerical status and performing pastoral duties. The two were complementary expressions of the one motivation: to serve

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111. Trial of Henry Hunt, pp.253-5.
112. MO, 24 July 1819, p.653. Scholefield's theology is evidently heterodox, as he attacked the notion that Jesus was an innocent sacrifice for the inherited sin of humanity. The clergy's betrayal of the poor was the product of such theology, he claimed.

God and his fellow human beings.[113] Shortly after Peterloo he organised a non-denominational Sunday School which lasted at least fifty years: a response to the Anglicans' and Methodists' taking firm control of existing Sunday Schools and purging them of radicalism. In 1823 he opened a chapel in Every-street, Ancoats, from which, among other things, he "dispensed radical politics".[114] Scholefield contested the belief founded on Romans 13 that "the powers that be are ordained of God". English history provided many examples of evil governments being changed by human intervention. He saw the Bible's condemnation of oppression, and its endorsement of justice, mercy and truth, as a vindication of Paineite political ideology. Of all books, he asserted, the Bible had the pre-eminent claim to the title "Rights of Man".[115]

In the face of an intransigent government, radicals suffered defeats and setbacks. Religious beliefs were important in renewing their hope and confidence. On the

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113. Scholefield was an important and respected local public figure, active in a number of causes, and he practised as a medical doctor as well as a clergymen. His career has been analysed by Paul A. Pickering, "The Chaplain of the Manchester Chartists: the Rev. James Scholefield (1790-1855) and the Bible Christians of Manchester and Salford" (La Trobe University seminar paper, 1984). The Bible Christians of Manchester and Salford were a sect founded in the late 1780s by William Cowherd, an Anglican curate influenced by Swedenborgian doctrine. Bible Christian theology, although rooted in the Bible, was rationalist and influenced by scientific knowledge. It was also oriented towards the performance of good works as the essential expression of Christian belief. Scholefield was a labourer in the cause of "true religion". Ibid., pp.6-13.
114. Ward, Religion, pp.95-6.
115. See Scholefield's "REMARKS On the Sermon, preached by the Rev. John Stephens, in the Methodist Chapel, Oldham-street, Manchester", MO, 4 Mar. 1820, p.944. Stephens was a prominent Methodist minister in Manchester. His sermon is discussed in chapter 3 below.

second anniversary of Peterloo Scholefield presided over a solemn meeting at St Peter's fields, which then reconvened at Hulme Chapel, where he christened nine children "Henry Hunt", an expression of patriotism on the part of the parents, of which he approved.[116] The event underscores the intimate connection between popular Christianity and radicalism. In Hulme Chapel on that day Scholefield took Psalm 94 as his text. The only record of the sermon is a brief outline printed by the Manchester Observer. Scholefield read the entire psalm aloud, having deemed it "suited to the times in which they now lived, and the occasion upon which they were now assembled".[117] The actions of the yeomanry two years previously were depicted thus by the Psalmist:

> Lord, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph? How long shall they speak and utter hard things?...They break in pieces thy people, O Lord, and afflict thine heritage. They slay the widow and stranger, and murder the fatherless. Yet they say, The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it.

In this way the government was identified with the "wicked", and the victims of Peterloo (and the common people generally) with the Lord's people. The psalm ends by asserting that God will defend the innocent and punish the wicked, cutting off the latter from his fellowship. This is the answer to the psalmist's question: "shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law?" Scholefield recalled, "with electrifying effect", the shameful treatment of the late Queen Caroline

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116. Henry Hunt, To the Radical Reformers, Male and Female, of England, Ireland, and Scotland... (London, 1821), pp.21-2, 30.
117. Wooler's British Gazette and Manchester Observer, p.4.

by George IV and his government.[118] As in the case of the parable of the good Samaritan discussed above, contemporary people and events were written into the Biblical scenario, and praise and blame applied according to its ethical criteria. Hunt heard that "it was a most able and impressive sermon, and caused his numerous hearers to be bathed in tears".[119] The people's tears showed that this was no mere ex post facto rationalisation made for political advantage. It appealed to what they really felt and believed, and was therefore an effective way of helping them to interpret their world and cope emotionally and psychologically with painful circumstances, working perhaps to transmute grief and despondency into hope, patience and constructive effort.

Christian beliefs were very important to some radicals incarcerated for their activities in the struggle for reform. We know they helped Samuel Bamford to adjust to imprisonment and the isolation and privation which it entailed. A Middleton weaver, Bamford was raised as a Methodist, and became a leading organiser of the local Hampden Club after its establishment in 1816. He attended the Manchester meeting on 16 August and was arrested and tried along with Hunt and the other organisers of the occasion, found guilty, and subsequently served a gaol term. In gaol he sought solace in reflection: "And why indeed! should I repine?/ The crown, as well as the cross is mine". After a visit from his wife he contrasted the lack of support he had received from former friends with the

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118. Ibid.
119. Hunt, To the Radical Reformers, p.22.

kindness to him of some Oldham radicals, some of whom had recently died. Feeling hurt by local reformers' neglect of him, he gave God the credit for his sustenance.[120] In 1817 the Lancashire radical, Joseph Mitchell, imprisoned for his participation in the planning which culminated in the Pentrich rising, had found comfort from reflecting that his life passed the test of judgement by the standard of "Christ's laws". He compared his present suffering to that endured by Jesus, another innocent, but persecuted, man.[121] Awaiting execution, Jeremiah Brandreth found solace in the promise of eternal life.[122] William Benbow, writing to his wife from Coldbath Fields prison in December 1816, found comfort in anticipating the approach of the millennium.[123]

THE COMING OF THE MILLENNIUM

The radical periodicals of 1819-20, particularly Deist ones, are imbued with prophetic language: the corruption

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120. Samuel Bamford, Passages in the Life of a Radical (1884; rpt. Oxford, 1984), pp.177-8, 337, 346.
121. In 1819 Mitchell published the ephemeral radical periodical The Blanketteer, and People's Guardian, which he used primarily to deny the (false) accusation that he was a spy. His prison experience of 1817 comes to light in the printing of letters to his wife which he wrote while in prison. See Blanketteer, 20 Nov. 1819, pp.72, 77.
122. See the letter to his wife printed by Cobbett, PR, 24 Apr. 1818, cols.497-8. Cobbett claimed that Brandreth, Turner and Ludlam, all executed as ringleaders of the Pentrich rising, were sincere and devoted Christians, "relying most firmly on salvation through the atonement of Christ". Cobbett had a special interest in the case as Brandreth's defence claimed that its client had been deluded by Cobbett and the radical press. E.P. Thompson notes Brandreth's and Ludlam's religious affiliations. See his account of the rising - "one of the first attempts in history to mount a wholly proletarian insurrection" - and the subsequent trial and executions, The Making, pp.715-34.
123. See McCalman, Radical Underworld, p.67.

and suffering of the time are condemned as evil, and radical change, cast in terms of retribution and the triumph of truth, is portended. Such an interpretation of contemporary events may be appropriately discussed under the rubric of millenarianism (sometimes called millennialism). There are several specialised studies of this phenomenon in late eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century England, which demonstrate its pervasiveness, both among the educated middle class and the common people.[124] Among Christians the millennium is associated with the second coming of Christ and his reign upon the earth. There was (and still is) a split between those who believed that Christ's return would precede and usher in the millennium (a thousand year period of peace) - this is called pre-millennialism - and those who believed that Christ would return at the end of the millennium - hence the term post-millennialism. Pre-millennialism entailed a change from a state of disorder to one of justice and peace, which was accomplished by divine intervention. The same change occurred in a post-millennialist scenario, but progressively and by human effort in co-operation with the divine will.[125]

Movements which are not Christian may be understood as expressions of the same way of interpreting the world. In the eighteenth century the millennium was equated with the

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124. See Clarke Garrett, Respectable Folly: Millenarians and the French Revolution in France and England (Baltimore and London, 1975), J.F.C. Harrison, The Second Coming: Popular Millenarianism 1780-1850 (New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1979), and W.H. Oliver, Prophets and Millennialists: the Uses of Biblical Prophecy in England from the 1790s to the 1840s (Auckland, 1978).

125. For discussions of this dichotomy see Oliver, Prophets, pp.22-3, and Harrison, Second Coming, pp.6-8.

idea of progress: "The millennium was secularised into a utopia or perfect state of society, to be attained through a gradual and steady march of improvement".[126] The term secular may not be appropriately applied to the radical Deists of this study: the essentially religious character of Deism has already been noted. Yet the idea of progress is apropos. And this kind of post-millenialism was common to radicals of our period, whether Deists or Christians. For true religion, as we have seen, had a predominantly earthly reference, and social and political change was the common aim. Millenarianism, too, has an earthly reference: for the world is where the millennium takes place. It is likely that millenarianism and radicalism - overlapping categories - had a similar function for some people: "The need was for an ideology of change, for salvation from a variety of social and individual ills...".[127]

In 1819-20 the suffering of the common people, and the government's repression of popular radicalism, signified to radicals a serious crisis which would be resolved - one way or another - by political change. After Peterloo a tactical difference emerged among English radicals. The majority, anticipating that reform would follow an inquiry into the events of 16 August, wanted to avoid any physical confrontation which would jeopardise the moral victory won at Manchester. Many London ultra-radicals (Watsonites), however, soon came to see physical confrontation as the inevitable, and even desirable, consequence of the

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126. Ibid., p.7.
127. Ibid., p.225. See also Oliver, Prophets, p.20.

authorities' use of force at Peterloo.[128] Common to all was the belief that radical political change was the will of God. The Cato Street conspirator, Arthur Thistlewood, expressed it this way: "The times are now portentous. Thousands of the most useful people die daily for want; the cries of the oppressed rise up to Heaven, and call aloud for justice upon the guilty authors of their sufferings".[129] The Female Radical Reformers of Carlisle applied the words of Isaiah 1:21-3 to contemporary England:

> Alas! how is the faithful city become a harlot; it was full of judgement - righteousness lodged in it - but now murderers: thy silver is become dross - thy wine mixed with water - thy Princes are rebellious and companions of thieves - every one loveth gifts and followeth after reward. They judge not the fatherless; neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them.[130]

One could easily read into this passage such contemporary phenomena as places and sinecures, plural livings of senior clergy, and the Peterloo massacre. Here is a Biblical paradigm analogous to the popular constitutionalist interpretation of English history depicted in Hone's The Political House That Jack Built: the myth of a once just and equitable society betrayed and disabled by corruption

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128. At the Crown and Anchor on the occasion of his triumphal entry into London on 13 September Hunt made a speech rejecting republicanism, Spenceanism, levelling, infidelity and revolution. Until this time the Watsonites had been committed to Hunt's constitutionalist tactics, their efforts to arm themselves being a defensive measure. Now spurning the hope of legal redress and reform, the ultras developed the strategy of holding simultaneous meetings throughout the country, but failed to attract much support - and their hope for a popular revolution was extinguished. They suffered defections among their own ranks, as well as losing key people to government repression. And Hunt himself worked to undermine their plan, the majority of provincial radicals remaining loyal to him. For a dogged remnant Cato Street seemed their only recourse. See McCalman, Radical Underworld, pp.134-9, Belchem, "Orator" Hunt, pp.121-32.
129. Radical Reformer, 27 Oct. 1819, pp.49-50.
130. Radical Reformer, 3 Nov. 1819, p.63.

among the ruling class. Isaiah went on (in the same chapter) to tell of God's intention to restore Israel to its former glory. Hone's pamphlet envisioned the triumph of truth over corruption and violence. The evident similarity of the two paradigms, when applied to English society in 1819, underscores the identical functions which radicalism and millenarianism may perform, the latter perhaps providing authority for the former and investing it with cosmic significance.

The pages of the radical press of 1819-20 abounded with references to the crisis at hand and claimed that rescue was imminent. A New Age was about to dawn as Reason and Truth triumphed over ignorance, superstition, oppression and tyranny. As one correspondent prognosticated, "the gloomy night of superstition and slavery is fast passing away, the dawn of reason begins to appear; that dawn which is a prelude to the bright and happy day which shall continue with us till time shall be no more".[131] In September-October 1819 the approaching trial of Carlile was seen by some, anticipating his vindication, as the event which would inaugurate the Age of Reason. The Cap of Liberty stated it baldly: "The age of reason and freedom is about to commence, and from the unprejudiced verdict of a British Jury will we date its origin".[132] As events transpired, of course, it would have been safer to have made

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131. Medusa, 31 Jul. 1819, pp.189-90. For similar examples see Medusa, 26 June 1819, pp.149-50, 13 Nov. 1819, pp.305-6, 25 Dec. 1819, p.356, Republican, 22 Oct. 1819, p.143, 4 Feb. 1820, p.103, 11 Feb. 1820, p.111, and Cap of Liberty, 3 Nov. 1819, pp.136-7.

132. Cap of Liberty, 13 Oct. 1819, p.91. See also Cap of Liberty, 15 Sept. 1819, p.22, 6 Oct. 1819, pp.65-9, and Medusa, 9 Oct. 1819, p.268.

a more elastic forecast.

Volney's Ruins of Empires is a likely conceptual source of millenarian expectations among infidel radicals. By investigating the causes of the decline and collapse of ancient empires, this most famous of Volney's works (first published in French in 1791) purported to elucidate the principles which make for a successful society. Like the New Testament book of Revelation, it has a visionary form. Volney preached a gospel of hope and self-help to his contemporaries. Knowledge had advanced through history (even under despotic regimes) and its dissemination had been expedited in modern times by the invention of the printing press. The American and nascent French revolutions were a sign that a new age was about to dawn, "an age of astonishment to vulgar minds, of surprise and dread to tyrants, of emancipation to a great people, and of hope to the whole world".[133] It is likely that radicals apprehended a consonance between Volney's new age and the creation of a new heaven and a new earth anticipated in Revelation. The two were probably mutually reinforcing and helped to unite Christian and infidel radicals around a

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133. M. Volney, The Ruins: or, a Survey of the Revolutions of Empires (London, 1851), pp.66-7. In the fifteenth chapter the power of knowledge is demonstrated as the productive class of society defeats the arguments in favour of their submitting to the prevailing unjust social and political order, which are expounded by the privileged, parasitic class. Thompson claims that the sociology of post-war popular radicalism was derived from this chapter, which was published in England separately as a tract, The Making, pp.107-8. Palmer's Principles of Nature similarly denominated the triumph of reason over superstition as the "new age, the true millennium" (p.206). Palmer probably borrowed and adapted Volney's concept. (He wrote after Volney, and admired his work, asserting that it was "pre-eminently entitled to the appellation of Holy Writ", Principles of Nature, p.90.)

common millennial hope. A blend of biblicism and newer rationalist ideas certainly informed the ideology of London ultra-radicals.[134]

From the late eighteenth century many Christians had anticipated the coming of the millennium. The burgeoning overseas missionary enterprises begun in the 1790s were, in part, an expression of a commitment to fulfilling Britain's providential role in the battle between good and evil on a world scale. The sermons and addresses occasioned by the founding of the London Missionary Society in 1795 reflected the millenarian beliefs among Dissenters.[135] In our period one correspondent to the White Hat compared the British constitution to Sampson - its strength having been shorn by tax-gatherers, excise officers, placemen and pensioners - and lamented that Britain was thereby failing to fulfil its providential role of leader and exemplar to the world "of the blessings of liberty, science, arts, and free commerce".[136] One northern Christian devised a comprehensive five-point plan which he claimed would bring about the millennium. His system was alleged to have existed at the time of King Alfred and its implementation

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134. See Iain McCalman's discussions of the religion of Thomas Spence and his followers, and the Hopkins Street blasphemous chapel, Radical Underworld, pp.63-72, 144-50.
135. See Oliver's discussion of "missionary millennialists", Prophets, pp.84-90.
136. White Hat, 13 Nov. 1819, p.78.

was to involve parliamentary reform.[137] In the radical Christian periodicals of the time truth was said to be destined to prevail and an era of freedom to commence. One correspondent delineated the role of Deism in this transformation: the confusion and division produced by Deist publications would end in "Total destruction and annihilation". He continued:

> The heavens and earth that now are must be destroyed; but a new heaven and a new earth will be created. Political establishments are the earth, religious establishments the heavens; both are corrupt, both are waxing old and decaying apace, and will soon pass away to make way for the new. The earth hath been shook; the heavens are now shaking, and that by deistical principles and publications.[138]

One noteworthy Christian exponent of millenarianism was Rev. Joseph Harrison, a Presbyterian minister who became active in radical politics after his arrival in Stockport in 1818.[139] Religion played a prominent role in the Stockport Union (which was allegedly influential among radical unions throughout the country). Harrison held

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137. George Edwards, A Cursory View...of the Expedients Requisite...for...Saving the United Kingdom...and for Introducing the Happy, and Millenian Era of Mankind... (Durham, 1820). The five points, mainly relating to taxation, are outlined in Edwards's pamphlet, The Forlorn Hope of the United Kingdom (London, 1819). In The Plan and Documents, whereby the new era of our predestined happiness...is now actually and actively set on foot... (London, 1819), Edwards insisted that "natural and scriptural religion wholly coincide" if the Bible is interpreted properly, and that it is the government's duty to reconcile different religious opinions (p.71). His arguments obviously complement the Saxon yoke mythology.

138. Briton, 2 Oct. 1819, pp.11-12. The quotation alludes to Revelation 21. See also the White Hat, 13 Nov. 1819, p.80, and 16 Oct. 1819, p.10.

139. For a brief biographical sketch of Harrison (which corrects Thompson's account, The Making, pp.709-10) see Glen, Urban Workers, p.219.

religious services which were well attended.[140] A speaker at a number of reform meetings, particularly in the north, in 1819, Harrison was arrested at a meeting at Smithfield on 21 July and tried at Cheshire for making seditious statements (on several occasions) in April the following year. He was sentenced to two years imprisonment.[141] At the Smithfield meeting Harrison endorsed resolutions passed in favour of universal suffrage and religious liberty, and assured his audience that "Your cause is God's cause". He insisted that reform was to be achieved peacefully: "While you act with righteousness, justice, and benevolence," he promised, "the great Jehovah will pour his blessings on you, as an abundant reward for all your exertions."[142] One of the charges of seditious libel against Harrison was for a sermon he preached at Stockport on 15 August 1819. The sermon was based on the Golden Rule. Corruption in government had taken place despite this commandment of Christ's to do to others what you would have others do to you, he said; if the principle were acted upon, parsons, lawyers, armed forces and even governments, would be

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140. Ibid., pp.225, 227-9. The Golden Rule ("Do unto others") was adopted as the Union's motto (and which radical parliamentary reform was believed would make possible for people to practise), and the rules prescribed the obligation of providing a place to teach "such good and moral principles as may lead the will to the practice of the great Laws of God, that man may live in harmony with his fellow and with all creation". MO, 8 May 1819, p.564.
141. Archibald Prentice, Historical Sketches and Personal Recollections of Manchester (London and Manchester, 1851), pp.196-8. The Black Dwarf reported Harrison's attendance (or influence) at several meetings around the country in 1819. For examples see 23 June, pp.412-15, 7 July, pp.440-7, and 28 July, pp.493-4.
142. A Report of the Meeting Held at Smithfield, on Wednesday July 21, 1819, to consider the best means of recovering our lost rights: H.Hunt, Esq. in the chair (London, 1819), pp.4-5. For an account of Harrison's arrest see pp.6-7.

rendered redundant. At his trial Harrison explained, "As a preacher, it is natural that I should wish to see the days of the millenium [sic] arrive. I would say, I will say, with the Apostle John, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly"".[143]

The purpose of many of the articles and letters in the radical press which made apocalyptic forecasts was both tactical and mobilisational. Firstly, they warned the government of impending doom (for by initiating reform disaster might be averted). A public meeting at Stockport in February 1819 adopted a remonstrance to the Prince Regent, which used Biblical language to suggest that violent conflict would ensue unless distress were relieved:

> But the sons of Belial shall be all of them as thorns thrust away, because they cannot be taken with hands. But the man that shall touch them must be fenced with iron, and the staff of a spear; and they shall be utterly burned with fire in the same place.[144]

If the Prince "would rule over a free and loyal people, it must be by taking the part which Nehemiah took, as recorded in his fifth chapter".[145] A correspondent to the Medusa advised that "the day of retributive JUSTICE" could be forestalled if England's rulers did "works meet for repentance".[146] In the aftermath of Peterloo the Black Dwarf placed in the government's lap the choice between

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143. BD, 26 Apr. 1820, pp.566-7. That Harrison was known as a millenarian preacher is suggested by the (unfavourable) reference to "Parson Harrison's millenium" in the pamphlet written under the pseudonym Lesteriensis, Thoughts on the State of the Nation (London, 1820), pp.51-2.
144. MO, 20 Feb. 1819, p.476. The words are from 2 Samuel 23: 6-7. Belial is a name for the Devil.
145. Ibid. In Nehemiah 5, Nehemiah rebuked the usurers among the Jews, for many people had had to mortgage their property and hire out their children as servants in order to buy enough food to eat. He ordered a total remission of debts.
146. Medusa, 24 Apr. 1819, pp.75-6.

safety and ruin, while the Cap of Liberty warned the Prince Regent that "the descendants of the Britons who armed at Runnymede, compelled a tyrant King to obey the voice of reason and justice, - who brought another to public execution, and compelled a third to descend from the throne he unworthily occupied" would not continue to wait forever for reform: "they have asked for the bread of freedom and their oppressors have given them the stone of despotism".[147]

Secondly, millenarian prognostications were directed towards stimulating the momentum of public agitation for radical reform. This was consistent with a post-millennialist paradigm of change, which emphasised human agency. A correspondent to the Medusa, using an Old Testament image for spiritual regeneration, lamented the lack of resistance to oppression (which had been shown by earlier generations of Britons), despairing: "...is there no cord to touch that would give animation to the dry bones, or dispel the lethargy you are under"?[148] The crisis must be resolved by resolute action among working people. Public meetings around the country were to be held, and people should attend.[149] As a defensive measure, in the light of

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147. BD, 23 June 1819, p.404, Cap of Liberty, 3 Nov. 1819, p.136. The Cap of Liberty alluded to the fates of King John, Charles I and James II in its characterisation of Britons. The bread/stone metaphor is an allusion to Jesus's words, recorded in Matthew 7:9: "...what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?"; as our heavenly father, God likewise, but more abundantly, is said to "give good things to them that ask him" (verse 11).
148. Medusa, 3 Jul. 1819, p.143. The allusion is to Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones (Ezekiel 37).
149. This strategy of the metropolitan ultra-radicals, with whose revolutionary hopes the periodicals cited in this paragraph identified, was noted above.

Peterloo, the Cap of Liberty advised people to come armed. In November 1819 the Republican anticipated civil war and urged people to prepare to defend themselves. A revolution of unparalleled importance was believed to be imminent: "If the People of this country can shake off the locusts that have eaten their way into the body politic, one of the most sublime eras that the mind of man can contemplate would follow".[150]

In contrast to the anticipation of revolution among ultra-radical journalists in the capital, several correspondents to the Manchester Observer appealed to Christians to support the cause of reform, which would be advanced by the holding of an inquiry into Peterloo. G. Beaumont, of Halifax, made a passionate plea for Christians to condemn the action taken by the authorities on 16 August and demand an inquiry into the event. Religious people must become involved in politics, he insisted, for the Bible is "the only pure fountain of politics".[151] "A REFORMER, but not A REVOLUTIONIST", denying any necessary connection between infidelity and reform, likewise urged Christians to rally to the cause. They should attend public meetings carrying a Bible:

> The holy Bible is acknowledged to be divine by the enemies of Reform. - The Bible contains almighty arguments in favour of Reform. - Then let Reformers take "the sword of the spirit" into the hand of an enlightened judgement and they will find it infinitely superior to BRUTE FORCE, to the bloody swords of Peterloo, for it is, "mighty through God, &c."[152]

Such pleas are representative of the belief in the efficacy

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150. Cap of Liberty, 13 Oct. 1819, pp.94-6, Republican, 12 Nov. 189, pp.177-80. See also Medusa, 4 Dec. 1819, p.331.
151. MO, 27 Nov. 1819, p.825.
152. MO, 25 Dec. 1819, p.859.

of moral suasion held by the majority of working-class radicals after Peterloo. Although the difference of opinion between revolutionary ultra-radicals and constitutional reformers at this time (referred to above), might be roughly mirrored by the theological divide between Deists and Christians, it should be noted that the Briton, a Christian paper, was clearly in the revolutionary camp.[153] And the division should not be allowed to obscure the fact that all papers appealed to religious authorities in attempting to mobilise support, whether they anticipated the fulfilment of their objectives by legal or extra-legal means.

The ultra-radical press compared their own times to the reign of Charles I. Peterloo was represented as an act of treason against the people of the same order as Charles's making war upon the nation in the 1640s. The Republican addressed the Prince Regent after he had refused to institute an inquiry into the Manchester massacre: "You have gone quite as far as Charles when he hoisted his standard at Nottingham".[154] The comparison of reigns was effectively made by an article in the Medusa (which pre-dated Peterloo),

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153. The Briton published letters (without editorial comment) anticipating revolutionary solutions to the post-Peterloo crisis. For example, "P.D." opined that the Bible inculcated "the demanding, and even violent struggling for reform", Briton, 23 Oct. 1819, p.33, "A. Briton" urged people to learn how to use arms, for "the time is coming, when the use of arms may be necessary to obtain the restoration of your birth-rights", ibid, pp.38-9, and "Brutus" urged immediate action, calling upon people with the same spirit "that animated an Alfred, that opposed a John, that beheaded a Charles, that banished a James", Briton, 30 Oct. 1819, pp.41-2.

154. Republican, 24 Sept. 1819, p.71. This statement clearly means that armed resistance by the people was considered justified under present circumstances. See the series of similar comparisons made by the Cap of Liberty, on the 8, 15 and 22 Sept. 1819, (pp.3-4, 29, 37), and 13 Nov.1819, p.307.

which was said to have been written by Charles I, and described his reign. It was obviously intended to function as a mirror of the acts and style of the Prince's government. The author urged the Prince Regent to "regard the parallel, but avert the consequence"; he was instructed to "...learn this sacred truth, that, when a people cry for justice, it is the voice of heaven, and kings are bound to reverence and regard it".[155] Carlile compared the government's prosecution of him to that of seventeenth-century Puritans such as Ridley, Latimer and Lilburne.[156]

It is relevant to recall that religion was important to the constitutional conflicts of the seventeenth century. Charles's Puritan opponents purported to be accomplishing the will of God in the world, a claim which gave them assurance of success. It was here that the millenarian tradition in English Dissent began.[157] The doctrines of our proponents of true religion are remarkably similar to those of the levellers, whose teaching of "equity", meaning what is fair and right, was embodied in the Golden Rule of scripture. A leading leveller, William Walwyn, believed that practical Christianity was true religion, and in the one list of religious duties he placed feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick, and "freeing a Common

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155. Medusa, 26 June 1819, pp.145-8.
156. Republican, 22 Oct. 1819, p.135, 17 Dec. 1819, p.264, 11 Feb. 1820, p.113.
157. See Garrett, Respectable Folly, Chapter 6, especially pp.122-6.

wealth from all Tyrants, oppressors or deceivers".[158] Believers in universal salvation, the levellers saw nature and grace as complementary; they made no distinction between natural and divine law.[159] Carlile was an admirer of the leveller, Lilburne, whose pamphlet writing he took to be an example of the power of the printing press, and whose opposition to Cromwell, as well as to Charles I, demonstrated his "steady adherence to true liberty".[160]

Given the transmission of such ideas through the Dissenting churches and sects, it is not surprising that at a time considered by radicals as analagous to the 1640s, the same ideas should be deployed in the same ways: "The sanction of practical Christianity was both a standard for criticism of those already in power and a spur to renewed political concern and activity".[161] It is clear that Christopher Hill's labelling of nineteenth-century radicalism as a secular ideology is inapplicable to the immediate post-war period. Perhaps "only a few village Messiahs proclaimed the Second Coming in the bad years after 1815", but much radical discourse of 1819-20 was imbued with apocalyptic language, which embodied an essentially providential view of history.[162] Christians and infidels

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158. J.C. Davis, "The Levellers and Christianity", in Brian Manning (ed.), Politics, Religion and the English Civil War (London, 1973), pp.228, 234. The words quoted are Walwyn's. Also see Lotte Mulligan, "The Religious Roots of William Walwyn's Radicalism", The Journal of Religious History, 12 (Dec.1982), pp. 162-79.
159. Davis, "Levellers", pp.227, 230-1.
160. Republican, 11 Feb. 1820, p.114.
161. Davis, "Levellers", p.235. That is, it served both tactical and mobilisational purposes.
162. Christopher Hill, "John Mason and the End of the World", in Puritanism and Revolution: Studies in the Interpretation of the English Revolution of the 17th Century (Harmondsworth, 1968), pp.322-3.

alike wielded the potent ideological weapon of true religion, with which they assaulted the twin citadels of Church and State, in order to hasten the coming of the millennium of peace, justice and freedom.

CONCLUSION

The use of religious arguments by radicals was virtually inevitable given two preconditions which existed in post-war English society. Firstly, Christian beliefs were prevalent among committed reformers and among the common people generally. Secondly, the government frequently identified reform with infidelity. This identification helped justify the legal repression of radicalism and underlay the tactic of supporting the distribution of the Bible and religious tracts to dampen the mobilising potential of radical propaganda. To mobilise support reformers therefore had to demonstrate the Christian credentials of their cause. To counter legal prosecutions for blasphemy, and, in discursive contests, to validate their analysis of contemporary society and politics, radicals often deployed religious language and arguments. This is true of reformers who were Churchmen, evangelicals, rational Christians and infidels.

At a theoretical level perhaps radical arguments for constitutional change could stand without appeal to religious authority, and it is true that religious arguments were not consistently invoked in all radical discourses, but in the contexts described above it was often deemed advantageous to do so. In this sense Robert Hole's assertion is misleading that the case for reform was overwhelmingly secular. The only primary source which Hole

cites to support his assertion is Hunt's voluminous Memoirs, which, he says, contains a mere handful of incidental and inconsequential references to religion.[163] The absence of religious arguments may be explained (at least in part) by considering the context in which Hunt wrote his Memoirs. It was written in Ilchester Gaol in the early 1820s with the purposes of bolstering the morale of radical personnel and maintaining his personal leadership of the movement. Hunt wanted to promote a national organisation of reformers and to forestall a revision of the post-war emphases.[164] In doing this he clashed with Carlile who had adopted the destruction of Christianity as his tactical priority.[165] The battles over Peterloo and the Six Acts had been fought and lost (for the time being at least), and in the aftermath of defeat radicals reflected on their losses and polarised along the lines propounded by Hunt and Carlile. As noted in the introduction of this thesis, Hunt, while dissenting strongly from Carlile's militant infidelity, hoped to unite radicals of all religious persuasions around a general religious libertarianism. It was not therefore appropriate to ground his arguments in specific Christian doctrines. There was nothing to be gained - in either a tactical or mobilisational sense - by doing so at this time.

William Hone is as much representative of a common type of radical (appropriately denominated Christian) as Carlile is of infidel radicals. Further, Christians and infidels co-operated in working for the political and social

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163. Hole, Pulpits, p.232.
164. See Belchem, "Orator" Hunt, p.144.
165. Ibid., pp.151-7.

transformation of English society, a partnership facilitated by a common conception of religious duties, their theological differences notwithstanding. They were all disciples of true religion, a religion shaped by a working-class perspective, but one which appealed to supra-class cultural values.[166] When they failed to usher in the millennium in 1819, this partnership - always a fragile one - broke down. The common opposition of infidels and Christians to the Erastian Church which supported the ancien regime, and to the Christianity of conservative arguments against radicalism, had also been a vital uniting factor - so significant that the religious dimension of conservative ideology warrants discrete attention, which is given in the next chapter.

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166. Epstein casts the similarly contested terrain of constitutionalism in these terms, "The Constitutional Idiom", p.568.

CHAPTER 3: THE ANTI-RADICAL RESPONSE

In response to the recrudescence of popular radicalism after the war, something like the Loyalist movement of the 1790s, a voluntary combination of conservatives who supported Church and King against English Jacobinism, was resurrected. It has been said that the Society for the Suppression of Vice was saved from extinction by post-war popular radicalism.[1] The story of the government's legislative and judicial responses is well known, and Elie Halevy has noted the importance of religion in parliamentary deliberations. In February 1817 the reports of secret committees provided the House of Commons with evidence of a plot to execute a revolution in London. Parliament suspended Habeas Corpus until 1 July and revived three other repressive statutes of the 1790s, one of which restricted the right to hold public meetings. The secret committees' reports "laid stress upon the irreligious and blasphemous character of the revolutionary propaganda". And in the debates over the Six Acts in 1819, government supporters reminded the House of Commons that infidelity and blasphemy had helped produce the French Terror, while Whigs argued that the counter-propaganda of evangelicals, along with religious instruction in Sunday Schools, would prevent a similar scenario from happening in England.[2]

In 1817 and again in 1819 conservative commentators were convinced that there was a real and immediate threat of

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1. M.J.D. Roberts, "Making Victorian Morals? The Society for the Suppression of Vice and its Critics, 1802-1886", Historical Studies, XXI (1984), pp.159-60, 163.
2. Halevy, A History of the English People, II, pp.23-4, 74-5.

revolution, and that this threat had been created by the pervasive influence of radical propaganda among the common people. In an editorial occasioned by Hone's acquittal in December 1817, for example, The Courier averred that events during the past year, such as the Spa Fields riots, the attack on the Prince's carriage, the flood of "insolently worded" petitions to the Commons, and the "indecent mirth" which erupted when Hone's parodies were read aloud in court, were consequences of the dissemination of radical publications:

> What are all these but so many commentaries upon the texts which sedition has spawned over the land for the last 18 months? They are not accidental. They are not the casual bursts of popular feeling, but the settled indications of radical corruption in the popular mind.[3]

The White Dwarf cited the execution of the three Derby conspirators as evidence of the effects of seditious and blasphemous publications, New Times saw Peterloo as the product of pamphlets, papers and speeches, and the Christian Observer attributed the Cato Street Conspiracy to the same cause.[4] The conservative press advocated both the suppression of such deleterious works, and the publication of counter-propaganda as antidotes to their poison.[5] For

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3. Courier, 23 Dec. 1817. In May The Courier, supporting the government's recommendation that the Habeas Corpus Suspension Act be continued, had denied the assertion of The Times that hunger had driven the people to combine against the government; seditious propaganda was the sole factor. Courier, 16 May 1817. See also the invective against Cobbett - "the most wicked and most dangerous author that ever wrote in the English language" - in the editorial of 10 Apr. 1817.
4. White Dwarf, 6 Dec. 1817, pp.23-9, NT, 20 Aug. 1819, and CO, March 1820, p.218.
5. For examples see the Anti-Jacobin Review, Oct.1817, pp.132-4, Apr.1819, pp.119-20, CO, Feb.1817, pp.126-32, Mar.1817, p.192, and the White Dwarf, 29 Nov.1817, pp.14-15.

a number of periodicals the latter function was their raison d'etre.

This chapter, a companion to the preceding one, is not concerned with the government's recourse to force in the counter-attack against radicalism, but rather, pays attention to the relatively neglected outpouring of pamphlets, periodicals and tracts which championed the conservative cause. It discusses the function of religious arguments and language in published anti-radical discourse of the immediate post-war years, seeking to determine the relationship between Christianity and society, as it was conceived and articulated in these antidotes to radical propaganda. This established, the vilification of radicals as Satanic agents bent on revolution will be examined, and the functions of the religious component in anti-radical and radical discourse - a "shared language of political legitimation", to recall Epstein's phrase - will be compared and contrasted.

The sources of this study are newspapers, periodicals, pamphlets and tracts, some of whose authors remain anonymous. In 1817 two specialised and short-lived anti-radical periodicals appeared: Anti-Cobbett, which reviewed Cobbett's Register, and the White Dwarf, a parody of Jonathan Wooler's Black Dwarf.[6] In 1817 too, Dr John Stoddart, after leaving The Times, became the editor of a new pro-government morning newspaper subsidised by the Treasury, called the New Times. It was never financially

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6. On the campaigns against Cobbett and Wooler see R.K. Webb, The British Working Class Reader 1790-1848: Literacy and Social Tension (London, 1955), pp.52-5.

successful, Stoddart gave it up in 1826, and in 1828 it became the Morning Journal.[7] In January 1818 William Shadgett, a petty clerk, began publishing his Weekly Review of radical writings, a financially onerous undertaking which he abandoned in mid-1819.[8] Other periodicals to make a fleeting appearance in 1819-20 were the Anti-Times, the Domestic Miscellany, and Poor Man's Friend, and The Patriot, all three of which professed the support of Christianity as part of their anti-radical brief.[9]

Several more enduring newspapers and periodicals whose founding pre-dated our period were also important sources for this chapter. The Courier, a daily morning newspaper, began publication in 1792 in sympathy with the ideas of the French Revolution. Its "conversion" to a Tory paper paralleled the transformation from Whig to Tory of Daniel Stuart, who bought it in 1800 or 1801. In our period it had the closest connection of any newspaper to Lord Liverpool's Government.[10] The Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine, a pro-Church Tory paper, was begun by William Gifford in 1798, and ran for sixty-one issues, until the end of 1821.[11] Finally, the Christian Observer, which ran from 1802 to 1838, was the organ of the Church Evangelicals known as the

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7. A. Aspinall, Politics and the Press c.1780-1850 (London, 1949), pp.65, 98-9. It was initially published under the title The Day and New Times, and was renamed at the beginning of 1818.
8. Webb, The British Working Class Reader, p.55.
9. See the preface to the first number of the Anti-Times, published with the second number, 27 Nov. 1819, p.17, and its emblem, a crown and sceptre resting upon a Bible; the introductory address of the Domestic Miscellany, No.1 (n.d.), pp.1-2; and the prospectus of The Patriot.
10. Aspinall, Politics and the Press, p.206.
11. Ibid., pp. 9, 176, 92.

Clapham Sect.[12]

William Shadgett regarded the medium of the political journal as the most effective weapon against infidel writings. He claimed that his own publication did, in fact, diminish popular discontent; an alleged decline in sales during 1819 of radical periodicals such as Cobbett's Register and the Black Dwarf, he attributed principally to the effect of the Weekly Review. Legal prosecutions, he contended, merely publicised infidel views, and religious tracts reached only a small audience.[13] Of course Shadgett needed to vindicate his own financially ailing venture, and perhaps he had the Weekly Review in mind when he appealed to the government to sponsor the publication of loyal writings as antidotes to infidel works.[14] On other occasions the Weekly Review urged the government to outlaw radical meetings and suppress the seditious and irreligious press.[15]

Religious tracts were published in enormous quantities during our period. There were several main agencies. The largest single distributor was the Religious Tract Society, an interdenominational organisation founded in 1799. Five years later the British and Foreign Bible Society was founded by Church Evangelicals and Non-Conformists. Of much earlier origin was the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, a High Church body which formed a committee in

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12. See Ernest Marshall Howse, Saints in Politics: The "Clapham Sect" and the Growth of Freedom (London, 1952), pp.105-7.
13. SWR, 26 Dec. 1818, p.377, 27 Feb. 1819, p.57, 13 Mar. 1819, p.73, and 26 Jul. 1819, p.228.
14. SWR, 27 Feb. 1819, p.57.
15. SWR, 13 Mar. 1819, p.78, 24 Apr. 1819, pp.127-8, and 17 July 1819, p.222.

1819 to facilitate the distribution of anti-infidel tracts. Between 1819 and 1823 the SPCK raised six thousand six hundred pounds to finance its campaign, and hundreds of thousands of tracts were issued free of charge. Many smaller independent agencies also existed.[16]

In 1817 Hannah More, author of many of the Cheap Repository Tracts of the 1790s, acceded to a government request to write some new tracts, and tens of thousands of these were distributed by a central London committee and by individuals.[17] It should be emphasised that these works opposed political reform as well as religious deviance. For example, Village Disputants, used throughout this study, reported an imaginary conversation between two artisans, Tom and Jack. Tom, who has been attending radical meetings and reading radical literature, is convinced that England needs a new constitution founded upon the equality of man: this would remedy his own present distress and that of the country. His friend, Jack, persuades him that the radical answer is a chimera and that anarchy and economic ruin would attend implementation of the radicals' levelling schemes. Now convinced that England has a good constitution and a good government, Tom renounces radicalism, and the pair depart singing "God save great George our King".[18]

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16. Richard D. Altick, The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public 1800-1900 (Chicago, 1957), pp.100-3, Webb, The British Working Class Reader, p.56, Roberts, "Making Victorian Morals?", p.165.
17. M.G. Jones, Hannah More (New York, 1968), pp.202-3.
18. [Hannah More], The Village Disputants, Fourteenth ed. (London, 1817). More's authorship is not acknowledged, but the tract is evidently a revised version of her Village Politics of 1792. (It has the same form and uses the same characters. The content has been made relevant to the post-war situation.) It is from the new Cheap Repository collection.

More and her fellow Evangelicals believed that in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries a serious moral crisis faced English society. The French revolution was an indication of what could happen if moral transformation did not take place. Such a transformation began with the individual soul, an emphasis which militated against concern with secular political issues and led to a "profound conservatism". Evangelicals opposed political radicalism and Owenism, and attempted to win converts to "real religion".[19]

CHRISTIANITY AND SOCIETY

The general thesis of Robert Hole's Pulpits, Politics and Public Order in England is that during the 1790s a shift of emphasis occurred in Christian political thought from a preoccupation with theoretical arguments about political obligations to an essentially pragmatic concern with social stability. This shift can be observed within Edmund Burke's precocious and enormously influential Reflections on the Revolution in France (1790). A corresponding shift occurred in the kind of argument used: from the deployment of deontological arguments to utilitarian ones, a change of which William Paley was the principal intellectual agent. One result was an enduring secularisation of political thought, which made possible (intellectually) the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts in 1828 and Catholic Emancipation in 1829, the twin events which, Hole argues -

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19. Davidoff and Hall, Family Fortunes, pp.81-3, 92-5. See also the discussion of Hone's contesting of evangelical perspectives in chapter 1 above.

following J.C.D. Clark - mark the end of the English ancien regime. But Hole does acknowledge that the transition was not unambiguous, a fact evident in the thought of Bishop Samuel Horsley, which is offered as an exemplification of the developing importance of social theory and utilitarian sanctions.[20] The ambiguous character of the transition is reflected in the eclectic nature of anti-radical discourse in the years of distress and instability after the war.

Social order was the principal concern of anti-radical writers in our period, and religious arguments were invoked by all (not only clerics) to serve this end. Underpinning the radical demand for universal suffrage was the doctrine of the sovereignty of the people, which posited the equality of all men. To anti-radicals the notion of equality, whether political or economic, was anathema. They held that in society deferential relations were normative because God had decreed that it be so. The concept of equality breached this order. A subject was required to obey his Sovereign, a wife her husband, a child his parents, and a servant his master.[21] God had assigned people to different stations

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20. On this point see Hole, Pulpits, pp.172-3.
21. William Atkinson, A Letter to the Reforming Gentlemen by the Old Inquirer (Bradford, 1817), pp.20-1, John Bull (pseud.), An Address from John Bull to his Fellow Countrymen, Third ed. (Birmingham, 1819), pp.2-3, and NT, 20 Nov. 1819 ("Address to the Self-styled Female Reformers of Britain"). Ephesians 5 is the main Biblical source of this claim.

in life which have their corresponding duties.[22] To assert the equality of man was to "quarrel with GOD".[23] In his series of articles on the Rights of Man Shadgett specifically contested Thomas Paine's argument - based on the account of creation in Genesis - that in the beginning all men were created equal. He sought to show that deferential relations existed as soon as there were enough people on the earth to constitute a society.[24]

Traditional arguments of political obligation also served the cause of social stability. Governments were instituted by God and were to be obeyed. The response of obedience was a religious duty required by Scripture.[25] Anti-radical propagandists frequently invoked the injunction of 1 Peter, to "fear God, and honour the King".[26] God and King were often identified by the use of the common epithet "father",

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22. Patriot, 4 Sept. 1819, pp.17-19. An allusion to Jesus's parable of the talents is made in support of this argument. (See Luke 19: 12-26.) The writer implies that people's personal characteristics are related to their station in life; the vote can only be exercised by wise, honest people. The Anti-Jacobin Review also argued that distinctions of rank are decreed by God, and arise from "the difference of genius and talent in different characters", Feb. 1817, pp.638-9.
23. [More], Village Disputants, p.11.
24. SWR, 12 Dec. 1818, p.362. For example, the case of the twin brothers, Esau and Jacob, is cited: Esau, being born first, inherited his father's property, but he sold his birthright to Jacob. The story is related in Genesis 25. Note the use of deontological sanctions in most of the arguments cited above.
25. Romans 13 was a passage commonly cited. For examples see Irving Brock, A Letter to the Inhabitants of Spital-fields, on the Character and Views of our Modern Reformers (London, 1817), pp.9-10, [More], Village Disputants, pp.11-12, and SWR, 29 Mar. 1818, p.66.
26. The preoccupation with social theory and utility notwithstanding. For examples see the tracts by Joe Shrewd (pseud.), A Few More Words to my Neighbours... (Birmingham, 1819), p.1, and Bull (pseud.), An Address, p.3; also SWR, 17 May 1818, p.125, Domestic Miscellany, 5 Oct. 1819, p.31, and NT, 16 Oct. 1819.

a practice which may be considered as part of an increasing trend, beginning in the 1790s with the French Revolution and the war, towards "the conflation of royal and patriotic with religious terminology".[27] This is exemplified in the preface to a sermon published in 1819 by the Rev. John Stephens. In a passage referring to the British constitution Stephens wrote:

> It stands among the nations of the earth, like an ancient oak in the wood; it overtops all the other trees of the forest; it commands universal respect and veneration. It is administered by a wise, a mild and liberal government;....It...is now blessed with a Monarch who, for more than half a century, has been the king and father of his people, practising, from early youth to extreme old age, all those excellencies which temper one another into manly, moral, and Christian worth, and which, if generally followed, would render all classes of his subjects happy. It is...under the special protection of Him by whom nations and empires rise and fall, flourish and decay: there is a blessing in it, on account of which neither foreign nor domestic foes can harm it: it is the steward of the richest boon of heaven to other lands: under its auspices the Gospel of our salvation is sounding forth to distant climes; and nations yet unborn shall arise and call it blessed.[28]

Here we have (at least) two implied equations. To be loyal to King and constitution is to be loyal to Britain is to be loyal to God. For Britain is the modern Israel: God's chosen people whose leaders have been appointed by God and whose laws have been handed down from on high; Robert Southey called the constitution "our Ark of the

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27. Linda Colley, "The Apotheosis of George III: Loyalty, Royalty and the British Nation 1760-1820", Past and Present, 102 (Feb.1984), pp.120-1.
28. John Stephens, The Mutual Relations, Claims, and Duties of the Rich and the Poor (Manchester, 1819), pp.v-vi. The last clause alludes to either Malachi 3:12 or Proverbs 31:28, possibly both. The Malachi passage refers to Israel, Proverbs to the wife of noble character. For a discussion of the monarch's fatherly role see SWR, 16 Jan. 1819, p.17.

Covenant".[29] Conversely, to advocate radical constitutional reform or to criticise the King or the government is to be unpatriotic and oppose God.[30]

Constitutional theory per se was not the concern of the sermon.[31] Stephens took as his text Mark 14:7: "For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good". He claimed that an unequal distribution of wealth in society was inevitable. God permitted, even appointed it; it was said to result "from the nature and constitution of the world".[32] The poor, whom Stephens defined as people whose subsistence was dependent upon daily labour, were recipients of numerous "blessings" peculiar to their condition, such as industry, contentment, temperance, gratitude and dependence upon God. The poor felt most in need of the gospel, with the result that they were Christianity's "most numerous disciples".[33] The argument is redolent of William Paley's famous Reasons for Contentment, which was reprinted during the post-war years. Paley similarly contended that poverty had its compensating advantages which were unknown to the rich; and the existence of a few rich people and many poor was a providential

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29. Robert Southey, Parliamentary Reform (Manchester, 1817), pp.22-3.
30. But note too the utilitarian tenor of the passage.
31. Hole cites this sermon as a typical example of the trend among clerics to set constitutional matters in the context of social order, Pulpits, p.179.
32. Stephens, The Mutual Relations, pp.7, 8-11. For other expressions of the contention that God had divided society into rich and poor see SWR, 19 Dec. 1818, pp.369-70, Patriot, 2 Oct. 1819, pp.88-92 (a homily called "Good advice in bad times", also printed in the first number of Domestic Miscellany), and the Domestic Miscellany, 5 Oct. 1819, pp.20-1.
33. Stephens, The Mutual Relations, pp.8-15.

arrangement against which it was "impious to complain".[34]

Why did Stephens preface a social theory oriented sermon with an impassioned defence of the constitution? Its context and purpose point towards an answer. Stephens, a Methodist minister at Manchester, was preaching after Peterloo (on 12 September) when the Methodist Connexion had begun to purge its organisation of radicals; he was a willing and efficient agent of repression.[35] The connection between the constitution, poverty and social order is, of course, that post-war economic distress among the labouring poor was the main stimulant of agitation for parliamentary reform. In this context, the cause of social stability was served by investing the constitution with the sanction of God's blessing; conversely, to argue that a social hierarchy was divinely instituted (thereby promoting quietism) was to serve the cause of preserving the constitutional status quo.

Many anti-radical writers cast God as the author of

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34. William Paley, Reasons for Contentment; Addressed to the Labouring Part of the British Public (London, 1793), passim. The quotation is from p.8. Note the consonance of deontological and utilitarian sanctions. William Hone was furious about the reprinting of Paley's pamphlet in 1817. See RR, 19 Apr. 1817. Extracts from Reasons for Contentment were also reprinted in New Times on 31 July 1819, around which time alarmist reports of "seditious" meetings being held in many parts of the country also appeared. New Times believed they were the product of a secret revolutionary conspiracy. See NT, 1, 6, 7 and 13 July 1819.

35. See Ward, Religion and Society, p.88. On 12 November the Committee of Privileges of the Society of Wesleyan Methodists issued an address to the members of all their societies in the United Kingdom, affirming the duty of Christians to obey authority and forbidding participation in reform meetings or societies. For a copy of its text see the Patriot, 27 Nov. 1819, pp.213-18. The schism within northern Methodism over political radicalism was discussed above in chapter 2 (with special reference to Newcastle).

post-war distress, which was a trial to be borne patiently.[36] One pamphlet explained that it was "moral retribution" for the protracted European war; the only recourse the nation had was to trust in God's mercy and forgiveness, "which it behoves offenders to entertain towards a Moral Governor".[37] Radical leaders who held the Bible in contempt and used blasphemous language, in the opinion of another writer, only brought further distress to the nation, as punishment for their sin. Personal moral corruption, rather than government corruption, was the evil which needed to be eradicated. On the authority of several Old Testament passages, he suggested that a reform of ideas and behaviour would bring prosperity, a notion also promulgated by some other conservative commentators.[38] A placard published by the Patriot specified the sins for which repentance was required: swearing, sabbath-breaking, theft, adultery, murder and treason.[39] In the last chapter we saw that radical writers frequently adopted a prophetic stance in condemning what they believed to be corruption and oppression, and they forecast bloody

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36. For examples of this view see Birmingham Association for the Refutation and Suppression of Blasphemy and Sedition, An Address to Reformers (Birmingham, 1819), pp.5-6, [More], Village Disputants, p.21, Anti-Cobbett, 22 Feb. 1817, p.57, Patriot, 28 Aug. 1819, pp.4-5, and Domestic Miscellany, 2 Nov. 1819, pp.49-51. The Committee of Privileges of the Society of Wesleyan Methodists articulated the same doctrine in its address to members of its societies in November 1819. See the Patriot, 27 Nov. 1819, p.216.
37. Conciliator (pseud.), An Appeal to the Artisans of Birmingham (Birmingham, 1819), p.8.
38. [Anon.], The Grand Secret Discovered! or Reform the Only Remedy for Public Grievances (Haslingden, 1819), pp.3-7. The verses he quoted as evidence of his view are II Chronicles 20:20, Isaiah 59:2 and Jeremiah 4:18 and 5:25. See also the Domestic Miscellany, 30 Nov. 1819, pp.81-2.
39. Patriot, 25 Sept. 1819, p.70.

consequences if appropriate reforms did not occur. Here a different diagnosis of society's ills is made and a correspondingly different remedy prescribed. However, religion functions similarly in both instances: it is the prophetic function of social criticism with its concomitant demand for change.[40] This was the role of the ancient Hebrew prophets of the Old Testament, two of whom the writer of the tract cited.

It is interesting that John Stephens dissented from the widely held belief that God had ordained present suffering. In his view God had not sanctioned the existing extremes of wealth and poverty. Rather, they were to be attributed to a range of factors, both material and moral, including the disruption to commerce caused by the war, the reduction of wages by unprincipled employers, laziness and lack of charity. He declared that "the man who dies worth half a million of money, while his poor neighbour is perishing for want, has neither acted upon, nor believed the solemn facts, doctrines, and injunctions of the Bible".[41] Christian charity was an acceptable response to poverty for virtually all conservative writers. For Stephens (among others), it was regarded as an act of obedience to God's commands. The same sermon which described the providential division of society into rich and poor, and the alleged blessings of poverty, very emphatically informed the rich of the Biblical injunctions to be kind and charitable to the poor; indeed,

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40. This prophetic function is one of the six possible social functions of religion described by Thomas F. O'Dea in The Sociology of Religion (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1966), pp.14-15.
41. Stephens, The Mutual Relations, pp.35-6.

one of the reasons for the existence of poverty was that the rich might have the opportunity to exercise condescension, humility, compassion and benevolence.[42] Irving Brock, a member of the Spital-Fields Benevolent Society, considered his work for the Society a "sacred task", and he echoed Jesus's list of actions (recorded in Matthew 25) performed by those judged worthy to enter heaven, in his statement to the poor that the object of the Benevolent Society was "to visit and relieve you when sick, to feed you when hungry, and when naked to clothe you".[43] These statements are consistent with the pervasive Evangelical view of charity at this time, which emphasised duty to God, and was concerned as much with the spiritual advantages to the rich as the material advantages to the poor.[44]

The paternalistic tone of Brock's letter is instructive. The relationship between rich and poor is analogous to that between King and subject. In God's order the rich have the fatherly duty of caring for the child-like poor. In hard times the poor are dependent upon the benevolence of the rich, and they are not to attempt to become independent. God tells the rich to be charitable, and it is as if the poor are not to hear this command - for it does not concern them. Their part is to obey the constituted authorities and

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42. Ibid., pp.15-21, 38-40. (Jesus's account of the judgement in Matthew 25 is cited.)
43. Brock, Letter to the Inhabitants of Spital-Fields, p.5.
44. This differed from the typical eighteenth-century view, as articulated by Paley, which emphasised duty to the poor (rather than to God). See Boyd Hilton's discussion of Evangelical philanthropy in The Age of Atonement: the Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1795-1865 (Oxford, 1988), pp.100-8. Note also that while the sanction is deontological, in the context of Stephens's sermon the injunction to practise charity served the purpose of social stability.

live a quiet life, not to remind the rich of their duties or to usurp their prerogatives. It is with this in mind that we can understand the use by conservative writers of the Golden Rule so favoured by radicals. At the beginning of 1819, for example, Shadgett urged his readers to reflect upon their lives over the past year, asking whether "they have done unto others, as they wish to be done unto".[45] For the rich this may entail (and Shadgett's further remarks suggest that he believed it did entail) being charitable to the poor. However, the poor were not being asked to decide whether or not the rich had done to them as they would have liked, but to judge their own relationships by this yardstick. In a tract designed for the labouring classes the Golden Rule was juxtaposed with the injunction to fear God and honour the King. Happiness and contentment were the promised rewards of obedience.[46] Doing unto others implicitly precluded violent protest which radical leaders were charged with inciting.

Christianity then, was fashioned by conservatives to function as a deterrent or an antidote to the acceptance of radical ideology by the labouring poor. At least they were attempting to make it function as such. The equation they made is that the performance of Christian duties by the poor (which implied acceptance of a social and political structure founded on deferential class and power relations), plus the exercise of Christian charity by the rich, equals

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45. SWR, 2 Jan. 1819, p.8. On 8 May 1819 he referred to the principle as one of the Bible's "two great laws", the other being to love God with all one's heart (p.139).
46. Bull (pseud.), An Address, p.3. A deontological and a utilitarian argument here work in concert.

peaceful preservation of the status quo. This simple prescription for post-war stability was articulated by one writer: "With a due reverence for the Bible, the blessings of the British Constitution, and a satisfied stomach, Sedition will be set at defiance, and we need not war with revolutions abroad to preserve tranquillity at home".[47] In a telling admission Shadgett argued that even if Christianity were not true, it ought to be supported in the current contest with infidelity because it effectively bound the various ranks of society together.[48]

Anti-radical propaganda offered Christianity to the poor as their only true hope and comfort. They should imitate Jack, in Village Disputants, who does not feel discontented because there are richer folk in the world; instead, he says, "I read my Bible, carry home my money to my wife, go to church, and think of a treasure in heaven".[49] The most idyllic description of the value of Christianity to the poor is given by Irving Brock, who renders the death of one of the beneficiaries of his charity thus:

> I have seen the dying father of an interesting family, who had long endured privations of the most trying kind, and whom my visit seemed to rescue from the consequences of famine; I have seen that dying father, surrounded by his starving wife and innocent children, still the resigned and pious Christian, his eye beaming with a hope of immortality, and his tongue never ceasing to utter praises to his God, who, amidst his apparent misfortunes, had evidently crowned him with

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47. John Boyes, An Attempt to Suggest some Reflections on the Present State of Society and the Country..., 2nd ed. (York, 1820), p.38.
48. SWR, 3 Apr. 1819, p.92. I am not casting doubt on the sincerity of Shadgett's personal religious convictions, but using his statement to expose the essentially functional nature of religion in anti-radical discourse.
49. [More], Village Disputants, pp.16-17. The adoption of such an attitude was enjoined by "THE ESSAYIST" in Domestic Miscellany, 19 Oct. 1819, pp.36-7.

> loving-kindness and tender-mercies; and when at last the excellent man exchanged the sword of the Spirit for a golden harp, and his daily cross for a heavenly crown, the mantle of his piety fell on those who were witnesses of his happy death, for they experienced all the power, and were no longer satisfied with the form of godliness.[50]

Brock's description attempts the alchemist's labour of transforming the base metal of suffering into the gold of spiritual hope and consolation. The bottom line for the poor was whether or not an inescapably harsh physical existence was to be made more bearable, and perhaps meaningful, by Christian beliefs and practice. Judgement Day would be a truly levelling experience; wealth did not qualify one to enter heaven, and the eternal perspective made poverty in this life seem insignificant.[51] Radicals were vilified as thieves who would steal the consolations and rewards of religion from the poor, without offering a worthy substitute.[52] Contemplation by the poor of eternal rewards and punishment was a bulwark against revolution in the eyes of some of their more fortunate compatriots.[53]

While the individual practice of charity by the rich was at least tacitly accepted, if not positively enjoined, by

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50. Brock, A Letter, p.7.
51. Birmingham Association, Address, p.8, Anti-Cobbett, 15 Mar. 1817, pp.157-8. The Christian Observer argued that "a knowledge of God in Christ, and a belief in his merciful promises, do naturally produce not only submission, but a willing acquiescence in our present condition, however afflictive". See the CO, June 1819, pp.345-53.
52. For examples of this charge see A.R., Reflections Suggested by the Propensity at Present Manifested by the Disaffected to Destroy the Religion and Laws of the British Nation (Bath, 1819), p.18, Bull (pseud.), An Address, pp.5-6, Shrewd (pseud.), A Few More Words, p.2, SWR, 1 Feb. 1818, pp.7-8, and NT, 23 Oct. 1819.
53. This is the implication of arguments which emphasise the incitement to moral behaviour which belief in eternity produces. For examples see R., Reflections, p.18, and SWR, 31 Oct. 1818, p.319 and 26 Dec. 1818, p.382.

all conservative writers, the role of the state in relieving poverty was a contentious question. To one pamphleteer, John Boyes, Ricardian political economy virtually described the way God had made society. Having declared that God had instituted social distinctions for the good of all, he proceeded to explain how ranks were the natural consequence of the development of society: "Rent, profits, and wages, form the distinctions of ranks in society, of landlord, tenant, and labourer, and are themselves naturally produced in the progress of society from its infant to its present state".[54] The operation of the law of supply and demand was superintended by Providence, who always ensured an adequate supply of labour. So government expenditure, such as the use of poor rates to supplement wages, breached the natural order and resulted in the dysfunctioning of the economy.[55]

During the first third of the nineteenth century theologians developed an ideology which comprehended the social implications of political economy. Malthus had argued that a burgeoning population produced competition for scarce resources, resulting in poverty and inequality. This posed a theological problem: how could a wise, omnipotent and benevolent God allow this to happen? Paley answered this question in his Natural Theology (1802), an answer which was developed at length by the Evangelical John Bird Sumner (later Archbishop of Canterbury) in his Treatise on the Records of Creation (1816). It was Sumner's work which

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54. Boyes, An Attempt, pp.1-3. A passage from Ricardo's On Political Economy follows as an elaboration of the quoted statement, pp.3-5.
55. Ibid., pp.56-8.

above all helped Churchmen to reconcile Malthus's population theory with the wisdom and goodness of God. The struggle for scarce resources was said to be partly a result of the entry of sin into the world at the Fall, but was also considered to be "optimal for intellectual, moral and spiritual development", and so, by its mitigation of the effects of evil, could be regarded as the ingenious provision of a benevolent God. "Poverty was thus seen...as the stick; inequality...as supplying the carrot. By means of the two mankind was propelled, despite its brutish inertia, towards the higher possibilities of earthly existence."[56]

Sumner thus provided a potent theological rationale for a laissez-faire social policy. Some conservatives, however, rejected these ideas and their political ramifications. Shadgett, for example, was a proponent of a Domestic Colonisation scheme as a means of preventing revolution. The poor should be settled on prepared allotments on waste lands and charged low rent. This was considered the requirement of "justice and mercy", and was founded on the belief that God had supplied the means to sustain the entire

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56. The foregoing summary of the theology of Christian political economists is based on A.M.C. Waterman's article, "The Ideological Alliance of Political Economy and Christian Theology, 1798-1833", The Journal of Ecclesiastical History, 34 (1983), pp.231-44. The quotations may be found on pp.241 and 238 respectively. On the importance of Sumner as an interpreter and populariser of Malthus see also R.A. Soloway, Prelates and People: Ecclesiastical Social Thought in England 1783-1852 (London and Toronto, 1969), pp.95-101, and E.R. Norman, Church and Society in England 1770-1970: a Historical Study (London, 1976), pp.43-4. For a more fine-grained analysis of the ideas of the Christian political economists after Malthus see Hilton, Age of Atonement, pp.73-80.

population.[57] A correspondent to the Weekly Review rejected the scheme of Malthus (that the poor should practise sexual abstinence to avoid having children), asserting that "It strikes at the goodness, and wrests the equatorial balance from the hand of the Almighty, with which he sustains the existence of his creatures".[58] In an appeal to the nobles, clergy and gentry to consider his proposal, Shadgett echoed the words of the prophet Isaiah: "Is there nothing commendable in binding up the broken in heart - in proclaiming the opening of our poor houses? Is their [sic] nothing worthy of esteem in him that makes the wilderness to bloom and bud forth, and administers of its supplies to those who are dying of want".[59] Here, again, we see religion assuming the prophetic function.

The Evangelical Christian Observer, while espousing the doctrines of political economy, urged the government to intervene to relieve want. It believed that the poor laws were one of the main causes of post-war distress, having resulted in an increase of population "beyond the means of obtaining a comfortable subsistence". The consequent distress made the poor vulnerable to the propaganda of radical demagogues intent on creating social disorder.[60] Being responsible for the institution of the poor laws, the government was obliged to relieve the misery thereby

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57. SWR, 12 June 1819, pp.177-9 and 19 June 1819, p.191. For further articles on the subject see 26 June 1819, pp.197-8, 3 July 1819, pp.205-6, and 17 July 1819, pp.223-4.
58. SWR, 19 June 1819, pp.190-1.
59. SWR, 12 June 1819, pp.177-9. The appeal echoes Isaiah 61:1 and 35:1. Jesus claimed that his mission was to fulfil these prophetic words, which suggests that they are at the heart of the gospel. See Luke 4:18-21.
60. CO, Mar. 1818, p.203.

created. Until the laws were suitably reformed the government should find ways of providing employment for all able-bodied people. Public works and emigration schemes were suggested.[61] And Christianity enjoined the relief of suffering, the principles of political economy notwithstanding. While supporting the government's intention after Peterloo to repress expressions of sedition and blasphemy by means of legislation (later embodied in the Six Acts), the Observer lamented the failure of both government and opposition to consider ways of alleviating distress:

> [It] reminds us forcibly of the words of an Apostle, "If a brother or sister be naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace; be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?"[62]

Relief of distress would simultaneously serve the causes of righteousness and social tranquillity. Duty and utility were two sides of the same coin.

Perhaps the most renowned critic of political economy was the Poet Laureate, Robert Southey. The unauthorised and unanticipated publication of Southey's radical poem, Wat Tyler, in 1817 (written in the 1790s when Southey was a republican), occasioned an attack upon the poet by the radical MP William Smith. In A Letter to William Smith Southey explained his own conversion to conservatism as a reaction to the change he had observed among the English Jacobins: they had become as violent and intolerant as their persecutors had been in the 1790s when it was a minority

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61. CO, Sept. 1819, p.624, Dec. 1819, pp.819-26.
62. CO, Nov. 1819, pp.754-7. See also Dec. 1819, pp.824-5. The words quoted are from James 2:15-16.

movement. To avert revolution the government had to improve the condition of the poor. Attracted to Owen's scheme, but lamenting its lack of a religious foundation, Southey recommended instituting schemes of domestic colonisation, public works and emigration.[63] In a recent article David Eastwood has labelled Southey a Romantic Conservative. While Southey was a passionate defender of the Constitution, his ideas about economic and social questions were closer to Cobbett's than to many other Tories'. Romantic Conservatives and radicals were alike "in their condemnation of political economy as a dismal science, and of manufacturing production as an inhuman and predatory system".[64] Exponents of a new "moral economy", Romantic Conservatives had "faith in the positive possibilities of paternalistic state intervention".[65]

Although holding heterodox religious ideas, Southey supported the Church Establishment, for it protected society against fanaticism.[66] He once expressed his position thus:

> Not being of the Church, I hold the Church Establishment one of our greatest, perhaps the greatest of our

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63. Robert Southey, A Letter to William Smith, Esq. M.P...., Second ed. (London, 1817), pp.7, 31-4. Believing revolution to be a real and imminent danger, Southey had dutifully written articles to alert people to the threat, and suggested what he believed to be the only appropriate remedies. He urged the suppression of the seditious press along with the relief of poverty. For an insight into his attitude and motives at the time see his letter to Sharon Turner, of 24 Feb. 1817, in The Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey, ed. Rev. Charles Cuthbert Southey, Vol.IV (London, 1850), pp.247-8.

64. David Eastwood, "Robert Southey and the Intellectual Origins of Romantic Conservatism", English Historical Review, vol.CIV, no.411 (April 1989), pp.309-12.

65. Ibid., pp.321, 327.

66. Geoffrey Carnall, Robert Southey and His Age: The Development of a Conservative Mind (London, 1960), p.72.

> blessings; and conscientiously desire to strengthen and support it. Not believing in the inspiration of the Bible, but believing in the faith which is founded upon it, I hold its general circulation as one of the greatest benefits which can be conferred upon mankind. Not believing that men are damned for not being Christians I believe that Christianity is a divine religion, and that it is our duty to diffuse it.[67]

Several conservative writers, while declaring their toleration of Dissent, pressed the claims to superiority of the Church of England. To Shadgett the worship of the State Church was superior to that of the Dissenters: the magnificent architecture of its cathedrals inspired awe and devotion, whereas Dissenting places of worship produced coldness; the liturgy of the Church was "noble and sublime, yet simple and affecting", that of the Dissenters "cold and heartless".[68] Moreover, the Church of England was virtually synonymous with Christianity: it was close to primitive Christianity and embodied the teachings of the Bible.[69] Another writer claimed that the best instruction in Dissenting chapels "breathes the spirit of the Established Religion".[70]

Both writers linked the Church with the State. The religious teaching of the Church was said to "inculcate the principles of loyalty to the "powers that are"".[71] The Church played an essential role, not only in preserving Christianity, but also in preserving the British Constitution; it was considered significant that opponents of the Constitution hated the Church.[72] In his pamphlet

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67. Quoted by Carnall, Southey, pp.216-17.
68. SWR, 17 Oct. 1818, p.304.
69. SWR, 9 Jan. 1819, pp.5, 8, and 26 June 1819, p.196.
70. R., Reflections, p.17.
71. SWR, 9 Jan. 1819, p.5.
72. R., Reflections, pp.15-17. For a similar argument see NT, 12 May 1819.

of 1819, Reflections on the Nature and Tendency of the Present Spirit of the Times, Rev. G. Burges argued that Church and State were interdependent. He urged his readers to remember

> that all the great doctrines of our constitution are parts of our religion; that our laws are cradled in Christianity; that the mercy of the throne is an emanation from the mercy that is from above; that our very spirit of freedom is less deducible from the form of our government than from the records of our salvation.[73]

It was the Established Church which preserved pure Christianity and was "the chief support of the monarchy". Political disaffection could be attributed to the growth of religious Dissent since the seventeenth century.[74] The White Dwarf espoused a similar view, and it attributed the drift of the lower orders to the Dissenting sects to the decline of paternalism among the gentry. Modern gentry are absentees, it lamented; hired landlords, having their own financial interests at heart, cut the wages of the tenants. Without a paternalistic lord to encourage them to attend Church, the tenants frequented various meeting-houses, where they

> imbibed strange doctrines, and became distracted by religious cant about equality and independence: they learned to read scripture after a new fashion; and having once felt an itching for argument, full of their own importance, they groped about in the dark, and laid hold of the first food that presented itself: in their blindness they could not discover, that their food was poison, - but it was novel, and flattered their new fangled ideas: from religious disputants they became political reasoners, and having tasted deeply of the Cobbettian stream, threw off all subjection and all

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73. The quotation may be found in extracts of the pamphlet printed in NT, 18 Oct. 1819. The Anti-Jacobin Review published a very favourable review of the work in March 1820, pp.1-14.
74. Anti-Jacobin Review, Mar. 1820, p.11.

allegiance.[75]

The Weekly Review contended that it was the existence of a variety of creeds, all claiming the authority of Scripture, that produced scepticism, with the result that religious obligations were neglected and revolutionary doctrines rendered attractive. Unitarians and Freethinking Christians, being "scarcely a remove from Deists", were considered the worst offenders, as their hostility towards both the Church and the existing government and constitution was blatant.[76] The claim of Deists, reported in the last chapter, that the variety of Christian creeds was one reason for their scepticism, would have lent credence to this argument.

The danger which was believed to be posed by Dissent accounts for the Review's approval of Parliament's granting of funds to build new Churches; at present there were not adequate places in Churches to accommodate the poor, it claimed.[77] The work of the National School Society (which set up schools for the poor based on Church teaching and worship) was similarly praised, while the existence of "opposition schools" was lamented. For upon no other basis than the national religion could "instruction be safely and extensively offered to the poor without raising them above

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75. White Dwarf, 13 Dec. 1817, pp.43-4. This argument is extended in the second part of the article, printed on 20 December.
76. SWR, 17 Oct. 1818, p.304.
77. SWR, 9 Jan. 1819, pp.7-8. Other papers also strongly endorsed the proposals. See Courier, 28 Apr. 1817, CO, Mar. 1818, pp.198-9, 203-4, and the Anti-Jacobin Review, Jan. 1819, p.461. The Church Building Act of 1818 granted one million pounds to the cause of building new churches. For an account of this subject see Francis Warre Cornish, The English Church in the Nineteenth Century, Part I (London, 1910), pp.78-81.

their proper rank in society, and tempting them to become infidels"; the National System rendered them contented, industrious and obedient subjects. The SPCK (a Church organisation which distributed copies of the Prayer Book along with the Bible) was likewise commended, while the British and Foreign Bible Society (an ecumenical organisation) was condemned as an "enemy of the most dangerous kind, both to religion and social order".[78] The High Church opposed the Bible Society because it was believed to undermine Church order and discipline by its encouragement of people "to believe that they might draw their religion from the Bible without reference "to the authoritatively commissioned priests of the only apostolic church"".[79]

Anglicanism, of course, was a component of the country's political and legal system: its Bishops sat in the House of Lords, and during our period the parochial unit was the basis of local government, social control, education and poor relief. But industrialisation created problems for the Church which made its alliance with the state a liability. Its involvement in land enclosure and tithe commutation schemes alienated many rural labourers and small farmers, while it lacked proximity to people in new industrial areas.

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78. SWR, 30 Jan. 1819, p.39, 19 Dec. 1818, p.376, and 26 June 1819, p.193-6. Robert Southey also supported provision of education for the poor based on the national religion. See his Letter to William Smith, pp.35-6.
79. Jones, Hannah More, p.208. These issues had occasioned vigorous debates (within the Church and parliament) in 1810-12. See Hole, Pulpits, pp.187-95.

Joining a chapel was often a form of social protest.[80] It seems that the doubts expressed by conservative commentators about the loyalty of Dissenters to the established order had some foundation.[81] But their ideal of a society in which paternalism and respect characterised the deferential relationship between rich and poor was becoming increasingly anachronistic, and was being undermined rather than strengthened by the Church whose cause they laboured to promote. At a time when the paternalism which had typified the attitude and behaviour of the ruling class towards the labouring poor was breaking down, Church theologians, as we have seen, were fashioning political economy - based on laissez-faire individualism - into an ideology buttressed by religious arguments. The notion of immutable economic laws was a barrier to many Christians advocating social reform until late in the century.[82]

INFIDELITY AND SEDITION

Armed with an ideology which forged a link between Christianity and a hierarchical society, conservatives attacked radicals as satanic agents of destruction whose triumph would see the end of Christianity and the British constitution. Almost by definition, radicals were

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80. Alan D. Gilbert, Religion and Society in Industrial England: Church, Chapel and Social Change, 1740-1914 (London and New York, 1976), pp.74-85. As noted in chapter 2 above, clerical magistrates also contributed to the growth of anti-clericalism.
81. Most Dissenting churches did, however, officially uphold social order as much as did the Anglican. The Church and its supporters needed to justify its position as the established Church, and internal reform began in the 1810s to serve this end as well as that of social stability. See Hole, Pulpits, pp.198-9.
82. See Inglis, Churches and the Working Class, pp.256-8.

anti-Christian. They were all lumped together as infidels who exalted reason above revelation, and this was the source of their waywardness.[83] Deism was considered an inherently speculative philosophy. While nature might provide evidence of the existence of God, it was an ambiguous source from which to derive moral principles, for which the doctrines of Scripture were required. Shadgett insisted that it is the New Testament, not nature, which commands us to love our neighbour as ourselves.[84] The context of most of the above references is a series of articles criticising Paine's Rights of Man and Age of Reason, which were believed to be prescriptive sources of radical ideology. Shadgett does not address the ideas found in Volney and Palmer that benevolence results from the calculated pursuit of self-interest.[85]

Christianity and revolution were held to be antipathetic, and this was the reason that radicals were believed to turn away from God and look to nature for their creed.[86] Post-war anti-radical literature brims with the charge that the strategy of radicals was to destroy people's faith in Christianity, as the necessary prerequisite to inciting them

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83. The Anti-Jacobin Review, for example, claimed that the organisers of the Manchester public meeting of 16 August 1819 had, prior to the occasion, "publicly roasted their Bibles at a slow fire". See the Review of September 1819, p.72.
84. SWR, 26 Sept. 1818, p.280, 23 Jan. 1819, pp.25-6, 1 May 1819, pp.129-30, 3 July 1819, p.202, and 10 Oct. 1818, p.296.
85. See Volney, Ruins, ch.5-6, Palmer, Principles of Nature, p.161.
86. SWR, 5 Dec. 1818, p.354.

to commit acts of sedition.[87] Southey encapsulated in a single sentence the nature of the alleged undermining of Christianity by radicals. Parodying 1 Peter 4:8, he referred to radicals: "Among them sedition stands in the place of charity and covereth a multitude of sins".[88] Anti-Cobbett, using another Biblical allusion, charged Cobbett with attempting to destroy the consolations of religion in order to exacerbate distress: "In short, he sowed the tares, which sprung up all over the kingdom, in clubs, in secret associations, in tumultuous meetings, in pretended petitions to parliament...".[89] In Jesus's parable the Devil sowed weeds (representing wicked people - sons of the Devil) in a field in which God had sown wheat (good people - sons of God). At the end of time the weeds were uprooted and cast into a fire. In these examples of anti-radical discourse contemporary events are rendered in terms of Biblical scenarios, thereby appropriating - by implication - the Bible's authority, in order to vindicate the conservative myth.[90]

Rarely was there any acknowledgement in anti-radical literature that among the advocates of reform there were

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87. For examples of this charge see Brock, A Letter, p.8, R., Reflections, pp.14-15, 20, [Anon.], Letter to his Fellow Countrymen (Birmingham, 1819), p.3, [Anon.], An Address to the Higher Classes in the Town of Manchester and the Vicinity (Manchester, 1820), pp.19-21, Anti-Cobbett, 22 Feb. 1817, p.40-1, 5 Apr. 1817, p.238, and SWR, 17 May 1818, p.124, 6 Mar. 1819, p.65, and 29 Mar. 1819, pp.65-6.
88. Robert Southey, Parliamentary Reform (Manchester, 1817), pp.1-2.
89. Anti-Cobbett, 8 Mar. 1817, pp.102-3. SWR used the same parable of Jesus, casting the Gorgon as the sower of the tares (19 Dec. 1818, p.374). The parable may be found, along with its explanation, in Matthew 13: 24-30, 36-9.
90. See chapter 2 above for examples of radicals doing the same thing.

people professing Christianity. As we saw in the last two chapters this could not be because there were none; and radical discourse was imbued with Biblical allusions. Conservatives only acknowledged these facts in order to negate them. For example, Paine was said to have tried to make people believe that Jesus advocated his principles, Cobbett was charged with assuming the "mask of a pretended Christian", and Rev. Joseph Harrison was said to possess "just sufficient acquaintance with the Bible to enable him to pervert the sacred text to purposes of Sedition".[91] Rev. Mr. Foxlowe, preaching at Divine service on the occasion of the trials for treason at Derby in October 1817, blamed the influence of "illiterate and immoral public teachers of the Gospel" for the disaffection of many among the lower orders at that time. He asserted that the "object of true religion, as it respected society, was to promote industry and prudence in the lower, and mercy and forbearance in the higher classes".[92] Spenceanism was claimed to make no provision for the worship of God; the title of Evans's book, Christian Policy, was a misnomer.[93] In the radical press there were to be found "the most abominable perversions of the Bible used...to justify

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91. SWR, 10 Apr. 1819, pp.105-6, 28 Nov. 1818, p.347, and NT, 4 Aug. 1819. The Patriot printed the following mock advertisement: "WANTED, By Parson HARRISON, - The True Spirit of Christianity", 20 Nov. 1819, p.206. The Courier also attacked Harrison - on 31 July 1819 and 25 Aug. 1819.
92. Reported in The Courier on 16 Oct. 1817. The false notions of religion promulgated by ignorant teachers were said to have deluded those who awaited trial. For an uncomplimentary depiction of radical preachers see the poem in the Patriot, 24 Dec. 1819, p.287.
93. Southey, Parliamentary Reform, pp.30-6.

regicide".[94] Supporters of radicalism claiming to be religious were deluding themselves: the principles of radicalism were exemplified by Carlile, "that shameless INFIDEL".[95]

In 1790 Edmund Burke had anticipated the destruction of Christianity in France - which was to result, he believed, in anarchy. The connection between the two became a common theme of sermons after the outbreak of war between England and France in 1793.[96] The same connection was resurrected by conservative writers in the post-war years. They always painted radicals as revolutionaries rather than as reformers. Religion was central to their thesis. Because infidelity had preceded the French Revolution, its acceptance in England would herald a bloody revolution. Radicals were infidels and, *ipso facto*, revolutionaries. The course of events in France was accounted for by Charles Phillips, the Irish barrister, in his speech to the Bible Society on 4 November 1819:

> [The French] abjured their God, and, as a natural consequence, they murdered their King. They called their polluted deities from the brothel, and the fall of the idol they worshipped extinguished the flame of the altar. - They crowded the scaffold with all their country held of genius or of virtue; and when the Peerage and the Prelacy were exhausted, the mob-executioner of to-day became the mob-victim of

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94. Arthur Hervey Kenney, *A Letter to Earl Fitzwilliam* (London, 1819), p.24. Kenney proceeded to give examples of such uses of the Bible by radicals, at least some of which were gleaned from the *Briton*. See pp.35-44.
95. [Anon.], *An Address to the Higher Classes*, pp.61-2. The *Patriot* asserted that the value of Carlile's trials in 1819 was that they had "identified *infidelity* with *rebellion*", 30 Oct. 1819, pp.150-1.
96. See Hole, *Pulpits*, pp.151-2.

tomorrow.[97]

Phillips's logic is probably derived from the Biblical injunction to fear God and honour the King: when one ceased to fear God, one also ceased to honour the King, thus making regicide a moral and psychological possibility. Many other anti-radical writers in 1817 and 1819-20 echoed similar sentiments in foreboding tones, making explicit connections with contemporary English developments.[98] France's defeat in the war was a sign of God's judgement; her fate was intended as a warning which other nations should heed.[99]

The penetration of the Regent's coach by a missile on 28 January 1817 provided a focus for discussion of the revolutionary threat. Richard Mant preached a sermon at the parish Church of St Botolph, without Bishopsgate, on 23 February, entitled "The Fear of the Lord and of the King".[100] The text of the sermon was Proverbs 24:21 - "My son, fear thou the Lord and the King; and meddle not with them that are given to change" - a command said to be taught

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97. Charles Phillips, Speech Delivered at the Recent Meeting of the Gloucestershire Missionary Society (Birmingham, 1819), p.6. The quote is from Phillips's London Bible Society speech which was published under the above title along with the speech denominated by the title. A brief account of Phillips's life may be found in DNB, XLV, 196-7.

98. For examples see Brock, Letter, p.8; Courier, 20 Feb. 1817; Anti-Cobbett, 1 Mar. 1817, pp.85-92 (This is a reprint of an essay of Cobbett's written when he was a Tory.); Anti-Jacobin Review, July 1817, pp.436-7, Feb. 1819, pp.567-8; SWR, 13 Feb. 1819, p.49, 13 Mar. 1819, p.59, and 19 June 1819, p.189; Patriot, 16 Oct. 1819, pp.118-19; [Anon.], Hints Addressed to Radical Reformers (Glasgow, 1819), pp.10-11; Conciliator (pseud.), An Appeal, p.6; Robert Aiton, An Inquiry into the Causes of Present Distresses (Glasgow, 1820), pp.44-5.

99. Phillips, Speech Delivered at the Recent Meeting, p.6, [Anon.], Hints, pp.20-1.

100. Mant was later a bishop in Ireland. See DNB, XII, pp.981-3.

by Jesus and the apostles as well as the Old Testament. This teaching comprised "the politicks [sic] of the gospel".[101] The three parts of the text are examined in turn, and then applied to present circumstances. The "signs of the times are awful", Mant said, and it is the duty of all to oppose the acts of the malicious. One should try to convince "the deluded" that only by living peaceably and fearing God and King could relief from suffering, and happiness in the future, be assured.[102] The Anti-Jacobin Review approved of the sermon and printed substantial extracts from it. The reviewer wrote that Mant shows people, "from the highest of all possible authority, that the senseless jargon which knaves retail to fools, at popular meetings, is contradictory to the revealed will of the Almighty".[103]

Increased crime and immorality, discord, and ultimately war and anarchy, were the projected social consequences of a successful assault upon Christianity. There was a Biblical basis for this forecast: what happens to the person who attends to infidel philosophy is that "his duty to God is discarded first, and his duty to his neighbour presently afterwards".[104] The foundation of this claim is probably Jesus's teaching that the two greatest commandments are to

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101. Richard Mant, The Fear of the Lord and of the King: a Sermon Preached in the Parish Church of St. Botolph, Without Bishopsgate, on Sunday, February 23, 1817.... (London, 1817), pp.9-10. Evidence for Jesus and the apostles teaching the same doctrine was said to be found in Mark 12:17, 1 Peter 2:17 and Romans 13:1.
102. Ibid., pp.20-2. Note the structural link between a deontological and a utilitarian argument: the performance of a religious duty produces happiness.
103. Anti-Jacobin Review, Sept. 1817, pp.1-8.
104. Southey, Parliamentary Reform, p.2.

love God and neighbour, and the logic is the same as that of Charles Phillips _apropos_ of regicide.[105] Without a sense of religious duty one would follow the dictates of one's heart, which was "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked"; hence the expectation of a rising crime rate and enmity between classes of society.[106] Families would be neglected as men met to discuss their grievances, authority would no longer be respected, and disorder and violence would ensue, culminating in revolution and war.[107] Walter Scott envisioned society after the triumph of radical reform. He described what an election would be like:

> Thousands on thousands rushed upon the field, drinking, roaring, fighting, brawling, as if the devil had possessed each individual. All talked, and no one listened - all proffered oaths, and no one would believe them; indeed, how was it possible that they should, for there was nothing left to swear by, through invoking which the faith of the witness should be a pledge of his sincerity? The belief in a common and general Creator, the hoop which of all others holds society most surely together, was burst asunder, and the loose staves fell separate in every direction.[108]

Underpinning such projections of disorder and immorality was the doctrine of original sin: which meant that human nature was believed to be innately corrupt. Only the teaching and

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105. The three synoptic gospels record the occasion of this teaching: _Matthew_ 22:37-40, _Mark_ 12:28-31 and _Luke_ 10:25-28.
106. _SWR_, 14 June 1818, p.160, and 13 Mar. 1819, p.73, Conciliator, _Appeal_, pp.1-4. The words quoted - used by a correspondent to _SWR_ - are from _Jeremiah_ 17:9. Phillips expected the destruction of everything the nation held dear if the "lava of human passions" was unleashed by the abandonment of Christianity. See his _Speech Delivered at the Recent Meeting_, pp.5-6.
107. R., _Reflections_, p.6, _SWR_, 12 Apr. 1818, p.84, 19 Dec. 1818, pp.374-5, and 13 Mar. 1819, p.79, [Anon.], _Address to the Higher Classes_, pp.24-32, and Birmingham Association, _Address_, p.7.
108. Walter Scott, _The Visionary_, No.III (Edinburgh, 1819), pp.46-7.

sanctions of religion were able to restrain and discipline one's propensity towards evil.[109] Here we have the main theological reason why religion assumed such a prominent role in anti-radical discourse.

Because of their attacks on Christianity, leading radical journalists and orators were portrayed as the conscious instigators of evil. Their preaching of liberty and equality was a guise which they assumed to fool the gullible. They were wolves in sheep's clothing, a Biblical image which denotes a false prophet. Henry Hunt's leaving his wife to live in adultery with another woman was considered emblematic of the true nature of radicalism.[110] Radicals were associates of Satan. Paine, having helped foment the American Revolution, was disappointed that Britain continued to grow prosperous, so "in imitation of his progenitor, bent his course to this Paradise of the globe, eager to destroy that felicity which it was not in his nature either to partake of or endure".[111] Satan was said to be the radicals' master, upon whose principles and

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109. For explicit examples of this claim see Courier, 18 Sept. 1817, Domestic Miscellany, No.1 (n.d.), pp.3-5, and Anti-Jacobin Review, Mar. 1819, pp.66-70, Sept. 1819, pp.61-2. For the connection made between infidelity and immorality see the Domestic Miscellany's "Anecdotes of Infidel Morality", 5 Oct. 1819, pp.27-8, and 19 Oct. 1819, pp.45-7.
110. Bull, Address, p.4. The pamphlet quotes Matthew 7:15, the verse which describes false prophets as wolves in sheep's clothing. See also Basil Montagu, Some Thoughts Upon Liberty and the Rights of Englishmen (London, 1819), pp.29-30. Montagu applies the words of 2 Peter 2, another description of false prophets, to radical "demagogues".
111. William L. Bowles, The Sentiments of a True Patriot and Good Man (lately deceased) on the Mischievous Tendency of Tom Paine's "Rights of Man"... (1791; rpt. Canterbury, 1819), pp.5-7.

plans they acted.[112] Hence Shadgett's implied equation of radicals with Satan in his use of the Biblical denomination, "roaring lions, roaming about seeking whom they may devour".[113]

Given that radicalism was the work of the Devil, it was a sacred duty to fight it. John Stephens declared that he would "blow the sacred trumpet, to call Jehovah's hosts to battle; and manfully unfurl the banners of his Country, his Sovereign, and his God".[114] The threat to the Religion and Constitution of the State demanded that every friend to both rally to the call.[115] And more than Britain's fate was at stake. For "the destinies of populous pagan nations" were in her hands, and other European states infected by infidel writings looked to the example of England, which had disseminated Christianity around the globe.[116] The conservatives' struggle against radicalism was in this way invested with the cosmic significance of a struggle between the forces of good and evil on a world scale. To recall Epstein's words from the last chapter, the "authoritative force of a "master fiction" of British society" was hereby invoked in order to legitimise conservative political views - and mobilise support for the cause of social stability.

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112. SWR, 10 Apr. 1819, p.109, [Anon.], A Radical Song (Oxford, 1820), and [Anon.], The Devil and the Radicals (Oxford, 1820). William Atkinson claimed that the only place where universal suffrage was practised was in hell. See his Letter to the Reforming Gentlemen, p.22.
113. SWR, 3 Apr. 1819, p.92. The prowling lion image is an allusion to 1 Peter 5:8.
114. Stephens, The Mutual Relations, p.v. The same tripartite loyalty was declared by Arthur Kenney, A Letter to Earl Fitzwilliam, p.55.
115. Loyalist, 2 Oct. 1819, p.3, SWR, 26 Apr. 1818, pp.100-1, and 9 Jan. 1819, p.6.
116. Stephens, The Mutual Relations, pp.v-vi, SWR, 9 Jan. 1819, p.6.

CONCLUSION

The many explicit and implicit Biblical allusions identified in the foregoing analysis of anti-radical discourse underscores the importance of the Bible and Christianity in English society in the early nineteenth century. In fashioning an ideological weapon with which to fight popular radicalism, conservatives made frequent use of Scriptural principles, images and language, thereby appropriating the endorsement of the Word of God (as they held it to be). In the last chapter we saw that this was also true of radical discourse, despite the professed antagonism of many radicals (Deists) towards the Bible. Radicals and conservatives alike posed as champions of God's cause in a cosmic struggle between Good and Evil, each branding the other side as Satanic. Christianity was the "contested territory" in this ideological struggle to appropriate a powerful legitimating authority. Its language and symbols were invoked to rally the ignorant, timid or apathetic to the cause, and to convince the undecided.

The true religion expounded by each side was fashioned to some extent by what may loosely be called class interests. Radicals selected passages which condemned tyranny and oppression and enjoined acts of justice and mercy, in order to indict the ruling class of the time and sanction their own demands for reform. Conservatives selected passages which enjoined obedience to legally constituted authorities and sanctioned existing socio-economic relations, in order to vindicate the _status quo_, thereby blunting the demand of radicals for change, and countering the mobilising power of

radical propaganda. The injunction to love one's neighbour was common to the discourse of both sides: it was used by radicals to show that the ruling class was failing to fulfil its religious duties, and thereby forfeited its Scriptural claim to respect and obedience, and by conservatives to prompt the rich to be charitable to the poor, and to discourage the poor from resorting to violent remedies for their distress.

Religion assumed a prophetic function in both discourses: that is, it condemned as evil the imputed revolutionary intent of radicals in one case, and the corruption and oppression of the ruling class in the other. The spectre of bloody revolution was raised as the consequence of both the triumph of radicalism and the failure of the government to grant radical reform. In radical discourse the coming of the millennium was the promised outcome of reform. Millenarianism is not an explicit characteristic of anti-radical discourse, but one might speculate, given the millenarian hopes of the sponsors of overseas missionary enterprises (mentioned in the last chapter), that some conservatives saw the threat of revolution as potentially a very serious impediment to steady progress towards the millennium. The chiliastic vision of others, keenly aware of the perversity and corruption of human nature, may have looked to divine rescue following the collapse into anarchy.[117] For all, the existence and integrity of British institutions and traditions were held to be at stake.

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117. That is, they subscribed to pre- rather than post-millennial doctrine.

Part 2: The Reform Crisis and the Unstamped, 1830-4

CHAPTER 4: EXPONENTS OF A "NEW ANALYSIS": WILLIAM CARPENTER, HENRY HETHERINGTON AND BRONTERRE O'BRIEN

In 1830 agitation for the repeal of the newspaper tax imposed by the Six Acts of 1819 was renewed. At the same time the parliamentary reform movement gathered strength and urgency. The two causes were connected: repeal of the newspaper taxes was seen as a prerequisite to achieving a range of reforms such as universal suffrage, secret ballot, annual parliaments and a more equitable distribution of property. The reasoning was that the dissemination of knowledge facilitated by the availability of cheap publications would swell the numbers of working-class people demanding reform.[1] This chapter is concerned with the publications of three prominent working-class journalists/publishers of the early 1830s: William Carpenter, Henry Hetherington and Bronterre O'Brien. These three have been selected both because of their importance in the "war of the unstamped" and because they were the chief proponents of an economic radicalism which Patricia Hollis has called the "new analysis" - in order to distinguish it from the radical ideology of 1819. Their papers were the only publications which waged war against

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1. Joel H. Wiener, The War of the Unstamped: the Movement to Repeal the British Newspaper Tax (Ithaca and London, 1969), pp.237-8, 241-2. Hollis pairs the expansion of the unstamped and the growth of the National Union of the Working Classes (NUWC), relating their development to the reform crisis. See Pauper Press, pp.104-5.

political economy as well as against Old Corruption.[2]

It is the task of this chapter to isolate the function of religion in the published discourse of Carpenter, Hetherington and O'Brien. Hollis paid little attention to religion in her analysis of the ideas of the unstamped press of the 1830s, simply noting that there were two main objections to Established Religion: that the Church was part of Old Corruption, taxing the poor to obtain revenue, and that it acted as "the intellectual arm of the Established Order", attempting to reconcile people to earthly distress.[3] Wiener observed that the temporal abuses of the Established and Dissenting Churches were attacked by the unstamped, but Christian doctrine only rarely, Carlile being the sole notable exception in this respect. Most writers, he said, refrained from publicising anti-Christian views because there was no general agreement about religion among the working class, and it would have alienated middle-class reformers:

> The absence of penetrating comment about religion was almost certainly a concession to working-class sensibilities. The reform of temporal church abuses was an issue upon which a working-class consensus was derivable, as were demands for political change and a

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2. Ibid., pp.220-2. See also Noel Thompson's more recent discussion of this subject, The People's Science, pp.136-57. The term "new analysis" (as noted in chapter 2 above) should not be understood to signify a complete break with the past, for the "old analyses" persisted even into the 1850s. It was, rather, an extra dimension of thought, important to its theorists and popularisers, but perhaps having only a limited effect upon working-class political organisations. See D.J. Rowe, "London Radicalism in the Era of the Great Reform Bill", in John Stevenson (ed.), London in the Age of Reform (Oxford, 1977), pp.151-6. Within the new analysis itself, it has been argued, the political domination of the exchange process is evident, and there is no clear conceptual distinction between taxation and profit and interest. See Jones, "Rethinking Chartism", p.137.
3. Hollis, Pauper Press, p.207.

> co-operative social and economic system. But no comparable agreement could be assured in the more controversial realm of fundamental religious commitment.[4]

There is an assumption here that working-class journalists held anti-Christian views about which they kept quiet. This assumption is contested in this chapter. Carpenter's theological views were quite orthodox, O'Brien maintained a strong religious faith, although probably less orthodox than Carpenter's, and Hetherington, while certainly dissenting from many doctrines cherished by most Christian denominations, nevertheless espoused a practical religion firmly rooted in the teachings of Christ.

Rather than concealing anti-Christian theological opinions, the subjects of this study muted their expression of strong Christian beliefs as a concession to "working-class sensibilities". In the early 1830s London radicalism overlapped with a variety of unorthodox religious sects - many of them anti-Christian - associated with preachers such as Robert Taylor, Josiah Fitch, Pierre Baume and Zion Ward.[5] It was not, therefore, prudent to found one's case explicitly upon Christian doctrine. Yet Christian beliefs clearly underpinned the radical political and economic ideology propounded in the journals of Carpenter, Hetherington and O'Brien, and while religion was not often the central focus of an article, Biblical language and teaching were quite frequently identifiable elements of the discourse of the unstamped. As in 1816-20, the use by conservatives of religious doctrines sometimes provided an

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4. Wiener, War, pp.231-6.
5. For a brief account of these see Prothero, Artisans, pp.259-64.

occasion for asserting a rival theological viewpoint. It should be remembered - and it will be evident from the analysis below - that radical discourse was often intentionally antagonistic to conservative discourse (and vice-versa).

WILLIAM CARPENTER

William Carpenter (1797-1874) led the campaign for the abolition of the newspaper tax during 1830-1. A Londoner, little is known of his early life. In the 1820s he edited and published Christian literature in order to make religious information accessible to the working class. These publications were intended to counter the attacks on the Bible made by Deists. In An Examination of Scripture Difficulties Carpenter charged Deists with opposing the Scriptures on the basis of "a few obscure places and apparent contradictions"; he considered their criticisms of the Bible dishonest and unjust.[6] His work therefore aimed to address such specific criticisms, demonstrating that "there is not one that can fairly be construed into an invalidation of the primary claim which Revelation sets up for itself, of being the Word of God".[7] Carpenter believed in the basic doctrines which characterised the gospel preached by both the Established Church and most of the larger and older Dissenting groups: the fall, the corruption of human nature, the divinity of Christ and the atonement.[8] Late in 1830 he debated Carlile at the

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6. William Carpenter, An Examination of Scripture Difficulties (London, 1828), pp.7-8.
7. Ibid., pp.8-9.
8. He stated his adherence to these doctrines in his Popular Lectures on Biblical Criticism and Interpretation (London, 1829), p.15.

Rotunda, arguing for the authenticity of Christianity from historical evidence.[9] As an apologist for Christianity, Carpenter fulfilled the radical ideal of persuasion by rational argument rather than by force; he opposed the legal prosecution of infidels as both impolitic and sinful.[10]

From 1827 Carpenter was an active agitator for parliamentary reform. In October 1830 he began publishing his unstamped Political Letters and Pamphlets, for which he incurred a short prison sentence the following year, his ploy of addressing each unnumbered letter to a different person having failed to avoid his publications being classified as newspapers. From September 1831 he began publication of a legal periodical, Carpenter's Monthly Political Journal, and although he helped to edit some other minor unstamped papers, he lost much working-class approval because of his failure to continue vigorous resistance to the stamp law and his warm advocacy of the Reform Bill. Carpenter's aim was "to mediate the chasm between middle- and working-class reformism".[11] He joined both the moderate National Political Union and the radical NUWC, unsuccessfully attempting to reconcile the positions of the

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9. HO 64/11, fo.171, Prompter, 25 Dec. 1830, pp.123-4. Carpenter also published Scripture Natural History: or, a Descriptive Account of the Zoology, Botany, and Geology of the Bible (London, 1828) and A Guide to the Practical Reading of the Bible (London, 1830) with the aim of popularising Christianity among working-class people.
10. Carpenter, Scripture Difficulties, p.8. He publicly opposed Carlile's imprisonment in January 1831 for allegedly inciting rebellion among agricultural labourers with an article in the Prompter. See Letters, 13 Jan. 1831, pp.2-4, where he also records his disagreement with Carlile's theological opinions.
11. Wiener, War, pp.139-42.

two organisations.[12] Later active in the Chartist movement, he continued to support various reform causes and contributed to a number of newspapers, of both a political and purely entertaining nature.

This study of Carpenter's ideology is confined to 1830-2, relying chiefly upon Political Letters and Pamphlets (1830-1), Political Tracts (1831) and the Monthly Political Magazine (1831-2).[13] Evidence of Carpenter's support of Christianity up to 1830 has been cited above. There is no question of his faith waning during the period with which this study is concerned: in 1832, for instance, he makes plain his commitment to revelation in contradistinction to Paine's natural theology.[14] In spite of such personal faith and a willingness to defend it publicly, asserts Wiener, Carpenter "refused to juxtapose political and religious subjects in his journal".[15] This claim, although (as a rule) technically true, is potentially misleading, and obscures the intimate connection for Carpenter between politics and religion.

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12. BDMBR, II, p.125. On disunity among reformers in the early 1830s see Rowe, "London Radicalism", pp.162-6.
13. The Political Tracts were reprinted the same year - 1831 - as Political and Historical Essays, the latter being used in this study; the abbreviation PT is employed. The Monthly Political Magazine was also named The Political Magazine, and is here abbreviated as PM. Rather than giving individual titles, the Political Letters and Pamphlets will be cited simply as Letters.
14. PM, Jan.1832, pp.198-9. At the same time he warmly endorsed Paine's political doctrines, the context of these remarks being "critical notices" of the republication of Paine's Common Sense and Dissertation on the First Principles of Government. See also the article on "The Saint Simonians", PM, Mar. 1832, pp.280-5.
15. Wiener, War, p.235. Wiener cites evidence that on one occasion Carpenter refused to print a Rotunda debate on Christianity in his Letters, despite his own participation in the debate as a proponent of the historical truth of Christianity.

Indisputably, Carpenter aimed to foster unity among the working class, and even between working-class and middle-class people, especially in order that the Reform Bill might be passed.[16] He was of course aware that religion was a potentially divisive subject, and discussion of religion per se is effectively excluded from his political publications.[17] Yet there are occasions when the subject of religion and politics is discussed, and these provide evidence adequate to document the connections Carpenter made between religion and radical political and economic reform. He also made many references to God in relation to current events, which may be interpreted as particular applications of his more general beliefs. These references were sufficiently general in theological terms to avoid alienating Deists.

The subject of "Religion and Politics" is featured in Carpenter's Letter of 18 February 1831. It is a response to a pamphlet called "Good Refuge in Bad Times", which enjoined quietism as a religious duty. According to Carpenter, religion was prostituted "by being made in appearance the authority, by which contentment in remediable wretchedness is thought to be enforced".[18] He contests the assumption that present distress is the will of God. Rather, it is the product of human injustice and is therefore remediable by human action. To pray and wait for divine intervention, as

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16. See, for example, this profession as one of the two aims of his Political Tracts, in the Letters, 26 Mar. 1831, p.16.
17. His published criticism of Paine's theological views, cited above, attracted some hostile comments. See the Republican, Jan. 1832, p.214 and a letter in PMG, 17 Mar.1832, pp.318-19.
18. Letters, 18 Feb. 1831, pp.4-5.

the pamphlet instructed, is thus the wrong response: it is analagous to "the aged lady who placed the basket in her cellar, and betook herself to prayer to get it filled with victuals".[19] So the conservative writer's "solution" to current ills is invalidated by the charge that he has mistaken the cause of the problem.

Carpenter goes further. He asserts that it is the Christian's religious duty to fight the injustice which lies behind distress. The dictates of Scripture, he argues, are predicated on man being a civil, moral and religious agent. Christians are obliged to oppose evil in all its forms, so "why is civil wickedness, the manifested form of moral and spiritual depravity, to escape the castigation which evangelical zeal so righteously bestows on the frailties of individual man?"[20] Carpenter's argument, pointedly addressed to Christians, reaches its climax with the following assertion:

> Those who are regenerate in religion, are required to be regenerate in politics; and he who imagines to do good by doing nothing, is almost too foolish to be told of his infirmity....Christians, alike with other men, owe a duty to society; and to ensure the constant and faithful discharge of that duty, and thus make the earth an antepast to heaven, was one of the grand designs in bestowing revelation.[21]

Far from enjoining quietism, says Carpenter, Christianity enjoins active opposition to evil in all its forms. Not only is agitation for political reform compatible with faith, it is a requirement of faith. Carpenter's letter thus served a mobilisational purpose.

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19. Ibid.
20. Ibid. There are echoes of Hone here - see the discussion of Political House in chapter 1 above.
21. Ibid.

No doubt William Carpenter, as a sincere Christian, saw his own participation in the cause of reform as a concomitant of his religious commitment. An important source of his ideas was Rev. Robert Hall's Apology for the Freedom of the Press and for General Liberty, originally published in 1793, and republished in 1821 by Hall himself, who wanted to refute the charge that his political opinions had changed since writing it.[22] Carpenter publicly disclosed his admiration of Hall by reviewing Rev. F.A. Cox's discourse delivered at Mare Street Chapel, Hackney, on the occasion of Hall's death in 1831. Acknowledging a breach of his policy of not reviewing sermons or theological works, Carpenter explained that "it would be unpardonable not to devote a small portion of one of my publications to the memory of one of the most holy, and consistent, and eloquent defenders of liberty and Christianity that ever appeared".[23] Hall's Apology, he claimed,

> placed the rights of the people upon their only true and legitimate basis, and with an eloquence unrivalled, established for ever the true principles of Government, while it proved that Christianity is favourable to the highest development of the mental powers, and to the full enjoyment of the most unlimited freedom in political discussion.[24]

What Carpenter admired most about Hall was that he practised the precepts of Christianity daily, exerting himself for good by communicating his knowledge to others.[25] It is likely that Hall was a model for Carpenter, the radical

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22. See the preface to the seventh edition of An Apology for the Freedom of the Press and for General Liberty (London, 1822). Its republication resulted in a vigorous debate between Hall and antagonistic reviewers. See Wickwar, The Struggle, pp.252-3.
23. Letters, 8 Apr. 1831, p.9.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid.

journalist, whose daily labour was also devoted to the cause of communicating knowledge to others.

Hall's Apology upheld the right of every person to worship God according to his own conscience. Free inquiry was only beneficial to Christianity. The Reformation, for example, had uncovered the nature of primitive Christianity, "long hidden and concealed under a load of abuses".[26] Discussion had produced the superior defences of Christianity by such authors as Locke, Butler and Clark. Deist writings contributed to the formulation of such apologies.[27] Hall contended that infidelity was a product of a corrupt alliance between Church and State. Piety declined as the Church hierarchy increased in splendour. For this reason Dissenters were far more pious than members of the Established Church.[28] It is possible, in the context of Carpenter's adherence to these beliefs, to reconstruct more precisely the rationale behind his editorial policy as a political journalist in 1830-2, and to apprehend a unity between his contribution to political radicalism and his efforts in the late twenties to make Christian literature available to working-class people.

The virtual exclusion of explicit religious content from his journals as a concession to the sensibilities of infidel radicals neither constitutes any real compromise of principles, nor does it signify a shift from religious to political concerns. We have already seen that practical opposition to injustice was held to be a religious duty.

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26. Hall, Apology, pp.5-7.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid., pp.74-5.

Unity between Christian and infidel radicals was crucial to doing this effectively. There was no need to mount a campaign against infidelity to further the cause of Christianity, for the demolition of the corrupt alliance between Church and State would produce a more pious Church exemplifying the tenets of primitive Christianity. Christian doctrine would thereby be rendered more attractive as actions were seen to be consistent with arguments. In this way the causes of Christianity and reform could be identified, the former being dependent upon the success of the latter.

The article on religion and politics in the Letter of 18 February 1831 was obviously addressed to Carpenter's Christian readers, who might be susceptible to the quietist argument of a pamphlet such as "Good Refuge in Bad Times". Carpenter took the opportunity not only to undermine that argument, but also to strengthen Christians' commitment to the cause of reform by insisting that such a commitment was an essential expression of one's Christian faith. This discussion of religion and politics was unlikely to offend infidel readers to whom the doctrine of passive obedience was also anathema.[29] It was in their interest, too, to convince Christians of its falsehood, and attach them to the common cause of radical reform. This was recognised by the arch-infidel Richard Carlile, who recommended that Christians read Thomas Parkin's Christian Corrector, a reform-oriented periodical based upon the doctrines of

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29. There was no published criticism of Carpenter in radical journals on this occasion as there had been when he registered his disagreement with Paine's theological views.

primitive Christianity.[30] In terms of religious duties, as distinct from doctrines, Christian radicalism was little different from infidel radicalism, a thesis developed at length in Chapter 2 for the post-war period.[31] Intending to address a broad working-class audience among whom he aimed to foster unity, Carpenter devoted relatively little space to "correcting" the misconceptions of Christians, whereas Parkin's journal, which was directed more or less exclusively to a Christian readership, specialised in performing this function.

Carpenter was a vehement critic of the grossly unequal distribution of wealth currently obtaining in English society. A study of his discourses on this subject, in relation to events of the early thirties, affords further evidence of the connection for him between Christianity and radical economic and political reform. Although careful not to alienate infidels by explicitly anchoring his arguments in Christian doctrine, Carpenter does articulate a providential view of history, and his statements are laced with Biblical allusions, a further indication of the underlying religious dimension of his radicalism.

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30. Prompter, 27 Aug. 1831, p.752. The leading article of this issue was addressed to Parkin, whom Carlile considered a good Christian corrector, although a poor infidel corrector. In it Carlile outlined some of the historical defects of Christianity. See pp.737-40. For a short discussion of the Christian Corrector see Wiener, War, p.233.

31. Isis, a paper expounding Carlile's allegorical Christianity - see the following chapter for a detailed discussion of this - reprinted some articles from the Christian Corrector, the editress explaining that although she dissented from Parkin's belief in the historicity of Christianity, "the moral of his christianity comes very near to that of mine". See Isis, 25 Feb. 1832, p.48 and 3 Mar. 1832, pp.54-5.

Carpenter argued that the necessity of change in "the social constitution of society" is apparent "When we behold the poverty of those whose labour renders them "worthy of their hire," and perceive that the creation of wealth, comfort, and abundance, does not exempt the creators from the pinchings of intense want".[32] The poverty of the working class could not be attributed to Nature, for the earth yielded an abundance of food, and industrial technology made possible the production of huge numbers of goods to make life comfortable. It was the means of distribution that was wrong.[33] Here is the nub of the unstamped's "new analysis": while labour gave to manufactured products their value, the capitalist, as middleman, siphoned off a large proportion of this value, thereby depriving the labourer of what was rightly theirs.[34] Special attention ought to be paid to Carpenter's way of referring to the labourer: "those whose labour renders them "worthy of their hire"". This is a Scriptural maxim, used by Jesus to explain that his disciples were entitled to be fed by the people to whom they ministered, and by Saint Paul as a warrant for paying elders.[35] Carpenter, and probably many of his Christian readers too, derived personal dignity, at least in part, from this Biblical sanction of their daily toil. It gave authority to their claim that the labourer ought to receive

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32. PT, 1, pp.5-6.
33. PT, 4, pp.1-2. See also the articles on political economy in PM, Feb. 1832, pp.238-42 and Apr. 1832, p.314, in which Carpenter claims that the doctrines of political economists are at odds with the concept of a beneficent God.
34. See Hollis's discussion of the labour theory of value, Pauper Press, pp.220-5.
35. See Luke 10:7 and 1 Timothy 5:18.

as wages the full value of the goods produced, and it implicitly challenged the hierarchical structure of English society which placed the labourer at the bottom.

Carpenter conceived of a struggle taking place throughout history between selfishness on the one side, and "religion, reason, and morality" on the other. While selfishness had always triumphed thus far, the final outcome was to be different:

> ...if we have recourse to revelation, as to the result of this contest, and combine its testimony with the deductions of reason, the most cheering anticipations will be inspired. The restoration of good-will, and the social amelioration which it entails, must produce a changed aspect in every detail of human society. Mutual help, instead of mutual oppression...will, at some certain though remote period, attest the introduction of an improved state. "Old things shall pass away," and be succeeded by new; and the evils which now devastate the human family...shall thence be regarded as a dismal object from which mankind will constantly recede....[36]

Belief in the certainty of ultimate victory was imparted to Carpenter by revelation - the Bible - and this was consistent with the forecast of reason. Evidently he understood the New Testament book of Revelation to foretell a change in the nature of human society upon earth. "Old things shall pass away" alludes to the creation of a new heaven and a new earth, where there shall be no more death, sorrow or crying, and God shall dwell with his human creation.[37] This expression of millennial hope was for Carpenter more than an emphatic or romantic way of articulating the great social change which he envisioned, for - as we have seen above - he located the ground of his hope in the Bible.

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36. PT, 6, pp.9-10.
37. See Revelation 21.

Progress towards this final victory was to be made through the extension of knowledge. To disseminate knowledge was an obligation of religion and morality:

> He who knows or believes the advantages of intelligence, - who has heard the solemn enunciation, that the "people perish for lack of knowledge", - can never be exonerated from the ponderous obligation of diffusing that by which society would be purified, enriched, and advanced.[38]

Christian readers might have recognised (and their commitment to the cause of reform be confirmed, even strengthened by) the allusion to the words of the prophet Hosea - "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6) - while the infidel, probably disregarding the Biblical context and authority, nevertheless would agree with the statement, and certainly be among those who "believes the advantages of intelligence". For Carpenter reason and revelation were harmonious, a conviction manifested in his discourse, and perhaps also consciously intended as a non-aggressive and inoffensive means of countering infidelity. The final statement of the tract asserts that "the supreme Being" is using knowledge to bring about the happiness of humanity, "and he who would impede its diffusion, or feels indifferent to its growth, must be infidel indeed".[39] The implied alignment of religious and political views, sharpened by the ironic use of the term infidel, underscores the argument of this thesis that there was a fundamental religio-political unity among radicals, whether Christian or Deist, and in a sense embracing atheists too. Christians and Deists alike could assent to the idea of God superintending the diffusion of

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38. PT, 6, pp.8-9.
39. Ibid., p.12.

knowledge, which enabled them to identify their own efforts in this regard with the cause of God. The work of their enemies, logically, opposed the cause of God - hence Carpenter's branding them as infidels. The demarcation between the supporters and the enemies of God, between "Christians" and "infidels", is defined in terms of actions rather than theological beliefs, and this is the basis of the religious unity postulated by Carpenter among Christians, Deists and atheists, although of course not all or even many conscious adherents of Christianity, Deism or atheism would have been happy to accept such an identification. The following chapter, which analyses Carlile's appropriation of the language of the Bible in 1832, will amplify and strengthen this argument.

Carpenter interpreted events of the early eighteen-thirties in terms of the providential view of history outlined above. In 1830-1 there was a spate of rural violence - incendiarism, machine-breaking and food riots - throughout southern and eastern England as Captain Swing stalked the land. Evidence suggests that worsening economic conditions from 1829, after the relatively "good" year of 1828, swelled rural unemployment, and at the same time local authorities were attempting to reduce the amount spent on poor relief by harsh and humiliating administration. Various local factors precipitated particular riots, none of which, it seems, resulted from the efforts of political agitators.[40] Carpenter sympathised with the plight of the rural labourers and derided the

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40. See E.J. Hobsbawm and George Rude, Captain Swing (London, 1969), pp.72-91.

application of religious tracts as sedatives to end the violence.

While not condoning the violent methods of the rioters, Carpenter averred that famine left them without an alternative.[41] Referring to a report of incendiarism in Cumberland, he drew a moral for the rich:

> Let the rich be taught that Providence will not suffer them to oppress their fellow-creatures with impunity. Here are tens of thousands of Englishmen, industrious, kind-hearted, but broken-hearted, beings, exasperated into madness by insufficient food and clothing - by utter want of necessaries for themselves and their unfortunate families.[42]

Here God is said to be on the side of the poor, punishing their rich oppressors by means of their desperate violence. It was a prostitution of religion to use it to condemn the labourers for their actions, as in a tract of late 1830 written by Charles Knight, entitled "The Rick Burners - A Tale for the Present Times".[43] Such a pamphlet was directed to propping up corrupt secular power, and Carpenter poured scorn upon it:

> The cause of complaint is to be continued by the forged sanction of Christianity; and thus those who do not hesitate to destroy men's bodies, evince a similar apathy for the comfort of their souls. "When they ask bread, do they not give them a stone?" Never was there more arrant quackery than this pamphlet displays. Perhaps, instead of giving food to a hungry multitude, the author would administer the "Book of Job in pamphlet-shape".[44]

That the sanction of Christianity has indeed been "forged" is supported here by contrasting the writer of the pamphlet

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41. Letters, 4 Dec. 1830 p.11.
42. Letters, 7 Dec. 1830, p.15.
43. Charles Knight (1791-1873) was the publisher for the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge from 1829 to 1846. A proponent of political economy, he popularised the ideas of the Ricardians. See the DNB article (XI, pp.245-8), and Hollis, Pauper Press, pp.138-9, 141, 221.
44. Letters, 23 Dec. 1830, p.12.

and all his ilk, with God, by means of the allusion to Jesus's assurance that God would not give a stone to those who asked him for bread.[45] There is a further implied contrast with Jesus, who fed a hungry multitude on several occasions. Jesus knew that spiritual teaching could not satisfy physical hunger.

Carpenter believed that a person could only attend to moral improvement if his bodily needs were satisfied. Poverty was more likely to produce vice than virtue. The way to promote moral advancement

> is first to remove the sources of discomfort - instead of endeavouring, as heretofore, to cultivate virtue in a soil where its growth is too often choked by the cares and sorrows, if not by the absolute privations and positive miseries of life. No one, who finds a fellow-creature dying of hunger, thinks of administering mental consolation to him, till he has previously relieved his first and most urgent necessity. We staunch the life-stream gushing from the lacerations of a mangled sufferer, before we preach patience to him under his agonies.[46]

The allusion to Jesus's parable of the sower strengthens the argument. Seed, representing the word of God, was scattered by the sower, taking root where conditions were favourable. Not all the seedlings survived, however. Those which germinated among thorns were eventually choked, the thorns representing the "cares and sorrows" of life.[47] The lesson which Carpenter evidently drew from the parable as he reflected upon the rural violence of 1830-1, was that the "soil" of people's lives - their material circumstances - needed to be free from "thorns" - hunger and privation - for personal moral growth to occur. They could not be blamed

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45. See Matthew 7:7-11, where Jesus assured his listeners that God would give good things to those who asked him.
46. Letters, 18 Nov. 1830, p.10.
47. See Matthew 13:3-13, 18-23.

for resorting to violence under desperate circumstances. Advancing the same argument in another place, Carpenter added a disclaimer: he was not a proponent of the doctrine of "ultra-necessity", "which involves the destruction of individual choice and moral accountability"; he was simply giving proper weight to the influence of circumstances upon the human character.[48] As a believer in orthodox Christianity, Carpenter could not assent to the Owenite doctrine that human behaviour was wholly determined by circumstances.[49]

Moral exoneration of the rioters had immediate practical import in November-December 1830. The new government under Lord Grey (with Lord Melbourne succeeding Peel as Home Secretary) was determined to suppress the disturbances, and it chastised local magistrates who made concessions (such as raising wages) to the labourers. Almost two thousand rioters were detained and awaited trial, a Special Commission being appointed to try prisoners in the counties where major disturbances had occurred. The penalties for some could be as severe as death or transportation, and such sentences were indeed imposed by the Commission. Public opinion could be influential in mitigating the severity of punishment, and petitions were efficacious in the cases of

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48. PT, 1, pp.11-12.
49. Owen's doctrine probably developed from the ideas of the necessitarian philosophers who worked out the implications of belief in natural law, concluding that all human actions are "necessary" given one's circumstances, knowledge and state of mind. See Royle, Victorian Infidels, pp.21-3. Owenism will be discussed below in relation to Hetherington and O'Brien.

several prisoners sentenced to death.[50] So in a grave tactical sense Carpenter's arguments were potentially of some tangible effect.

One object of the Swing rioters' destructive fury was the threshing machine, for it diminished the demand for labour during the winter when seasonal unemployment was always at its highest anyway. For agricultural labourers the threshing machine "thus became the symbol of their misery".[51] Carpenter, like most of the journalists of the unstamped, did not oppose the use of machinery - in both agriculture and industry - per se. He saw in its use the potential to supply people's needs while relieving them of the burden of labour. He was insistent, though, that it should not be instituted at the cost of creating a huge number of paupers, which would constitute a perversion of humanity's capacity for invention.[52] Carpenter adhered to the "under-consumption theory" propounded by the working-class press. The rosy scenario forecast by middle-class political economists - that workers would benefit from the use of machinery because goods would be cheaper, and the consequent greater demand for goods would increase the demand for labour - was rendered chimerical by the fact of rising unemployment. The scenario of the political economists could only be made reality if workers were paid higher wages so that they could afford to buy

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50. Hobsbawm and Rude conclude that the sentences as a whole were especially harsh. Out of the 1,976 men arraigned, 19 were actually executed (252 had been sentenced to death), 481 were transported, and 644 imprisoned. See Captain Swing, pp.256-63.
51. Ibid., pp.74-5.
52. Letters, 4 Feb. 1831, pp.8-9.

manufactured goods. Consumption would then remain in tandem with production.[53]

For Carpenter this question had religious implications. Inherent in the use of machinery was the promise of greater material abundance for all people. The issue was whether or not this promise was fulfilled: would there be wealth for some and destitution for others, or would "the whole human family...share with equal joy and gratitude, the beneficence which the Parent of all would bestow upon his children?"[54] This was not a question which would be determined by chance or by inflexible economic laws, or even by God, but it was a choice to be made by human beings:

> The evils under which society groans are the result of human folly and human wickedness, and knowledge and honesty are fully adequate to their annihilation. "Whatsoever men sow that shall they also reap," is a declared and obviously recognised principle in the Divine government of the world. The materials for constructing a state of social happiness are placed within our reach, and invite the necessary efforts to realise such a condition.[55]

Carpenter is countering the claim of political economists that distress, aggravated by the use of machinery, is inherent to society and not amenable to human intervention. This, he says, "is not only irrational, but in the highest degree impious and profane", a slur on the character of God as known through both reason and revelation.[56] The principle of human choice and determination of this matter is validated by divine writ: "Whatsoever men sow that shall they also reap" is a quote from St Paul's letter to the

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53. See Hollis, Pauper Press, pp.234-7.
54. PT, 6, p.7.
55. Letters, 4 Feb. 1831, pp.8-9. The context is an article entitled "The advantages and disadvantages of machinery".
56. Ibid.

Galatians (6:7). It was, as we have seen above, the unjust distribution of the products of labour that was the cause of distress, and the reason, too, why mechanisation was not fulfilling its promise.[57] And so, at present,

> In vain may religion preach charity and brotherly love to the broken-hearted, so made by the tyranny of man...; in vain may the prosperous affect religion, while he continues insensible to the feeling of the suffering, and is touched by no disposition to seek out, and, having found, root out, the causes of the foul leprosy which...is now breaking out widely on the surface of the body civil and politic.[58]

Religion demanded action to remedy distress: not just acts of charity, but radical structural change in society, which would cure the disease rather than merely relieve its symptoms, change which would restore dignity to working people. Anything less, purporting to be religion, was affectation.

Parliamentary reform was a means to the end of social and economic reform.[59] Carpenter vigorously supported the Bill of 1832, rejoicing in its final passing in June. Religion, along with justice and humanity, was unequivocally on the side of the contenders for reform.[60] Referring to the final phase of the Reform crisis in May 1832, when the King, refusing to accede to Grey's request that he create new peers to get the Bill passed, accepted Grey's resignation and asked Wellington to form a government, Carpenter interpreted events thus:

> Madmen, however, wield but an imaginary power; and the

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57. PM, Feb. 1832, pp.228-33, July 1832, pp.416-22.
58. PT, July 1832, p.421.
59. See PT, 1, pp.5-6, where Carpenter argues this case, emphasising that parliamentary reform alone cannot "remedy the evils of a redundant supply of labour, or the desolating consequences of competition among the productive classes".
60. PM, June 1832, p.379.

> hero of a hundred battles, and the conqueror of Waterloo, found his arm withered up when stretched forth to touch the ark of a people's liberty, which he impiously dared to contemn. The crown tottered - the throne shook - and the accumulating and terrific thunders of the people's wrath reverberated through the vault of the heavens. The discarded Minister was recalled, and the king sought protection under the shadow of his wings.[61]

The amalgam of Biblical allusions and language invests the passing of the Reform Bill with sacred and cosmic significance. There is a specific allusion to an incident recorded in 2 Samuel 6, where Uzzah incurred the Lord's anger when he "put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it".[62] The metaphor of thunder is often used in the Old Testament to describe the power of God, particularly when exercised in anger.[63] And in the Psalms, seeking the protection of God is spoken of as taking refuge in the shelter of his wings.[64] So the outrage of the populace during the Days of May is identified with the judgement of God, and the cause of reform thereby accorded sacredness. As the sponsor of the Bill, Grey is compared to God - able, in this case, to forestall possible revolution by delivering reform.

The inadequacy of Wiener's claim that Carpenter refused to juxtapose religious and political subjects in his periodicals is now evident. If Wiener meant that separate discussions of religion and politics were not set side by side, he is of course right. However, a closer relationship

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61. Ibid., pp.378-9.
62. See 2 Samuel 6:6-7. Uzzah was struck dead. The ark was the ark of the covenant - the vessel containing the stone tablets upon which God had inscribed the laws which constituted a covenant between himself and the people of Israel.
63. For examples see 1 Sam.7:10, Ps.18:13, 77:18, 104:7.
64. For examples see Ps.17:8, 36:7, 57:1, 61:4.

between the two than that obtained in Carpenter's discourse, a symbiotic partnership which renders Wiener's unqualified assertion misleading. Radical economic, social and political ideals and aims are given the status of a religious cause, deriving their validity in part from Biblical revelation and from what could be known of God through human reason. And the cause of Christianity itself is promoted among working-class people by its identification with the agenda of popular radicalism.

HENRY HETHERINGTON AND BRONTERRE O'BRIEN

Henry Hetherington (1792-1849) was indisputably the leading working-class combatant in the struggle for a free press in the 1830s. Not many details of his early life are known. Son of a Soho tailor, he was apprenticed to the parliamentary printer, Luke Hansard, in 1805, worked for three years as a printer in Belgium (1812-15), and registered his own press in London in 1822. In the 1820s he became attracted to Owenism and he helped found several working-class organisations dedicated to co-operative economic ideals and parliamentary reform, including the British Association for Promoting Co-operative Knowledge in 1829, the Metropolitan Political Union in 1830, and the NUWC in 1831.[65]

Hetherington's unstamped papers are the subject of this section of the chapter. His Poor Man's Guardian (PMG) was the most enduring - 1831-5 - and influential. It informed

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65. For sketches of Hetherington's life see BDMBR, II, pp.236-8, Dictionary of Labour Biography, ed. Joyce Bellamy and John Saville, III (London and Basingstoke, 1976), pp.162-72, and Wiener, War, pp.143-6.

its working-class readers of their rights to the vote and to the products of their labour; this entailed "grafting socialist and cooperative theory on the traditional political radicalism of Paine, Cobbett and Hunt, and then recasting the whole into a systemic account of oppression and exploitation".[66] He also published the Penny Papers (1830), the Republican (1831), the Radical (1831), and the Destructive (1833-4). Evasion of the stamp duty cost Hetherington three short terms of imprisonment and many fines; several hundred vendors of the PMG were imprisoned. This study does not go beyond 1834, by which time the NUWC had collapsed, the fund for victims of government prosecution was empty and there was a lull in prosecutions.[67]

The editor of the PMG (from November 1832) and the Destructive was James "Bronterre" O'Brien (1804-64), an Irish immigrant who had studied law, but began a career as a journalist in London in 1831 by writing three articles which were published in Carpenter's Political Letters. In April that year he moved to Birmingham to edit the Midland Representative and Birmingham Herald, returning to London after fifteen months because the paper was taken over by the Birmingham Journal. Then began his partnership with Hetherington.[68] O'Brien was brought up in Ireland as a

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66. Patricia Hollis, Introduction to the Poor Man's Guardian, (London, 1969), p.xxix.
67. As mentioned above, Hollis relates the rise and decline of the unstamped, and of the NUWC, to the dynamics of the Reform crisis. See Pauper Press, pp.104-5.
68. These details of O'Brien's career were gleaned from the BDMBR article, II, pp.375-83. For a book-length account see Alfred Plummer, Bronterre: a Political Biography of Bronterre O'Brien 1804-1864 (London, 1971). O'Brien went on to become a Chartist leader.

Catholic, but in a tolerant atmosphere. Becoming a critic of organised religion as an adult, he was not, however, attracted to infidelity. His biographer claims that

> He retained his faith in the fundamentals of Christianity, his admiration of Christ's teaching, and his belief in prayer, both public and private....Above all, he was caught up, heart and mind, by the social message and implications of Christianity; the true gospel.[69]

This claim will be borne out by the following discussion of the religious strain of the discourse of the PMG and Destructive. Before proceeding to that, Hetherington's religious beliefs will be considered at some length, as they are more elusive and complex than O'Brien's. It will emerge, however, that he shared O'Brien's ardent belief in the social dimension of Christ's teaching, and this underpinned his radicalism.

Before his death in 1849 Hetherington prepared his Last Will and Testament in order to discredit a possible false report of a death-bed conversion to Christianity. The first article reads:

> I calmly and deliberately declare that I do not believe in the popular notion of the existence of an Almighty, All-wise, and Benevolent GOD - possessing intelligence, and conscious of his own operations; because these operations involve such a mass of contradictions, so much cruelty and injustice on His part to the poor and destitute portion of His creatures - that, in my opinion, no rational reflecting mind can, after disinterested investigation, give credence to the existence of such a Being.[70]

He also disclaimed belief in life after death. The only religion he ever considered useful to humanity "consists exclusively of the practice of morality, and in the mutual

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69. Plummer, Bronterre, p.211.
70. Henry Hetherington, Last Will and Testament, published along with tributes to Hetherington, under the editorship of G.J. Holyoake (London, 1849), p.9.

interchange of kind actions"; priests ought not to exist.[71] The pertinent question for this study is, did Hetherington believe these things in 1830-4? Royle claims that in the 1830s he shared Carlile's beliefs, although he disliked Carlile.[72] This would mean that he was a materialist, who perhaps, like Carlile, found value in an allegorical reading of the Bible.[73] Certainly Carlile could have assented to Hetherington's denial in 1849, quoted above, of belief in the existence of an omnipotent, omniscient and benevolent God. But did Hetherington believe, or rather not believe, the same thing in the early 1830s? If the answer is yes, the question remains as to what he did, as distinct from did not, believe. It should be observed that he did not deny the existence of a God, but only one possessing the attributes popularly ascribed to him.

The main evidence of Hetherington's religious beliefs in the 1830s is a tract often cited by historians (or listed in their bibliographies), but little analysed: Cheap Salvation, probably first published in 1833. Hetherington wrote Cheap Salvation in response to a request made by Rev. David Ruell, chaplain of Clerkenwell Prison, where he was detained between September 1831 and March 1832 and again from December 1832 to June 1833. In response to Ruell's attempt to convert him, Hetherington insisted that he was:

> an orthodox believer; and had resolved to embrace, and to the utmost of my power practise, the ennobling principles taught by Jesus and his apostles, - but only

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71. Ibid.
72. Royle, Victorian Infidels, p.42.
73. A reading of the following chapter will provide an understanding of this.

> because they appeared to my mind true, and useful to society, independently of their supernatural pretensions.[74]

Unconvinced, Ruell urged Hetherington to study religion and write down his thoughts on the subject. The product of this discussion was Cheap Salvation, but it was not written just to satisfy Ruell. It is an anti-clerical tract designed to alert working-class people to the fraudulent claim of the Church to teach and embody the precepts of genuine religion:

> For a system of cruelty, tyranny, and robbery, to be designated religion, is an outrage to the common sense of every honest man. It is an artful scheme...to doom the honest and industrious portion of the community to the inextricable thraldom of ignorance and superstition - that they may ever remain an easy prey to their oppressors. A religion that does not practically exemplify the principle that the "labourer must first be partaker of the fruits," is an imposture foisted upon society by artful and designing knaves to perpetuate their plunderings....It is time that the honest and industrious opened their eyes, and attended to this important and exhilarating appeal of the founder of Christianity, "Obey the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John viii.32.) In the fervent hope that this little tract may assist you in realising this glorious consummation, I commit it to the attentive perusal of my honest and religious fellow-countrymen.[75]

Here we see exemplified one of the objections to the Church which Hollis said were held by the Unstamped: that it was the intellectual prop of Old Corruption.[76] Hence Hetherington's attempt to counter its influence among

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74. Henry Hetherington, Cheap Salvation: or, an Antidote to Priestcraft: being a succinct, practical, essential, and rational religion, deduced from the New Testament..., Third ed. (London, n.d.) [1833?], Preface. Ruell had interrogated the Cato Street conspirators in 1820, concluding that their infidel ideas were at the bottom of the commission of their grave crime. See McCalman, Radical Underworld, p.139.
75. Hetherington, Cheap Salvation, preface. The "labourer must first be partaker of the fruits" is a Biblical quotation (2 Timothy 2:6).
76. Hollis, Pauper Press, p.207. Hollis's view was cited in the introduction to this chapter.

working-class people. His main purpose was mobilisational. There was a personal motive, too, behind this attack. Conditions in Clerkenwell were unpleasant, and Hetherington complained of the "petty meanness" exercised towards him and his fellow-prisoner, Watson, by visiting justices, especially the chairman, a Mr Hoare, who professed to be a religious man. Such religious hypocrisy partly accounted for Hetherington's resistance to Ruell's attempts to convert him. Further to this, the clergy had failed to denounce his being twice imprisoned without trial for selling unstamped papers, and his property was to be seized for non-payment of the Church-rate, threatening his family with destitution so that Ruell "and a host of men of his stamp, may receive £300 a-year for preaching a religion that sanctions such iniquity".[77]

What is critical to our discussion - a point which has escaped the notice of most historians - is that Hetherington grounded his indictment of the Church in the teaching of the New Testament. Cheap Salvation preaches a counter-Christianity, which, being founded upon the teaching of Jesus, asserts a claim to being true Christianity. It rejects the religion preached from pulpits as "incomprehensible and blasphemous" and declares that "essential saving religion, or true Christianity, WHOLLY CONSISTS IN DOING GOOD TO EACH OTHER"; it permits freedom of

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77. Ibid. Around this time Dissenters were campaigning against the compulsory payment of the Church rate. See Chadwick, The Victorian Church, pp.81-9. For some details of the conditions in Clerkenwell gaol see T. Cooper, The Life and Character of Henry Hetherington, one of the pamphlets which was published collectively with others on Hetherington's death, ed. G.J. Holyoake (London, 1849), p.6.

belief and opinion, teaches truth, justice, liberty and equality, and requires no priests to teach it. All Christian sects are said to be "infidels to true religion".[78] Salvation here is a concept much broader than the notion of one's soul passing from earth to heaven upon the death of the body: it is present and corporal, collective and universal, rather than future and spiritual, individual and selective.

These ideas are developed in the body of the pamphlet and are shown to proceed from the teaching of Jesus. All mystery is rejected as antipathetic to revelation. Hence doctrines such as original sin, the trinity, the miraculous conception, the two natures of Christ and eternal punishment must be rejected as false. It is the moral part of the New Testament which must be examined and heeded.[79] Such a declaration is consonant with Deist as well as radical Christian beliefs. The two great commandments of Jesus - love of God and neighbour - are fundamental, and love of God is said to be practised by loving one's neighbour.[80] Loving one's neighbour means not only to avoid doing him harm, but also to do all the good one can. Its meaning was explained by Jesus in the parable of the good Samaritan. The compassionate action of the Samaritan (Samaritans being a race of people despised by Jews) shows "the superiority of

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78. Hetherington, Cheap Salvation, p.7. The use of the term infidel strikes a chord with William Carpenter's branding as infidels those who impede or feel indifferent to the diffusion of knowledge.
79. Ibid., pp.7-9.
80. Ibid., pp.9-10. Scripture is said to support the claim that love of God and neighbour are essentially the same thing (1 John).

practical over theoretical, or merely ceremonial, religion".[81] Modern priests are like the people in the parable who ignored the suffering man:

> The working people have, indeed, fallen among public robbers, who have "stripped them of their raiment," and left too many of them "half dead" for want of food; but English priests, unmindful of the imperative duties of true practical religion, take especial care not to assist the victims of an unjust and tyrannical government, by denouncing, as they ought to denounce, the conduct of public robbers. Provided they receive their share of the booty, they, like the priests in the parable, will take any circuitous route to pass by unobserved or heedless of the wrongs and sufferings of the plundered people.[82]

Similar use of the parable was made by a correspondent to the Black Dwarf in 1820, who advanced an interpretation of Peterloo, and in particular the role of clerical magistrates in the events of 16 August 1819, in its terms.[83] This nicely underscores the continuity between the practical religion propounded by radicals of the post-war years and the radicals of the 1830s, some of whom of course were the same people. And it was the kind of religion upon which holders of a variety of beliefs on speculative theological questions could agree.

Hetherington was alert to the potential of religion to divide working-class people, a point which will be substantiated more fully below in discussing the editorial policy of the PMG. The religion outlined in Cheap Salvation, he claimed, "leaves the mind free to believe what appears to be true upon all subjects, and to reject what appears doubtful or disputable". Provided one was acting to promote the happiness of all people, one was fulfilling the

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81. Ibid., pp.10-11.
82. Ibid.
83. See Chapter 2 above.

requirements of religion.[84] The individual was free to read the Bible on his own, without the aid of special teachers; the method of teaching on speculative questions prescribed by the New Testament was "FREE INQUIRY and MUTUAL INSTRUCTION".[85] This presumably allowed the drawing of different conclusions which were all to be tolerated. Future salvation was not dependent upon reaching correct conclusions about speculative matters. If there is a future state (one of the speculative questions evidently), one's happiness therein would depend upon "having acted upon the principles, and from the motives, developed in this tract".[86]

It should be noticed that there is no necessary discrepancy between the theological premises of Hetherington's Last Will and Testament and Cheap Salvation. Although in the former, Hetherington denies the existence of the kind of God which the major world religions worship, at the same time he asserts the concept of religion as acting benevolently towards one's fellow human beings. And this is the religion exalted as true religion in Cheap Salvation. There is a dearth of evidence of Hetherington's personal theology in 1833, but questions about the nature of God and life after death are clearly of secondary, perhaps even of marginal importance. It is possible that he was a

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84. Hetherington, Cheap Salvation, p.16.
85. Ibid., pp.13-14. In support of this point, Luke 12:57, 1 Thessalonians 5:21 and Acts 17:11 are cited. Mutual instruction, on the evidence of 1 Corinthians 14:27-31, was said to be the method of teaching practised in early Christian gatherings.
86. Ibid., pp.15-16. Of course there are New Testament passages cited to support this contention: Romans 2:6-11, 12-16, John 5:24-9 and Matthew 25:31-46.

materialist like Carlile, but unlike Carlile, he rooted his notion of religion in a historical reading of the New Testament, at least in those parts pertaining to human behaviour.

A recent discussion of Cheap Salvation, which incorrectly gives its date of publication as 1843, uses it to show that "an Universalist theology of brotherhood and community...inspired all [Hetherington's] political activity".[87] Christodoulou's dissertation helpfully places Hetherington's social and political radicalism within the context of the Universalist theology which he imbibed during the 1820s when he was a member of the Freethinking Christians, a sect founded in 1798 when some members of the universalist church which met at Parliament Court broke away to start their own church to be organised and operated on New Testament principles. Cheap Salvation certainly bears the marks of the beliefs of the Freethinking Christians. It is consistent with their beliefs in the right of private judgement, the unity of the Deity, salvation according to works rather than beliefs, and in the Scriptures as containing the revealed will of God. It also

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87. Joan Patricia Christodoulou, "The Universalists: Radical Sectarianism (1760-1850)" (Open University M Phil thesis, 1988). The British Library catalogue gives the date of publication of Cheap Salvation as 1843, although no date appears on the copy held by the BL. The only other copy I have seen, held by the National Library of Australia, a third edition, is also undated. However, the preface of the pamphlet, which explains the occasion for its composition - discussed above - suggests that it was published in 1833, after Hetherington's second six-month term in Clerkenwell. Christodoulou's account implies a shift in Hetherington's religious beliefs between the writing of Cheap Salvation and his Last Will and Testament, which, as we have seen, is not an inescapable conclusion, and it obscures the common emphasis upon practical religion.

harmonises with their proscription of pulpit preaching and their anti-clericalism.[88]

In 1828 Hetherington had been expelled from the Freethinking Christians for his outspoken support of John Savage, who had advocated the case of a Jew who had been denied admission to the sect by its leaders.[89] What to Hetherington seemed the dictatorial behaviour of the leaders, constituted in his opinion at the time, a departure from the original principles of the Freethinking Christians: "having emancipated themselves from the dominion of priestcraft, their leaders have gradually and imperceptibly established a system of brothercraft more odious and oppressive than the former".[90] Their principles he obviously admired, and it was these which informed Cheap Salvation. The pamphlet itself speaks favourably of the Freethinking Christians, which he contrasts with the Established Church, and for which he forecasts an influential role "in the protection of the rights of Christian freedom and equality for every sect and party" - provided that they neither establish "an aristocracy of talent" nor "abandon, in practice, that spirit of fraternal

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88. For a statement of the beliefs of the Freethinking Christians see the Freethinking Christians' Magazine, Feb. 1812, pp.51-3. Concerning the Scriptures, Christodoulou points out that they believed the Bible to contain both true scripture and interpolations or mistranslations. The Romans 13 dispute, for example, was adjudicated by rejecting the authenticity of the first seven verses. Christodoulou, "The Universalists", p.177.

89. For Hetherington's account of the events leading up to his expulsion see H. Hetherington, Principles and Practice Contrasted; or, a peep into "The only true Church of God upon earth," commonly called Freethinking Christians (London, 1828). For a secondary account see Christodoulou, "The Universalists", pp.225-6.

90. Hetherington, Principles and Practices, p.30.

affection which should ever characterise the sincere votaries of Christianity".[91] In 1834 the sect split over Thompson's publication of an extremely exclusive view of the church's purpose, which affirmed the Calvinist principle of election. Thompson's group accused the others of inappropriate and excessive involvement in political affairs.[92]

Throughout the 1820s and 1830s members of the Freethinking Christians participated in political activities. For example, Hetherington, Lovett and Watson, all one-time Freethinking Christians, attended weekly NUWC meetings. The co-operative movement also attracted their interest and commitment. Hetherington and Benjamin Warden helped form the London Co-operative Society in 1824, and James Watson and William Lovett were leaders of the Society. Christodoulou argues that in the 1820s Freethinking Christians were attracted to Owenite socialism "with its millenarian vision of a rational and just society", which some of them began to reinterpret in their own terms. They thereby helped to give co-operation a more political emphasis. "Cheap Salvation," she asserts, "integrated Universalism with Hetherington's eclectic version of Owen's socialism".[93]

Owenism is a large topic and it is not intended to discuss it in detail here.[94] It should be noted, however, that in

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91. Hetherington, Cheap Salvation, p.15n.
92. See Christodoulou, "The Universalists", pp.226-30.
93. Ibid., pp.217-22, 231.
94. For accounts of Owenism see J.F.C. Harrison, Robert Owen and the Owenites in Britain and America: the Quest for the New Moral World (London, 1969), and Sidney Pollard and John Salt (eds), Robert Owen: Prophet of the Poor (London and Basingstoke, 1971).

the early 1830s working-class people were adapting Owen's ideas to their own needs and circumstances. What may be termed the "co-operative movement" was a protean phenomenon, some groups identifying themselves as Owenite, others dissenting from Owen's doctrines in various ways. Such diverse techniques and schemes as co-operative trading, the bazaar, the industrial school, home colonisation and currency reform were canvassed and/or implemented. Most groups had aims which fell far short of Owen's ideal of society being reorganised into self-supporting co-operative communities.[95] There was division, too, over the question of religion. Owen himself attacked Christianity, and his insistence that all religions ought to be eradicated precipitated the collapse of some co-operative societies.[96] Various anti-Christian sects promoted Owenite ideas, to the extent that Prothero asserts that there was "a clear connection between Owenism and unorthodox religious ideas".[97] Yet the co-operative ideal also appealed to some Christians. The group at Brighton, for example, which started the pioneering co-operative store there and published the Co-operator (edited by Dr William King), while opposed to Owen's religious views, saw co-operation as practical Christianity.[98] So neither the attraction of Freethinking Christians like Hetherington to Owenism, nor their selective adaptation of Owen's ideas, is peculiar.

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95. This argument is advanced by Prothero, Artisans, pp.246-57. For a similar view see Thompson, The Making, pp.868-72.
96. Prothero, Artisans, pp.258-9.
97. Ibid., p.263.
98. Ibid., pp.241-2.

Owenism is noted for its millenarian language (and its sectarian structure), and perhaps this partly explains its broad appeal. Owenites were generally post-millennialists in the eighteenth century mould, believing in a secular theory of evolutionary progress:

> While using the language of prophecy, revelation and scripture, the Owenites emptied the concept of the millennium of all theological content, leaving it simply and essentially a description of a state of society in which a new system prevailed. No longer was the millennium the end of human history, but rather the latest and highest stage in historical evolution.[99]

Christianity provided concepts and language which were adapted to conceive and articulate the vision of a new co-operative order; it was a case of using the language of the age in order to communicate.[100] As we have noted above, there were both Christians and anti-Christians who drew on Owen's ideas in formulating their own ideologies as reformers, and some of them were members of the same organisations. The same language could be used with different, yet overlapping, meanings for reformers of various religious opinions. Although needing to tread cautiously in the area of religion, the unstamped press oftentimes used religious language in its discussion of social and political issues, language which could communicate effectively with readers of varying religious beliefs.

In response to the charge made by some members of parliament that radical papers were "atheistical", Hetherington's Penny Papers explained its editorial policy

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99. Harrison, Robert Owen, pp.133-4.
100. Ibid., p.91. See also Barbara Taylor, Eve and the New Jerusalem: Socialism and Feminism in the Nineteenth Century (London, 1983), pp.148-9.

respecting religion. Asking why the label atheistical has been applied, it speculates:

> ...because, we suppose, we would pull down the "established church," whose god is mammon - the only god you acknowledge or worship. As for "religion" itself, we exclude it studiously from our pages, because we are desirous of not offending the prejudices of any party, and because we know that it would be useless urging, in support of our charitable cause, the just and equitable principles of Christ, inasmuch as, those whose rights we demand, are sufficiently interested to enlist under our banners without their persuasion, and those whom we attack would attend to them no more than did the Jews, were Christ himself present to plead them.[101]

So Christianity would seem to have been rendered redundant to the service of popular radicalism. Yet this is not the end of the story. First, it should be observed that the claim of the Established Church to worship the God of the New Testament is implicitly rejected by the assertion that its god is mammon. One recalls Christ's statement that one cannot worship both God and mammon. The charge that radical papers are atheistical is also denied by means of this counter-charge: they are only disbelievers in and foes of the god of mammon. Second, the principles of Christ are said to be "just and equitable": certainly consistent with the radical cause and eminently capable of being cited in its support. This is not done, however, for three reasons: non-Christians might thereby be offended, working-class people have a vital interest in the cause and do not need further inducement to support it, and the opponents of radicalism would not heed Christian principles anyway.

Although religious discussion was professedly excluded from Hetherington's papers, the teaching of Christ was implicitly - and consciously - being obeyed and even

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101. PP, 2 July 1831, p.1.

promulgated. The editor of the PMG referred to "our papers in which we endeavour to follow the precepts and advocate the principles of Christ as much as possible", such principles nowadays being branded by people like the MP Spencer Perceval as "blasphemous and seditious".[102] Although insisting upon the right of each person to formulate their own religious beliefs, PMG was not comfortable with anti-Christian doctrines. Noting Watson's publication of Volney's Ruins of Empires and Law of Nature, it acknowledges its reluctance to offer an opinion on the principles of the book, desiring that people make up their own minds about religion, "unbiassed by the dictatorial authority of others". Disagreement with the Ruins is implied by the review, but the morality of Law of Nature is commended, its doctrines being considered the same as those taught by Christ.[103] An editorial in the Destructive about the "St. Simonians" objected to their association of religion and politics: "these are not times for imposing on men by religious effect; besides, if we are to connect any religion with politics, the religion of Jesus Christ is good

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102. PMG, 1 Oct. 1831, p.101. The context is a denunciation of Perceval (the infamous "General Fast") as a hypocrite, on the occasion of his speech moving that an annual grant to an Irish Catholic college be discontinued, on the ground of "popery" being a corruption of the true worship of Christ.

103. PMG, 16 Feb. 1833, p.52. Volney himself pointed to such a connection: citing the Golden Rule as encapsulating fundamental social virtue, he observed that when the gospel declared this injunction, it "did no more than announce a precept of the law of nature". See M. Volney, Law of Nature, appended to Ruins, p.35.

enough."[104] So, it is clear that, while respecting freedom of religious opinion, Hetherington's papers (under O'Brien's editorship from November 1831) preferred Christianity to the alternatives available in the early 1830s, and Christ's teaching informed their social and political radicalism.

Christians who worked for the cause of reform could attain a respected status among working-class radicals. This was most notably true of Rev.Dr. Arthur Wade, a Warwickshire vicar introduced to a meeting of the NUWC on 17 May 1832, by which time he was already respected by London working-class men. He was active in NUWC campaigns against military flogging, and in support of a free press. Later he became involved in anti-Poor Law agitation, the protest following the sentencing of the Tolpuddle martyrs, and Chartism. A latitudinarian loyal to the Church, he was tolerant of others' beliefs and supported Catholic emancipation.[105] Wade's sermon A Voice from the Church was reviewed favourably by the PMG, and copies were sold by Hetherington and vendors of the Guardian; Hetherington published a portrait of Wade, along with a facsimile of his handwriting

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104. Destructive, 21 Sept. 1833, p.339. The Saint-Simonians were the disciples of the French proto-socialist thinker, Saint-Simon, whose New Christianity was based on science rather than theology. See G.D.H. Cole, A History of Socialist Thought, Vol.1 (London and Basingstoke, 1953), Chapters 4 and 5.

105. See T.H. Lloyd, "Dr Wade and the Working Class", Midland History, vol.II, no.2 (Autumn 1973), pp.61-83. Wade's ideas are representative of the "true religion" of popular radicalism. See the conclusion to this thesis below.

and a summary of the political principles of the sermon.[106] Wade was the kind of clergyman which radical Christians like Hetherington and O'Brien would want to be typical. Because of his clerical status there was tactical advantage in publicising his views.

But disunity among reformers over religion threatened the integrity of working-class radicalism, and there was a need for discretion on the part of journalists seeking to promote the common cause. A reading of the correspondence published by Hetherington's papers attests to this. One Dissenter, for example, wrote that he was offended by anti-Christian statements made at meetings of the London Political Union. Although a determined opponent of their common oppressors, he felt unable to join or attend meetings "of a society where I am constantly liable to have my feelings outraged, and my opinions treated with contumely by a few mouthey Deistical ranters". He claimed to know many others who felt the same.[107] Another correspondent accused this Dissenter of being intolerant of Deists, whom he styled as "rational, sober, and reflecting men". The use of the Bible, he contended, had failed to produce reform, and so different language must now be employed.[108] Between such conflicting opinions O'Brien and Hetherington, anxious to

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106. PMG, 15 Sept. 1832, p.536, 29 Sept. 1832, pp.550-1, 28 Dec. 1833, p.420. A Voice from the Church may not be extant - Lloyd was unable to find a copy, "Dr Wade", p.73. The sermon was preached at St Nicholas's, Warwick, on 19 August 1832.
107. PMG, 17 Sept. 1831, p.85. There was a reported instance, probably not related to this correspondent, of a speaker at a meeting of the NUWC being howled down when he began quoting scripture in a discussion of "infant slavery". See PMG, 31 Mar. 1832, p.330.
108. PMG, 8 Oct. 1831, p.115.

foster unity, had to chart a careful course.

In September 1833 a controversy arose when the PMG attacked the Wesleyan preachers of Macclesfield, who had allegedly told their congregations that the PMG was "the poor man's poison" and the Destructive the "poor man's destruction".[109] A correspondent calling himself "E.J.H." and claiming to be both a Christian and a Republican, was indignant about the PMG's attack on the Methodist clergy and he cited as contrary evidence examples of clergy championing liberal causes such as Catholic emancipation, the abolition of slavery and the regulation of child labour in factories. His concern was that some people might think that the crimes attributed to the priesthood by the Guardian arose from the Bible. The reform movement, he said, could not afford to be disunited; many members were Christians and liable to be offended by their being labelled "bad characters because of their religion".[110] PMG replied that E.J.H. had misunderstood its intention, assuring him that the attack on the clergy was not because of their religion.[111] In an article addressed to Methodist preachers the Destructive expanded on this assurance, explaining that it held no hostility towards their religion, but did object to their intervention in secular matters to the detriment of the temporal welfare of the people. "The minister who would not labour to improve the temporal condition of the people", it declared, "cannot be a disciple of Christ, but an infidel and a hypocrite".[112]

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109. PMG, 7 Sept. 1833, p.285.
110. PMG, 14 Sept. 1833, pp.299-300.
111. Ibid., pp.294-5.
112. Destructive, 21 Sept. 1833, p.265.

This kind of usage of the term infidel appeared earlier in the discussion above, and it, too, points to a notion of true religion as active benevolence rather than "correct" theological formulations. The Destructive went on to explain that

> The fundamental doctrines of Christianity were designed to raise man to a higher state of moral and intellectual culture, social enjoyment, and freedom in this life, as necessary to secure for him felicity hereafter. Practical christianity is not a string of mysteries, ceremonies, and prayers - No, it consists in active benevolence, in granting to every man his right.[113]

This claim is supported by pointing to Jesus's denunciation of the Pharisees who thought they were justified by reciting public prayers, fasting, sacrifices and ceremonies, "while they kept the people in ignorance, poverty, and oppression".[114] A similar juxtaposition of true and false religion had been a reiterated theme of PMG during 1832-3, and such remarks were often occasioned by the imputation that radicals were irreligious. Reformers were called atheists by their opponents, as in a Christian country it was in every person's interest to be thought to be a Christian, but Christians were to be known "by their actions, which shew, [sic] in spite of them, whether they are or are not real followers of Jesus Christ, who has said, "If ye do my will, then are ye my disciples indeed".[115]

Against the statements of Christ, the clergy, particularly of the Established Church, were tried and found wanting. In

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113. Ibid.
114. Ibid.
115. PMG, 1 Dec. 1832, pp.624-5. The context is a response to a speech on the character of reformers in England, by the Lord Lieutenant of Norfolk, Mr Wodehouse, on 7 Nov. 1832. He had called reformers atheists. For similar statements see PMG, 16 Mar. 1833, pp.81-2 (concerning flogging in the army), and especially 31 Aug. 1833, pp.277-8.

spite of the declared uselessness of using Scripture to fight their enemies, time and again PMG and Destructive deployed the injunctions of Christ as weapons with which to censure the actions and pronouncements of the Church. The contrast between the wealth of the Church and the poverty of most of the population was considered an indication that the teaching of Christ was not heeded, particularly as the Church, by its collection of tithes, contributed to the impoverishment of the people.[116] The case of one Jeremiah Dodsworth, of the East Riding, attracted the particular attention of the radical press. Tithe disputes did not normally involve the lower classes as no personal tithes were payable. Dodworth, however, was sent to a House of Correction for three months for not giving a tenth of his wage to the rector of Lockington (East Riding) in 1832.[117] "Heaven is not more opposite to hell," declared the Destructive, "than is the benevolent spirit of Christianity to the frauds and rapacity of a Church like this."[118]

In the period under review in this chapter, the outstanding clerical offence was the bishops' decisive contribution to the defeat of Grey's second Reform Bill in October 1831. Clergymen and church property became the

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116. For examples see PMG, 9 July 1831, p.6, 6 Aug. 1831, p.37, Destructive, 22 June 1833, p.168, and 1 Feb. 1834, p.418.
117. See Evans, "The Growth of English Rural Anti-Clericalism", pp.90-1. Evans observes that while still exceptional, labourers were increasingly coming into direct contact with the collection of the tithe as more of them began to grow potatoes for domestic consumption. Ibid., pp.91-4.
118. Destructive, 7 Sept. 1833, pp.252-3.

objects of popular anger.[119] PMG reported its suspicion that a bishop had persuaded the King not to create more peers, with the result that a more moderate Bill was to be drawn up during the prorogation of parliament. It spurned bishops as

> "wolves in sheep's clothing" - these anti-christian advocates of christianity - who have made the "house of prayer" a "den of thieves" - these demons who wear the mask of peace, and charity, and justice, merely to gain them easy practice for their damnable intentions!![120]

At the same time the cholera epidemic had prompted the formulation by the Bishops of a prayer to be used in Churches throughout the country. It took the form of a confession of sin and a plea for mercy, which PMG denounced as hypocritical: "What right have these practical mockers and blasphemers to ask their master for mercy when they deny it to all their dependents?"[121]

The potential tactical advantage of turning Biblical maxims against the Church can readily be appreciated. They were also employed much more widely, to challenge the government about specific issues and indeed to indict the existing economic and political order of English society.

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119. See Clark, English Society, p.405. For an account of a bishop being burned in effigy at Huddersfield see PMG, 19 Nov. 1831, p.174.
120. PMG, 22 Oct. 1831, p.128. In chapter 3 above we saw that radical leaders were identified by conservatives with false prophets by using the Biblical metaphor "wolves in sheep's clothing". The other Scriptural allusion is to Christ's driving the moneychangers out of the temple in Jerusalem. See Mark 11:15-17.
121. PMG, 5 Nov. 1831, pp.159-60. See also 19 Nov. 1831, p.173, for a report of the resolution of the NUWC that it was improper for the Church to be governed by such sinful men, who, while praying against the "Indian cholera", supported the boroughmongers - the "political cholera". For an account of the various responses to the cholera epidemic of 1831-2 see R.J. Morris, Cholera 1832: the Social Response to an Epidemic (London, 1976).

The Bristol riots is an example of the former. Following the defeat of the second Reform Bill, mentioned above, riots broke out in several towns, the most serious being in Bristol where gaols were burned, the town hall was ignited and much property damaged. Thirtyone of the rioters were subsequently sentenced to death, but only four were executed.[122] PMG expressed regret about the violence and destruction, laying the blame not on the rioters, but on the government - for the government was responsible for the impoverishment which lay behind the Bristolians' angry violence. It urged the King and "his christian ministers" to exercise mercy, remembering that "there are some who plunder the country more every day than the Bristolians in all their riot; and we should "do unto others as we would that others should do unto us"".[123] The Biblical injunction will be remembered from its widespread use by radical publications during the post-war years. The special commissioners appointed to try the rioters were urged to heed this injunction of Christ's, taking into account the wretched circumstances of the accused and their disappointment following the defeat of the Reform Bill.[124] The executions of four of the rioters were styled by the Guardian as deliberate murders -

> by permission and command of one who professes to be the representative of an all-merciful GOD, and who is at the head of a Christian church, whose chief commands are, thou shall do no murder, - return thou good for evil, - and do unto others what you would that others should do

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122. For an assessment of the revolutionary threat of the October crisis see Malcolm I. Thomis and Peter Holt, Threats of Revolution in Britain 1789-1848 (London and Basingstoke, 1977), pp.86-9.
123. PMG, 5 Nov. 1831, p.148.
124. PMG, 31 Dec. 1831, p.225.

unto you![125]

Britain professed to be a Christian State ruled by a Christian monarch who was head of the State Church, and so it was pertinent to attempt to influence the government's decisions and judge its actions by making specific reference to the injunctions of the Scriptures. The Bible was an authority recognised by both the government and the PMG, and therefore appeal was made to it as a kind of arbitrator in such disputes.[126]

Of course the issue in which Hetherington's papers were most vitally interested was that of the freedom of the press. The lead article of the first issue of PMG declared its determination to fight for the freedom of the press in spite of the risk of prosecution. It drew a parallel between its own cause and that of Christ, arguably drawing strength and inspiration from this identification:

> we shrink not from the worst, be our reward the cross of agony itself, on which Christ expiated his "SEDITION;" and be our doctrines, like his - pure and just as they are - rejected by all mankind; or, be they like his, only received to be distorted - even by those who profess the most to venerate them - into an authority for every species of rapacity and injustice - still we are prepared.[127]

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125. PMG, 4 Feb. 1832, p.265. For similar uses of Biblical texts and allusions with respect to the government's treatment of both the Bristol and Nottingham rioters see PMG, 21 Jan. 1832, pp.257-8 and 4 Feb. 1832, p.271.
126. A detailed Scriptural argument was also advanced in opposition to the Bill for the Better Observance of the Sabbath, the restrictions it imposed upon activities permitted on a Sunday being considered oppressive to working-class people and preventing them meeting to discuss their grievances. See Destructive, 27 Apr. 1833, p.102. The use of flogging as a punishment in the armed services was also seen as contrary to Christian principles. See PMG, 26 Nov. 1831, p.177, and 14 July 1832, p.457.
127. PMG, 9 July 1831, p.1. For another strong statement of the struggle for press freedom being a Christian cause see PMG, 15 Mar. 1834, pp.42-3.

Concomitantly, the cause of press censorship was considered anti-Christian. By 19 August 1831, the day on which a public meeting at Huddersfield adopted a petition to the House of Commons protesting against the prosecution of people for publishing or declaring publicly their beliefs, the popular radical writers and/or orators Taylor, Carlile, Carpenter and Hetherington, had been arraigned. The Society for the Suppression of Vice, which prepared cases against such men, was said to be a "Holy Inquisition" acting contrary to Christian principles and motivated by the love of money.[128] PMG consistently upheld the right to express one's opinion, supporting the victims of prosecution even when, as in the case of Robert Taylor, it disagreed with the opinions of those victims.[129]

Opponents of political economy, Hetherington's and O'Brien's papers vigorously contested any suggestion that the extreme inequality of property in Britain was natural or inevitable. There was a religious dimension to this question, for conservative writers, and, it would appear, even William Cobbett, argued that God was the author of the existing state of things. Several articles in 1833 defended the character of God against this allegedly blasphemous contention. In February the Destructive and the PMG printed a refutation of the ideas of an article in the Saturday Magazine on the subject of "Rich and Poor".[130] The Saturday Magazine was an unstamped paper published by the

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128. PMG, 17 Sept. 1831, p.84.
129. See PMG, 9 July 1831, pp.4-6 and 2 Feb. 1833, pp.37-8 for articles which, while expressing disagreement with Taylor's religious views, nevertheless strongly advocate his cause.
130. Identical articles appeared in PMG and Destructive on 2 February.

SPCK, an organisation which PMG said aimed "to prop up the present cannibal order of things, by reconciling the poor, (in the name of religion!) to hunger, and servitude".[131] The term "cannibal" was used to refer to the fact that the rich consumed the poor man's means of living, a practice condemned by the Bible.[132] The Bible, said the Saturday Magazine, forbids coveting another's goods - simply because they are his - and this applies irrespective of whether or not they are used for good. PMG applauds the injunction, but asserts that it should be addressed "to the plundering rich instead of the plundered poor". All the poor want is "to be allowed to keep the fruits of their own industry, or to exchange them for others upon equitable terms".[133]

Implied by this statement is that the present economic order is unjust and that this injustice is remediable. At this time, as we have seen, working people were discussing and implementing various schemes based on co-operation rather than competition, and their ideas challenged the unequal distribution of wealth and the class structure of English society. The Saturday Magazine advised that God would judge people according to how they have acted in the station in which he had placed them; he has "appointed to each his own trials".[134] PMG contested this, and suggested that if the writer worked for a month at Marshall's factory where the billy roller was used, he would cease to attribute all humanity's trials to God:

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131. PMG, 2 Feb. 1833, p.33.
132. Ibid. Ecclesiastes 34:22, used as a motto at the head of this article, is cited: "The bread of the needy is their life; he that defraudeth them thereof is a man of blood".
133. Ibid.
134. Ibid.

> The evidence of decripid [sic] limbs - loss of appetite - incessant head-ache, stinted [sic] growth, and a sore back, occasionally rising in wheals and tumours - would soon convince him that many of the evils which he now innocently believes to be of "God's appointment," are not of so divine and remote an origin as he supposes. In short, he would discover that the devil and man had more to do with our "trials" than a God of mercy, upon whom he blasphemously saddles them.[135]

No doubt PMG believed that in a society released from the pressure of competition such debilitating working conditions would not exist. And it would be more a case of people caring for each other's welfare than of the imposition of legislative restraints.

These ideas were more fully and explicitly developed in three articles written in response to articles which appeared in Cobbett's Register in the latter half of 1833. Destructive approved of a pamphlet, reviewed by Cobbett, which exposed the suffering of working people under capitalism: when wealth is accumulated by a few, the majority is inevitably enslaved. Disagreement, however, is expressed with Cobbett's claim that the source of the problem was the capitalist's lack of responsibility; the evils of the factory system could never be eliminated because of "the badness of the human heart".[136] O'Brien made his dissent plain:

> We assert that the human heart is naturally good, and that the man who maintains the contrary, would not only make the Deity the author of an essentially corrupt thing, but would represent him as placing the whole of animated nature at the mercy of that corrupt thing, than which doctrine we consider nothing more blasphemous and insulting to the Creator. No! no! - Our evils do not

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135. Ibid.
136. Destructive, 3 Aug. 1833, pp.213-4. The title of the pamphlet in question is As Address to the Working Men of New England on the State of Education, and the Condition of the Producing Classes in Europe and North America. It was published under the pseudonym Seth Luther.

> spring from the "natural badness" of our hearts, but from the atrocious circumstances by which cannibal civilization surrounds us from the moment of birth - and the remedy lies not in superadding jealous responsibility to jealous power, but in substituting the CO-OPERATIVE for the COMPETITIVE spirit, in the production and distribution of wealth.[137]

O'Brien criticised Cobbett's journal's exclusive advocacy of political reform, when social reform was also required. At the theological level this was contested by disputing the notion of humanity's innate depravity, the doctrine of original sin. If people were naturally bad then legislation - formulated by representatives of all the people, lest particular interests preponderated - was the only means of establishing a just society. But if people were naturally good, and only made bad by circumstances, then new generations, nurtured in a co-operative society, would be good people not inclined to serve their own interests at the expense of others. "The desire of one man to live on the fruits of another's labour," averred O'Brien in an earlier article, is the original sin of the world".[138] Christ was crucified because he tried to destroy "this demon principle".[139] That "original sin" had resulted in the institution of a competitive society which begets selfishness and strife, and which continues to breed sin. Of course O'Brien and Hetherington also advocated universal suffrage, but their vision transcended Cobbett's, and they embraced industrialisation for the potential benefits it

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137. Ibid. The Owenite doctrine of necessity (referred to above) probably underlies this assertion.
138. PMG, 27 Apr. 1833, p.130.
139. Ibid.

held for all people, rather than hearking back to Old England.[140]

PMG disputed at length an article which appeared in Cobbett's Register on 14 September arguing that the present order of the world was to be attributed to God's decree that the vast majority of people were to live by hard work, and never possess property. PMG condemned this view as absurd and atrocious, based on a misunderstanding of the Bible. God's curse upon Adam - "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground" - simply meant that everyone would live by labour; it did not "doom any portion of mankind to drudgery for the aggrandisement of the rest".[141] The present unnatural state of society was upheld by force and fraud and was not to be connected with the name of God:

> We deny it as inconsistent with the beneficent character of Him who has made man the intellectual and sensitive being he is - Him who has made the earth so fertile - made all nature teem with animal and vegetable life - furnished a table for every thing that lives....In the name of the beneficent Author of these gifts, we denounce the impious wretches who charge Him with the avarice, the luxury and the laziness, the pride, perfidy, meanness, poverty, cruelty, crime, starvation, and legalised murders which deluge the world. We deny that to be the work of God which can be clearly traced to the crimes of man.[142]

This sounds like the Deist radicals of 1819. It is very much grounded in observation and reason. Yet it is also given a secure Biblical foundation. On 5 October PMG

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140. Around 1816 Cobbett believed that machinery was not harmful to workers' interests, but by 1826 he had changed his mind, lamenting the decline of cottage work. He understood little about factory production and his interest in the industrial worker waxed and waned. See Spater, William Cobbett, II, pp.541-2, and Osborne, William Cobbett, pp.177-95.
141. PMG, 28 Sept. 1833, pp.309-10.
142. Ibid.

published an article entitled "THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT VERSUS COBBETT'S DAMNABLE DOCTRINE, THAT THE POOR ARE PREDESTINED BY GOD TO BE THE SLAVES OF THE RICH. - THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION FAVOURABLE TO COMMUNITY OF PROPERTY". Cobbett's influence among working people made it imperative that this doctrine be contested, and PMG proceeded to adduce scriptural authority for its own view. Among other things, it described the Old Testament regulations designed "to prevent the undue accumulation of property", and claimed that Christ's mission was to abolish inequality of power and property; the apostles established "a community of property" after Jesus's death.[143]

The connection between economic equality and Christian doctrine was not forged in 1833 in response to Cobbett and the Saturday Magazine. There are many other scattered references from 1830 which suggest that the link was always made, although it was rarely elaborated upon, this being consistent with the editorial policy regarding religious issues discussed above.[144] Major discussion of religion required a stimulus important enough to warrant a breach of the usual rule. We can see from the example discussed in the preceding paragraph that the opinions of both Deist and Christian readers were kept in mind: the testimonies of reason and Scripture were blended, although that of Scripture was given greater attention because it was the basis of Cobbett's argument too, and the editor of PMG had a sincere respect for the Bible as revelation.

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143. PMG, 5 Oct. 1833, pp.317-19.
144. For examples see Penny Papers, 9 Oct. 1830, 20 Nov. 1830, and 31 Dec. 1830, pp.3-4, PMG, 30 Jul.1831, pp.29-30 and 1 Oct. 1831, p.99.

CONCLUSION

In 1835 was published Thomas Dolby's The School for Reform in Church and State, an instruction manual in political principles, explicitly founded upon the Bible.[145] The Bible was exalted as a political as well as a religious authority, and passages were invoked in support of popular sovereignty, universal suffrage and the ballot. It was represented as favouring the poor, forbidding excessive taxation and advocating deliverance from earthly tyrannies. On the subject of religion Dolby quoted St James: "Pure religion and undefiled before GOD is this; - To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27); rather than being a mere profession or a means of obtaining the respect of others, religion entailed devotion to God and "justice and practical benevolence to man".[146] Such a publication was not anachronistic by the mid-eighteen-thirties, despite the growth of Zetetic societies and Owenite organisations during the twenties. E.P. Thompson was right to insist that "it is premature, in the 1830s, to think of the English working people as being wholly open to secular

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145. Dolby had been a leading radical bookseller and distributor in the post-war years, and campaigned on Hunt's behalf in 1818. In 1821-3 he was the victim of several prosecutions instigated by the Constitutional Association, and, like many other pressmen, entered severe financial straits in the twenties. See Belchem, "Orator" Hunt, p.81, McCalman, Radical Underworld, pp.158-9, 214, and Thomas Dolby, Memoirs of Thomas Dolby (London, 1827), esp. pp.108-14, 124-49.

146. Thomas Dolby, The School for Reform in Church and State, in which are set forth the doctrines, lives and labours of the most eminent Reformers (London, 1835), pp.25-6, 31, 33-9, 58-9, 175, 180, 190-1, 198, 200.

ideology".[147] Indeed this is an understatement. Radical ideology had a significant religious component, which, if not always as overtly rooted in the Bible as was Dolby's book, was nevertheless consonant with the emphases of Dolby's genuine religion.

In the early 1830s "genuine" or "true" Christianity had an important, if not central, function in the discourse of the working-class press, one which has not been identified by previous historians. As we have seen, Carpenter, Hetherington and O'Brien all drew on the Bible to bolster their arguments for political and economic reform. This reflected their own religious backgrounds and convictions, and catered for a readership of diverse religious opinions. The concepts and language of the Bible were harmonised with the observations and prognostications of reason. Just as Church and State were partners in upholding the existing order of things, true religion and radical politics were partners in the cause of reform. This religion was one stripped of speculative theological elements for the sake of unity among reformers, and a common notion of doing good to others as being the essence of religious practice was deployed to indict the practices of Church and State as impious, and to identify reform with the cause of God.

There are few differences in ideas between 1819 and 1832. The major alleged development of a new economic radicalism - to whatever extent it may have been influential among working-class people - was buttressed with Biblical allusions. In 1819, the extreme inequality of wealth was

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147. Thompson, The Making, p.882.

also attacked with religious weapons, and so it was but a small step to extend the sanction of Christianity to doctrines like the labour theory of value. The enduring anti-clerical strain of radical discourse points to the continuity with the post-war analyses. As in 1819, too, harsh economic conditions and a swelling movement demanding reform helped create a millenarian atmosphere. The doctrines of radical religious sects and Owenite groups contributed to this mood, and the Swing riots, and the struggles for the passing of the Reform Bill and for a free press aroused specific hopes and expectations, providing short-term goals to be pursued. The perceived importance of Biblical concepts and language in the struggle for reform - particularly in mobilising support - is further demonstrable by an examination of the careers of Richard Carlile and his associates in the early 1830s. The arch-infidel-radical becomes a Christian. This is the focus of the next, and final, chapter of this thesis.

CHAPTER 5: INFIDEL TURNS CHRISTIAN: RICHARD CARLILE AND HIS ASSOCIATES

On 5 May 1832 Richard Carlile publicly announced his conversion to Christianity after fourteen years of infidelity. He claimed sincerely to believe in the truth of the interpretation of the Bible which had been expounded in the Isis over the past few months; on the basis of belief in this "moral allegory" he could proclaim: "I DECLARE MYSELF A BELIEVER IN THE TRUTH OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION".[1] This declaration is the pivot of this chapter, the aim of which is to explore the meaning and significance of Carlile's conversion. What produced the conversion? To what extent was it a break with the past? In what ways did it affect his subsequent career? The most central question of this study, however, extends beyond the man to his social and intellectual milieu: in what ways (if any) was the allegory related to the issues with which popular radicalism was concerned in the early 1830s?

This discussion is centred on the period 1831-4, but it is essential to place Carlile's conversion in the context of developments from 1826. Of particular importance are his provincial lecture tours (1827-9), the events of which he recorded in the Lion (his first periodical since relinquishing the Republican in December 1826), and the period of the Rotunda, a building on Blackfriars Road, London, which from May 1830 when Carlile opened it to the public, until the imprisonment of Robert Taylor in July 1831, was "the center of working-class radicalism in

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1. Isis, 5 May 1832, pp.202-3.

London".[2] In the early months of 1832, Elizabeth Sharples, shortly to become Carlile's de facto wife, expounded at the Rotunda the "moral allegory" of the Bible to which Carlile announced his adherence in May. During the Rotunda years Carlile published the Prompter (November 1830-November 1831) and the Isis (February-December 1832). The end of his last major periodical, the Gauntlet (February 1833-March 1834), marks the end of the episodes of his career with which the present study is concerned. Carlile spent two and a half of these years in prison for seditious libel (January 1831-August 1833). Shortly after his release from gaol he resumed his provincial lecture tours, having failed to find a new Rotunda-style meeting hall in London. He had made three tours by the time of the Gauntlet's demise.

Carlile had made his earlier provincial tours as a "missionary" of infidelity.[3] His aim had been to destroy, not only Christianity, but all religion. His ends were political and social, however, not purely religious. In a discussion with a "religious, radical reformer" (to Carlile a contradiction in terms) in Hyde, he explained that religion was a major cause of poverty; his "effort to uproot religion, was not a mere struggle about faith, but an attempt toward a great political reform".[4] We should recall Carlile's assertion in 1819 that the Bible was the main cause of misery at the time.[5] In 1819 he had been a Deist; in the early eighteen-twenties he "progressed" to

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2. Wiener, Radicalism, p.165.
3. See ibid, ch.8.
4. Lion, 25 April 1828, p.518.
5. See chapter 2 above.

materialism, hence his branding of Deism in 1828 as a form of superstition - for it made of God a moral power. The only appropriate epithets to use of God were "unknown" and "incomprehensible"; the word "God" referred solely to physical power in the universe.[6] Carlile's religious opinions had changed, but his commitment to political reform had not, and neither had his opposition to religion insofar as he believed it to impede political progress.

Carlile contended that all religions were made by people. Rather than God having made man in his own image, men made God in <u>their</u> image, and this was a powerful lever of oppression and injustice. This theory was expounded in a discourse at the Rotunda in late October 1831 - in the charged political atmosphere of riot and repression which followed the Lords' rejection of Grey's second reform bill. (The discourse was entitled "What is a Lord?") A long excerpt is quoted below for its importance to present and later discussion.

> The principles of social inequality, and consequent despotism, have arisen from human passions; and, as auxiliary to its purposes, the exemplary picture has been drawn in the Heavens. It is but a picture which you see in the Heavens - the reality is upon earth. The God of Heaven, personified and passioned, as you find every description of him to be...is but the type of the monarch of the earth. The vicegerency is in the clouds - the real power on earth, which we, who labour for our daily bread, feel to our acute misery. Then follows the train of lords and lordly bishops, of officers and priests, which you find painted in the heavens as patriarchs, apostles, saints, and angels. This again, in relation to the heavens, is nothing but a picture. You have the reality on earth. You have both heaven and hell on earth; and you will not find them elsewhere. They who labour and are taxed to support a monarchy, a church, and such an aristocracy as we have in England, are in hell; and hotly do they feel it. Out of that hell of yours, the privileged classes create a

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6. <u>Lion</u>, 4 Jan. 1828, pp.9-10.

> heaven, and satiate themselves with luxuries. Such is the only title-deed which the lords of the earth hold. They have arisen upon you, or out of you, through imposture; and you deserve to bear their yoke just as long as you will consent to bear it. Your will preserves it - your will may shake it off.[7]

By denying the existence of a God - except as an impersonal physical force - Carlile had intended to undermine belief in the anthropomorphic God of both the Established Church and Dissent, the God who sanctioned the existing political regime. If a religious man, kowtowing to a tyrant in heaven, was likely to kowtow to a tyrant on earth, then the picture of the heavenly tyrant needed to be broken in order to destroy submission to the real earthly one. The premise was that if the majority of people wanted political change they could accomplish it, for their numerical strength assured them of success. Carlile's mission, therefore, was to change people's beliefs, as a means of mobilising them to demand reform.

The destruction of Christianity in England was a formidable task. It is the argument of this chapter that by the time of his "conversion" Carlile had adopted a new tactic. Rather than attempting to annihilate Christianity, he would appropriate its mythological foundation for the cause of radical reform. Rather than undermining respect for the Bible, he would claim that the Christian churches had misunderstood its real meaning, that it was not to be

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7. Prompter, 5 Nov. 1831, p.908. For a brief statement of the same view, made by Carlile in an open air discussion at Nottingham in 1828, see the Lion, 29 Aug. 1828, p.258.

read literally but interpreted allegorically.[8] This change of tactic signified the realisation that the Bible was deeply entrenched in English culture, and uncompromising hostility towards it alienated large numbers of people otherwise potentially sympathetic to reform. Such an admission was implicit in the response to Carlile's conversion by the editress of the Isis, his collaborator, Eliza Sharples. She averred that Carlile's embracing of Christianity would "satisfy the honest Christian, that no degree of knowledge is at variance with a right interpretation of his religion".[9]

Carlile rationalised his conversion as a stage in the progress of an enquiring mind divesting itself of superstition. There were four stages of religious development. First, one believed in the Bible as revelation, and God as a supernatural power personified as "an Almighty human being". This was the product of Christian education, whether of the Established Church or one of the Dissenting sects. Intellectual progress began with doubting these beliefs, a result of attending to the Bible's inconsistencies and realising that many of its historical passages could not be reconciled with notions of God's justice, wisdom and benevolence. Drawing the conclusion that the Bible is not the word of God, but continuing to believe in God's existence, one reached the

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8. Most Biblical exegetes around this time were literalists, but allegorical interpretations did exist - see Oliver, Prophets, pp.18-19. Southcottian prophets popularised allegorical understandings of the Bible; see the discussions of Ward and Smith below.
9. Isis, 5 May 1832, p.200. See the discussion of Elizabeth Sharples below.

second stage, that of Deism. The study of chemistry, geology and astronomy led one on to the third stage, that of materialism, which entailed denial of the principle of design and the existence of supernatural beings. The fourth stage - that of working out a rational meaning of the Bible - was an expression of one's commitment to destroying superstition. This was the task that Carlile and Robert Taylor had recently undertaken: Taylor had worked out the physical allegory (in which leading characters of the Bible stories were made to represent the sun in its zodiacal transits), and Carlile the moral allegory (in which the Bible characters "represent the good man struggling to communicate knowledge to his fellow men, being persecuted as a seditionist or blasphemer by existing ever-corrupt authorities; but always finally triumphing over those authorities").[10]

Carlile's moral allegory was not the product of a sudden inspiration, but the culmination of his reading and thinking throughout the 1820s, and its basic concepts were established several years before it assumed prominence in 1832. In September 1827, on his second provincial tour, Carlile first preached the moral allegory - at a Bible Christian meeting held near Stockport. The sermon was subsequently published in expanded form in two pamphlets: A Sermon upon the Subject of Deity and The Gospel According to Richard Carlile.[11] In A Sermon Carlile denied being an

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10. Isis, 28 July 1832, pp.369-71. Taylor's ideas had their origin in Charles Dupuis's Origines des tous les Cultes (1795). See Wiener, Radicalism, pp.131-2. Taylor's influence upon Carlile will be discussed below.
11. See Wiener, Radicalism, pp.144-5.

atheist in relation to the physical powers of the universe, but only in ascribing attributes to God. His was the gospel of materialism, that is, the sum of knowledge about the physical world; it never concerned itself with speculative, metaphysical subjects: "It is that Deity...which represented the PRINCIPLE OF REASON, the sum of human knowledge, past, present, and to come".[12] Most of The Gospel was devoted to discrediting the historicity of the life of Jesus and the early development of the Christian Church as related in the New Testament. Christ represented the persecuted principle of reason. If one interpreted the New Testament in the light of this understanding, one could claim to be a true Christian.[13]

The formulation of the moral allegory probably owed a special debt to Robert Taylor, an ex-Anglican clergyman turned Deist, who came to London in 1824.[14] It is not the purpose of this study to analyse Taylor's ideas, but it is essential to acknowledge the convergence of the two men's thought and careers from the mid-1820s as a critical stage, if not the genesis, of the process leading to Carlile's "conversion" in 1832. Within the orbit of Taylor's influence Carlile's rigid materialism began to soften, and by 1828 he was beginning to publicise Taylor's theories.

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12. Richard Carlile, A Sermon upon the Subject of Deity, Preached on Sunday, Sept.9...from the Pulpit, before the Congregation, of the Church of Mount Brinksway, near Stockport (London, 1827), pp.3-4, 6, 8.
13. See Richard Carlile, The Gospel According to Richard Carlile, shewing the true parentage, birth, and life, of our allegorical Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ (London, 1827), esp. pp.4-8, 32.
14. For brief biographical sketches of Taylor see DNB, vol. XIX, pp.461-3, and Wiener, Radicalism, pp.130-2. Wiener suggests that Carlile's thought was moving in the direction of religious allegory before he met Taylor, ibid., pp.132-4.

The developing partnership with Taylor was a solution to Carlile's post-prison crisis. (He was released from Dorchester gaol on 18 November 1825.) His freethought following had splintered and he had to compete with a number of popular infidel preachers who combined rationalist thought, liturgical formulations and a sectarian structure.[15]

Taylor's Deism (expounded at his Christian Evidence Society) was more popular than Carlile's materialism in the mid-1820s. In May 1827 Taylor was indicted for blasphemous libel and subsequently imprisoned. His followers formed a new Deist society, renting a chapel in Grub Street, where Josiah Fitch conducted religious services. Carlile condemned Fitch's services as superstitious and opened a rival School of Free Discussion. But it was Fitch who attracted the larger audiences. It was only after Taylor (whose cause Carlile championed) was released from gaol in February 1829 and began lecturing at Carlile's "school" (having been rejected by his former friends) that attendances increased. Thus began a partnership which brought together the complementary talents of the two freethinkers.[16] They then made a joint provincial tour, or "atheist mission", which spanned the summer of the same

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15. There were four Deist liturgies available in London by Spring 1828. See McCalman, "Popular Radicalism and Freethought", pp.174-6.

16. Prothero, Artisans, pp.259-61; McCalman, "Popular Radicalism and Freethought", pp.176-8; Wiener, Radicalism, pp.148-9. Carlile's first provincial tour of 1827 - during which he encountered a variety of popular religious sects - had convinced him that the style and structure of Zeteticism needed to be more sectarian. Taylor's release from gaol encouraged him in this direction. See McCalman, "Popular Radicalism and Freethought", pp.178-82.

year. And for a little more than a year from May 1830 Taylor was the principal attraction at the Rotunda. Here he gave astronomical discourses based on Biblical passages, in the garb and style of a Christian preacher.[17]

Carlile claimed that at the Rotunda they were restoring the church "to its original purity and lustre".[18] He expressed his adherence to Taylor's doctrines in his declaration that the Bible "is truly the word of God, of and concerning, not by God. It is a mass of words collected about God the sun, known to the collectors, brought into a volume, and rudely shaped as an historical romance".[19] At the same time he was beginning to utilise the Bible for political purposes. In an article written just before the House of Lords rejected the Reform Bill on 8 October 1831, Carlile spoke of reform as the country's salvation; the significance of the impending judgement of the Lords he conceived in Biblical terms:

> Our second edition shall announce the sentence of the Lords: whether it be "come unto me, all ye that do labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" - or whether it be, depart, ye cursed thing - whether the Lords be our Lords, or whether they be our Egyptian taskmasters - their judgment on this bill must decide.[20]

Carlile was very conscious of his use of Biblical language, and felt the need to explain that he had "borrowed that

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17. For an example see HO 64/11, fo.147-8. On the occasion here related by a government spy (in November 1830) Carlile read two lessons (the sixteenth chapter of Volney's Ruins of Empires and the third chapter of St Matthew's gospel), after which Taylor preached a diatribe against Christianity and advanced an allegorical interpretation of Matthew 3.
18. Prompter, 26 Feb. 1831, pp.270-1.
19. Prompter, 8 Oct. 1831, p.841.
20. Prompter, 15 Oct. 1831, p.863. The underlined words were spoken by Jesus, and may be found in Matthew 11:28 and 25:41.

emphatic language which is so well known, and so much revered in this country, to give force to our words". He went on to advise his readers that "The symbols of the Bible are meant for thy instruction. Pass them not by as a dead thing. Take heed to their precepts, and thou shalt become a quickening spirit".[21] The moral allegory was shortly to take centre stage; it only awaited its Egyptian goddess.

Analysis of the moral allegory and its applications in 1832-4 helps to provide answers to the questions posed above concerning the meaning and significance of Carlile's "conversion" in 1832. The answers shall be sought by attempting to establish the functions of the main concepts of the allegory: God, evil, sin, salvation (or redemption) and eternal life. These functions can be established by observing the use that proponents of the allegory made of them, but can be fully appreciated only if understood as constituting an implied challenge to the social and political ramifications of the same concepts when the Bible was interpreted in an orthodox sense (that is, as historically true). Our comprehension of these things is enhanced by looking also at the lives and beliefs of some other people who, to varying extents, were associated with Carlile during 1831-4: Eliza Sharples, John ("Zion") Ward, and James ("Shepherd") Smith. While allowing for differences between them, they were all theological fellow travellers.

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21. Ibid.

THE MORAL ALLEGORY

The interpretation of the Bible expounded by Eliza Sharples at the Rotunda in the first few months of 1832, and reported in the Isis, was founded on the premise that Biblical characters represented principles. The Bible did not refer to actual people and events of the past. Rather, it told of future struggles which arose from there being two opposite principles of existence: liberty and necessity. Liberty was equated with God, good, freedom, free-will, knowledge, health, pleasure, summer, love and life, its quality was moral and its principle active and benevolent. Necessity was equated with devil, evil, tyranny, fate, predestination, ignorance, disease, pain, winter, hatred and death, its quality was physical and its principle passive. The story of the fall was held to be an allegory of the two principles: the tyrant God, Necessity, forbade man to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but Liberty, seeing that the fruit was good, disobeyed the command and shared the fruit with her husband. Here Eve is the heroine of the story. The feminist implications will be explored below in the discussion of Eliza Sharples, who conceived of herself as a modern-day Eve who would disseminate knowledge to the poor from whom it was withheld by means of taxes.[22] The present concern is to explore the implications of an allegory which freed humanity from the bondage of a depraved nature inherited from our progenitors.

The word "sin" in the allegory denotes ignorance. Christ

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22. See Isis, 7 April 1832, p.132.

is the personification of reason or knowledge. Thus, "to gain knowledge is to gain Christ, to be born again, to receive his second coming"; Christ's crucifixion was "emblematical of powerful error persecuting young and innocent truth. It was crushed, destroyed, killed, dead, and buried: but, it must rise again, and carry man on to heaven, to the knowledge of making a paradise of the earth".[23] The gospel as rendered by the allegory refers entirely to physical earthly existence: the promise of eternal life is the promise of knowledge in this life. This is the meaning of John 17:3, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent".[24] People are responsible for gaining knowledge and making for themselves a paradise upon the earth. If they fail to do so they remain "in the land of Egypt, in a state of darkness and pain and torment, prone only to evil, and suffering the just punishment of [their] demerits". This is the meaning of the parable of the sheep and the goats, the sheep being those who believe the allegorical interpretation of the Bible, the goats those who take the Bible literally.[25]

The allegory is the gospel of republicanism. In the New Testament Jesus plays the part of the republican: "young Reason, the hero of the Gospel drama, will not acknowledge divine right, or any right, of kings".[26] The principle of Jesus Christ has a perpetual existence, being founded

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23. Isis, 3 Mar. 1832, p.52.
24. Isis, 26 May 1832, p.241.
25. Isis, 5 May 1832, p.197. The parable is found in Matthew 25.
26. Ibid., p.195.

upon the principles of human nature. In the present age it is manifest in Taylor and Carlile, who are being persecuted for introducing new knowledge. The redemption paradigm of the exodus is invoked: "Moses and Aaron are the ancient Carlile and Taylor, and the most general leaders of the rebellion that shook off the yolk of Pharaoh, casting him and his chariots and his army, his princes, priests, and lords, into a Red Sea or a sea of blood".[27] The call to repentance is the call to seek knowledge. "Instead of praying, we should study; instead of singing psalms, we should hold discussions; instead of attending to church sermons...we should take part in philosophical lectures".[28] Such seekers after knowledge are "the only genuine Christians". Eliza Sharples asserted, with reference to herself and those of like mind, "We are the elect. We are saved. We believe that knowledge is life everlasting, and we seek it".[29] Free discussion was said to be a hallmark of the religion of Christ, the principle of which is light. The religion commonly practised in England could not, therefore, be the religion of Christ. "It is the religion of darkness; for all their deeds are evil and shun the light".[30]

Living in the light entailed accepting responsibility for one's actions here and now. Since there was no life beyond the grave, death-bed repentance was rendered nugatory. Alleged conversions to Christianity of convicted

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27. Isis, 19 May 1832, p.226, 28 Apr. 1832, pp.179-80, 2 June 1832, p.259.
28. Isis, 21 April 1832, p.167.
29. Isis, 28 Apr.1832, p.178.
30. Isis, 3 Mar. 1832, p.55. The quotation alludes to John 3:19.

murderers attracted the notice of Isis. Crime was held to be encouraged by Christians who "promulgate one of their favourite texts, namely, that all sins can be washed away in the blood of the lamb".[31] This is an implied rejoinder to the charge commonly made by conservatives that by abolishing heaven and hell, infidel radicals issued an invitation to immorality and crime, for God did not reward virtue and punish vice in the after-life. Popular radicalism was thought to be intrinsically antinomian.[32] Calling attention to the possibility of a death-bed repentance turned the tables. The case of the convicted murderer, James Cooke, of Leicester, became a particular bone of contention. It was alleged by a Miss Payne that Cooke's association with a group of Deists, who read Paine, Carlile and other infidel writers, had undermined his commitment to Christianity, hence he became a murderer. Carlile retorted that murders had often been committed because of religious passion. The Bible was said to be - in the literal way it was read by Christians - a source of violent ideas; it presented a catalogue of murders. By contrast "every sentence written by Paine or Carlile, in their republican Scriptures, has a moral tendency. Every sentence has been written with a view of pulling down tyranny, imposture, or some evil in society".[33]

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31. Isis, 25 Aug. 1832, p.445. The words quoted are those of a correspondent, Ann Kendall, of Southwark. That the editor held the same views is indicated by her expression of similar sentiments about the convicted murderers, Brown and Kennedy, on 15 September, pp.487-9.
32. This was, most notably, the view of the principal ideological spokesman of Methodism at the time, Richard Watson; see Clark, English Society, p.241. See also chapter 3 above.
33. Isis, 25 Aug. 1832, pp.433-7.

In 1819 Carlile had repudiated the Bible for its errors and its violent and immoral passages. In 1822 he identified God solely with the physical power of the universe. In 1831-2 he "redeemed" God and the Bible, transforming them into potent weapons in the armoury of the radical reformer. Now that the word "God" signified reason or knowledge, the Bible could be styled the revelation of God, meaning of course the revelation of knowledge. It was "the sacred book of the Reformer, to guide him against all the evils of Church and State".[34] The Isis printed a glossary of key terms of the Bible (also published separately as a pamphlet), which made possible a simple substitution of the allegorical meaning for the literal denotation.[35] Eliza Sharples's discourses on the Bible, published in the Isis, accustomed readers to making such substitutions, and advanced allegorical interpretations of a number of Biblical books and theological doctrines. The doctrine of the trinity, for example, was rendered acceptable, Father, Son and Holy Spirit representing knowledge, reason and the communication of knowledge to others.[36] The book of Job was said to be "the drama of reason, or a contention between the principles of good and evil".[37]

Since the "fall" was now a desirable event located in the present and future instead of being an unique historical occurrence, the presence of evil in the world required an

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34. Isis, 2 June 1832, p.260.
35. The glossary may be found in the Isis, 7 July 1832, pp.337-40. A copy is appended to this thesis. An advertisement for the pamphlet, which was priced at 2d per copy, appeared on 14 July, p.361.
36. Isis, 28 Apr. 1832, p.181.
37. Isis, 9 June 1832, p.273.

alternative explanation.[38] 1 Samuel 8, which tells of the origin of monarchy among the Jews, "clearly sets forth the origin of the political evils of mankind" (although not historically true, of course). Substituting "reason" for "Lord", the reader learns that reason advises against the institution of a monarchical government, for freedom will be lost and oppression take its place. Rejecting the voice of reason, the people demand to have a king.[39] Far from being a divinely ordained institution, monarchy is shown to be of human origin and contrary to the dictate of God/Reason.[40] The implied message is that present oppression could be eliminated by means of the people collectively demanding - and effecting - radical political reform. If knowledge prevailed among the people this would be the inexorable consequence.

Knowledge was believed to have advanced appreciably during the month leading up to the successful passage through parliament at the beginning of June 1832 of the Reform Bill, engendering hope that "the millenium of good government and human happiness" was approaching. Isis observed a new "public spirit", which evinced "the disposition to throw king, queen, lords and bishops into the

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38. In the story of the fall, "God", rather than signifying knowledge, evidently stands for "the idol of human nature's imaginary perfection" - see the glossary (appendix). As we saw above, the "God" of Genesis 3 is the tyrant God, "Necessity".
39. Isis, 14 Apr. 1832, pp.148-9.
40. In his tract in support of American independence, Common Sense (1776), Paine had advanced an argument against monarchy as contrary to nature and scripture. Scriptural evidence constituted most of this section of the pamphlet; in particular, Judges 8 and 1 Samuel 8 and 13 were cited. See Clark, English Society, pp.325-6.

sea, as the enemies of God and good government".[41] With the threat of a Tory Government under Wellington following Grey's resignation on 9 May (the Lords having pulled their final trick to obtain a more moderate reform and the King refusing to create the necessary number of new peers to get the Bill through), public anger swelled to revolutionary pitch. People stopped work, there were petitions, threats not to pay taxes, and, finally, a call to withdraw savings from the Bank of England. While it would be wrong to give the full credit for the passage of the Bill to extra-parliamentary pressure during the Days of May, it was almost certainly an important contributing cause.[42] The fact of virtually unprecedented mobilisation of "the people" (at least within the recollection of contemporaries) is undoubted, and it was this which encouraged Carlile. Isis exultantly proclaimed: "We have heard the voice of the people, which was never before heard in this country; and it

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41. Isis, 2 June 1832, p.257. Note the allsuion to the story of the exodus, after which Moses and the people of Israel sang, "I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea" (Exodus 15:1).

42. The view of Francis Place that the mobilisation of public opinion was the decisive factor was accepted by historians in the early twentieth century. Recent historiography has emphasised the parliamentary situation in the developments of 7-15 May. John Cannon argues that the decisive factor was Peel's refusal to serve in a Tory ministry obliged to sponsor a reform bill. Most of the petitions were received too late to have any influence, the posters urging a run on the banks were not printed until 13 May, and the plans of Place and his friends for armed resistance if the Duke took office were a bluff (and there is no evidence that the Tories knew of them anyway). See John Cannon, Parliamentary Reform 1640-1832 (Cambridge, 1973), pp.238-40. For a more balanced view (and a more thorough analysis), which attributes greater influence to extra-parliamentary pressure - regarding the outcome of the negotiations of 15-18 May as important - see Michael Brock, The Great Reform Act (London, 1973), pp.249-309. For a similar view see also Thomis and Holt, Threats of Revolution, pp.96-7.

is in this sense a truth, that the voice of the people is the voice of God. God among men is the aggregate power of human knowledge; and, in this sense, God is perfectible, as well as man".[43]

No longer "a capricious, cruel tyrant, with attributes morally indefensible", God "offers salvation alike to all, is a dwelling and a shelter for all, and a place of improvement for all".[44] In stripping God of his tyrannical attributes Isis invoked the authority of the Bible. The first three commandments of the law of Moses forbade "the reduction of the supposed attributes of deity to any kind of superstition".[45] Reading the passage according to the allegory, one is forbidden to have any God besides knowledge, to make an idol of anything in heaven or earth (which precludes personifying God as a heavenly king), and to misuse the name of God (by using it to denote anything but knowledge). Isis asks rhetorically, with the prophet Isaiah, "To whom then will ye liken God, or what likeness will ye compare unto him?"[46] The hard line against investing God with human characteristics soon softens, however, provided they are the right characteristics. As the spirit of knowledge, God's attributes are "love, life, light, and power".[47] It is unobjectionable to make God represent "in perfection, the

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43. Isis, 2 June 1832, p.257.
44. Eliza Sharples addressed these words to her sister in a letter printed in the Isis, 17 Nov. 1832, p.579.
45. Isis, 11 Feb. 1832, p.2.
46. Ibid. The quotation alludes to Isaiah 40:18. The same text headed Carlile's A Sermon upon the Subject of Deity of 1827 (see p.3).
47. Isis, 12 May 1832, p.209. On 3 March Isis denied that God has emotions such as love, mercy or justice, because these are attributes of created beings (p.51).

best attributes of the human character".[48]

ELIZABETH SHARPLES CARLILE

While the moral allegory was largely worked out by Carlile, its publication - in the Rotunda lectures and the Isis - was related to the life of a middle-class woman from Bolton, Elizabeth Sharples, who, cutting her ties with her mother and sisters, arrived in London on 13 January 1832 to join Richard Carlile in his career as an infidel-radical reformer.[49] One may perhaps be justified in cynically interpreting Carlile's formulation of the allegory as a political ploy lacking personal conviction. The case of Eliza Sharples affords an opportunity of observing the effect of Carlile's doctrines on a sincere Christian whose faith was being tested by personal loss. An examination of her conversion and the mission which she vigorously prosecuted in 1832 help to explain the potential psychological and emotional appeal of the moral allegory to people of particular backgrounds and propensities - that is, its mobilising power.

Eliza was brought up in the Established Church and later became a Methodist. The zeal imparted and required by the Wesleyans made Eliza "a religious slave"; the Sabbath became a full day - from six in the morning until ten at night - of demanding spiritual duties. But her strong commitment did not bring inner peace and happiness: "The

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48. Isis, 9 June 1832, p.273.
49. For a brief account of the life of Elizabeth Sharples (1803-1861) see BDMBR, II, pp.121-4. Wiener's biography of Carlile also gives a biographical sketch, Radicalism, pp.195-9.

more enthusiastically religious I became, the more I degraded myself in the idea of being a sinner, and the more fear I had of a place of torment".[50] When Carlile visited Bolton in 1827 Eliza believed him to be a "devil", although she neither saw nor met him on that occasion. In August 1829 in Liverpool she saw Carlile and overheard his discussion about religion with the friend in whose house she was staying at the time. Some of her horror of infidelity abated because of this contact. Shortly afterwards her father took ill and then died.[51]

Eliza remembered her father as "kind, indulgent, attentive, and intelligent".[52] She mourned his death deeply and it proved the occasion of a personal crisis of faith. The failure of God to answer her prayers for his recovery, she wrote, "rendered me almost callous of the idea of a divine Providence". Soon to follow was the death of a dearly loved brother. Grief overwhelmed her and sapped her interest in life. The beginning of the road to recovery was her reading of a volume of Carlile's Republican, which was owned by one of her cousins. Evidently it made sense to her at the time, and she proceeded to read all of his works. She says, "I read them with avidity unknown to [her sister and mother], and I felt a new birth, I trust unto righteousness....In these writings, the ignorance and the errors of my past life were told to me as by some magician". Hearing that Carlile and Taylor were in gaol at the time she resolved to help them.[53]

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50. Isis, 31 Mar. 1832, p.113.
51. Isis, 27 Oct. 1832, pp.545-6.
52. Isis, 31 Mar. 1832, p.113.
53. Isis, 27 Oct. 1832, pp.545-6.

During December 1831 Eliza corresponded with Carlile, and on her arrival in London in January, began to visit him daily in gaol where he instructed her regarding the lectures she was to give at the Rotunda. She delivered her first lecture on 29 January and published the first issue of the Isis on 11 February. Management of the Rotunda was placed in her hands, the existing staff dismissed and her own servants employed in their place.[54] The government spy, Abel Hall, attended her lectures, and was of the opinion, because of the doctrines espoused and the handwriting of the speaker's notes, that Carlile and Taylor had composed the lectures.[55] Eliza herself publicly admitted that she was the "automaton" of "more experienced students".[56]

Although not, therefore, an original thinker, Eliza did personally appropriate Carlile's doctrines and found her life transformed as a result. To her sister she wrote, "I have made a wonderful change in myself in the last year".[57] In October 1832 she claimed to be "a new being, without grief, with new life, new hopes, new joys. I find condolence for the past, and bright encouragement for the future. Above all, I feel, that I am something independent of all human beings, in being publicly useful as an individual, the first and best of independencies".[58] A factor in her recovery was her personal relationship with Carlile. He filled the void in her life left by her father's death, even resembling him "in general habits,

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54. These details were gleaned from a spy's reports, found in HO 64/12, fo.15, 36.
55. HO 64/12, fo.42, 47, 58.
56. Isis, 3 Nov. 1832, p.561.
57. Ibid.
58. Isis, 27 Oct. 1832, p.546.

manners, and character".[59] From the Spring of 1832 she and Carlile had been making love, although the relationship was kept secret for a time. A son was born to them in April the following year, and in September their "moral marriage" was announced in the Gauntlet.[60] Yet Eliza's claims to independence and public usefulness ought also to be taken seriously.

Once she believed whatever she was taught by clergymen, and she unquestioningly accepted all the attitudes and values of respectable society. Now she searched the Scriptures herself, and was continually acquiring new knowledge: "I take a subject as a text of a new discourse, sit down, think deeply and write freely all I can perceive to bear on that subject". Faith had been supplanted by inquisitiveness.[61] Admittedly her new knowledge ran in channels dug by Carlile and Taylor, but she had appropriated it for herself and was making a career of communicating it to others. One of these channels was that of social and political radicalism. The foundation of respectable society - orthodox Christianity - had been undermined; it now being to her "a matter of error", she saw that "a better state of society may be formed without [it]".[62] Her mission was to fight for liberty, which entailed opposition to all forms of tyranny, whether of master over servant, husband over wife, father over child, or that exercised by the customs and institutions of society. In the first number of the Isis she declared her commitment to teach people "to bow

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59. Ibid.
60. These facts are reported by Wiener, Radicalism, pp.195-8.
61. Isis, 11 Feb. 1832, p.7, 31 Mar. 1832, p.113.
62. Isis, 3 Mar. 1832, p.55.

themselves before no other God; for God is love and love is liberty".[63] She had found the courage "to do in politics and philosophy what no woman in England has done before me".[64]

Evangelical conceptions of sex roles relegated women to the functions of wives and charity workers. Although endowed with important Christian qualities, such as love and compassion, women were to exercise their gifts in subordination to male leadership, and were denied the opportunity to preach, both in the Established Church and most of the old Dissenting congregations. Barbara Taylor, in her study of socialism and feminism in the nineteenth century, suggests a significant consequence of such a sexual division of labour: "An ideal of femininity which combined holy love with social subordination not only served to suppress women, it also tamed and contained the anti-capitalist implications of Christian love itself. Domesticated Christianity, like domesticated womanhood, was the most comfortable kind for a bourgeois man to live with".[65] It seems no coincidence that the bonds of orthodox Christianity, social subordination and bourgeois social and political values were, for Eliza Sharples, loosened simultaneously.[66]

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63. Isis, 11 Feb. 1832, pp.2-3.
64. Isis, 28 April 1832, p.184.
65. Taylor, Eve and the New Jerusalem, pp.125-9.
66. R.S. Neale analyses Sharples's career as the first woman in England to give public lectures on politics and to publish and edit a weekly newspaper. He sees her rejection of Christianity as central to her political radicalism: "...she perceived the barrier to women's improvement to lie in Christianity and the Church and in the legal powers of a tyrant state". See R.S. Neale, Class in English History (Oxford, 1981), pp.205-15.

Delighting in her new-found freedom, Eliza called upon women to give her their "intellectual assistance" to break the bonds of custom. Her pseudonym "Isis" (the Egyptian goddess of reason) was felt to be apt, as she recalled with amazement that a woman, who, six months ago "was absolutely without prospect...should now be waving the magic wand of intellect over the darkness of this land, this real Egyptian darkness, really requiring an Egyptian goddess for its removal".[67] Carlile, too, had a vision of Eliza's role, especially in reforming the status and duties of women in society. He declared his belief in a letter to the Isis:

> It is the possession of good and great character, and a sense of usefulness in society, that makes life a pleasure, or anything but a burden; and women have not been free to participate in such characters. I do not like the doctrine of women keeping at home, and minding the house and the family. It is as much the proper business of the man as the woman; and the woman, who is so confined, is not the proper companion of the public useful man.[68]

As mentioned above, the moral allegory not only exonerated women from the blame for the fall, but the woman, Eve, was transformed into a heroine, "a fair picture of liberty", to be emulated by contemporary women. Such a "fall" from ignorance to knowledge was sorely wanted at the present time:

> The tree of knowledge is still monopolized: its fruit is so taxed as to be forbidden to the poor, and who will quarrel with another Eve, or fair picture of liberty, who shall break the bounds and barriers that surround it, hold up her shield of virtue to the tyrant's frown and shaft, and plucking the tree bare, throw down its golden fruit, as a prize of moral contention to the whole human race. I will be such an Eve, so bright a picture of liberty![69]

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67. Isis, 10 Mar. 1832, p.71.
68. Isis, 3 Mar. 1832, p.56.
69. Isis, 7 Apr. 1832, p.132.

Eliza alluded here to her commitment to the struggle for the freedom of the press, the cause for which her mentor was suffering imprisonment.

The juxtaposition of the two emblems of Eliza's mission - Eve and Isis - is instructive. As a pagan goddess of liberty her antipathy to orthodox Christianity may be evoked. As a new Eve, transformed into a heroine by means of the allegory, the continuity of Eliza's life as a Christian is represented. She frequently cast her recent life-change and present commitment in Biblical terms. "Born again" to a new life, she conceived of her calling as the fulfilment of Christ's commands to "Feed my lambs" and "comfort ye my people" (meaning to educate the inquiring people of society); performing this duty "makes my salvation, my calling and election sure".[70] Using another Biblical metaphor, she cast herself as the physician, diagnosing disease and prescribing a remedy; she left "its application to those who need it. I need none. They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick".[71] Her family disapproved of what she was doing, but "having put my hand to the plough, I will not look back. I see that the field is large and the labourers are few".[72]

To Eliza Sharples herself, the change from a pious, submissive, respectable, middle-class evangelical to an active infidel-radical-feminist champion of popular rights did not signify an abandonment of Christianity. "Though I

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70. Isis, 11 Feb. 1832, p.7, 17 Mar. 1832, p.86. The allusions are to John 21:15 and 2 Peter 1:10.
71. Isis, 14 Apr. 1832, p.149. See Matthew 9:12.
72. Ibid., pp.4, 12, and Isis, 27 Oct. 1832, p.546. The allusions are to Luke 9:62 and Matthew 9:37.

have changed my opinions," Eliza said, "I feel that I have only purged my Christianity of its impurities".[73] The language and authority of the Bible informed and sanctioned her radicalism as it had done her evangelicalism. Eliza delivered a series of lectures on the Bible because "We shall reform nothing, until we set up a right understanding of this book"; this was so because so many people regarded the Bible as valuable.[74] Eliza was one of those people, and the transition to infidelity was, no doubt, made smoother by the continuity of Biblical concepts, language and imagery.

THE GAUNTLET

Laying the Isis to rest at the end of 1832, Carlile began publication of the Gauntlet in February 1833. His most recent biographer makes the comment of this periodical: "Eschewing freethought for the most part (there are only incidental references to his religious allegory in its pages), it emulated the format of successful political newspapers by providing its readers with a large quantity of radical news".[75] In one sense this is true. Until late in 1833 little space was devoted exclusively to religious discussion; articles concentrated on criticising the legislation and proceedings of the reformed parliament. However, the Bible was an important instrument of this criticism. The "incidental references" to the allegory observed by Wiener do not signify a shift from religious to

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73. Isis, 18 Feb. 1832, p.23.
74. Isis, 21 Apr. 1832, p.168.
75. Wiener, Radicalism, pp.192-3.

political concerns. It must be remembered that the purpose of the allegory was essentially political. Theological reform was a prerequisite of radical political reform, for established Christianity buttressed the existing socio-political order. Using the Bible to undermine this order was a case of fighting fire with fire. Noting that theological issues were given more space in the Gauntlet late in 1833, Wiener makes the more accurate comment that the allegory "was a redemptive message of reform".[76]

One of parliament's concerns which attracted Carlile's attention was the state of Ireland. A Peace Preservation and Coercion Bill, introduced in the House of Lords on 15 February and securing enactment on 1 April, was intended to make possible the collection of the tithe, which was being resisted. The Bill restricted political meetings, provided for the imposition of a curfew, the searching of private homes for arms, and the use of courts martial, and it suspended the Habeas Corpus Act.[77] Carlile identified the existence of opposing factions in Ireland as the obstacle to effective resistance to oppression. Ireland stood in need of "that new birth unto righteousness, which is best defined by describing it as a proper, or the best exercise of the brain".[78] The printing press would create the "mind" required in Ireland to throw off the yoke of tyranny. It would, Carlile wrote in a letter addressed to Earl Grey, "array a physical power equal to your overthrow and condemnation"; the power of mind was said to be

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76. Ibid., p.204.
77. See Halevy, History of the English People, III, pp.130-2, and Chadwick, The Victorian Church, pp.49-51.
78. Gauntlet, 17 Feb. 1833, p.18.

> the law, it is the word, it is the gospel, it is the thing that can be read, pondered, marked, observed, and inwardly digested; it maketh people wise unto salvation; it cutteth the cords and breaketh asunder the bands which kings fasten upon us; it is a rod of iron, stronger than their iron sceptre; it shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Thus saith the Lord, the word, the law, the knowledge or reason of man; and blessed are all they that so trust. I so trust, and in the name of that Lord I take up your defiance, and in return defy you, Goliath as you may feel yourself, in the army of the Philistines. The Bible is a very pretty allegorical type when rightly understood and rightly interpreted.[79]

The passage speaks of the power of knowledge, here spoken of in terms referring to the Scriptures. The reasoning is that a right understanding of the Bible would allow the Irish people not only to identify correctly the source of their misery, but also to overcome sectarian and other divisions, in order to forge a united and effective resistance to English aristocratic tyranny. The power of mind would create a physical force. Carlile himself, a David against the Whig Philistines, trusting in the power of knowledge, assumed the task of helping to create that mind by means of his publications.

Reform of the Church - in England and Ireland - was another issue on the parliamentary agenda to which Carlile applied his printing press. A Bill for reform of the Church of Ireland was introduced into the House of Commons on 12 February. The proposed reform trimmed the Church's budget by abolishing a number of appointments and cutting the primate's income; the upkeep of churches and the cost of services were to be financed by a graduated tax on the

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79. Gauntlet, 3 Mar. 1833, p.49. On the understanding of types and shadows as referring to both national and personal happenings, see Harrison's discussion of Joanna Southcott, Second Coming, esp. pp.101-2, 228.

income of clergy, which was to replace the church cess (equivalent to the English church rate).[80] Financial reforms were not enough for Carlile. Reform must mean abolition. The Church's doctrines were wrong, and Carlile intended alerting parliament to the error made by the priests of the Established Church of England and Ireland: they "entirely misunderstand and mistake the meaning of the allegory and mystery of the Gospel and Sacred Scriptures".[81] The funds and buildings of the Church should be handed over to a national school. As Lord Chancellor, Brougham was accused of being at "the fountain head of the polluted stream" of knowledge, and Carlile would strike him down: "You have withheld...that which you owe to the church of the people, and you shall drop dead as Ananias and Sapphira fell before Peter".[82] Nothing but Carlile's own plan of church reform would suffice. With his customary self-effacement Carlile declared himself to be

> thoroughly master of the whole subject. The purest and most perfect divinity that was ever presented to mankind, is presented in the volume of the Isis....I am the first doctor of divinity in the world, and I will not allow any one to supersede me in the title. All others are counterfeits. I have discovered the secret of the riddle, the mystery, the allegory, by which the Christian religion is a truth, and can be made applicable to general human welfare. I hope to take the Duke of Wellington by the hand as Premier, and lead him on to this sort of Church Reform.[83]

The link between the allegory and "general human welfare" is

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80. See Halevy, History of the English People, III, pp.140-4, and Chadwick, The Victorian Church, pp.56-60.
81. Gauntlet, 17 Feb. 1833, p.24.
82. Gauntlet, 31 Mar. 1833, pp.113-4. The allusion is to Acts 5, the story of a husband and wife, Ananias and Sapphira, who, having sold a piece of property, gave only part of the money to the Church (the Church at that time holding all property in common), and concealed their action. When Peter confronted and rebuked the couple they fell down dead.
83. Gauntlet, 28 July 1833, pp.385-6.

central. Church reform is the foundation of social and political reform. To this end Carlile directed his effort. As the premier doctor of divinity in the world he would, it is implied, bring down the Whig government and show the Tories how to institute real church, and proceeding from that, social and political, reform.[84]

The Gauntlet was devoted to destroying the Whig government. Its methods were to expose and denounce the government's misdoings and to focus opposition by collecting and publishing a list of signatures of people in favour of a huge cut in taxation; Carlile termed this project the enrolment of volunteers.[85] Many of the Gauntlet's most vitriolic attacks on the first reformed government were expressed in a series of letters published during the first six months of 1833, and addressed to Brougham. Brougham was a special victim of Carlile's poison pen because he was held to have betrayed his former championing of the people's cause by accepting Grey's offer of the Chancellorship. When the Six Acts were first promulgated by the Tories, Brougham had denounced them; in government he enforced them. As Lord Chancellor, the revenue laws (against which the "war of the unstamped" was being waged) were virtually personified by Brougham; he was held responsible for the imprisonment

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84. Church reform continued to be a preoccupation of the Gauntlet; a series of articles on the subject appeared in December 1833-January 1834. Tension between the Church and Dissent was growing at this time, reaching its height early in 1834, the Church rate being the Dissenters' greatest grievance. Lord Althorpe's bill to abolish Church rates and charge the Treasury with the costs of repair of Churches had not been passed before the government fell. The perceived threat to the integrity of the Church in the early 1830s motivated the activities of the tractarians. See Chadwick, The Victorian Church, pp.60-95.
85. For details see Wiener, Radicalism, pp.193-4.

during the past couple of years of a large number of vendors and publishers of radical periodicals.[86] The revenue laws were a guise for the persecution of political and theological opinions. And so Brougham was charged with being "that political death to the nation which is the last enemy that I have to destroy. I shall then have placed all such things under my feet".[87] This claim implicitly expresses Carlile's conviction that unfettered expression of opinion would inevitably result in radical reform of Church and State.

It should not be forgotten that Carlile had begun his third consecutive year in prison by this time. Scriptural examples and images seemed to help him maintain his buoyancy while his personal freedom was thus limited. In his third letter to Brougham he eulogised his own career as an opponent of priestcraft and kingcraft. Even in prison, he declared,

> I have still a burning soul...I have still such a soul as that which brought the angel of light to Peter and John; and I will make my gaoler cry with terror, "Sir, what shall I do to be saved?" I will make the judge weep that has condemned me, and the jury that threw me into his hands gnash their teeth with grief and fear.[88]

Faced with opposition on his provincial tours after his

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86. At least 1,130 cases for selling unstamped periodicals were brought before London magistrates between 1830 and 1836. The maximum sentence for vending was three months, but lighter sentences were usually imposed. For an analysis of the 1,092 cases about which information survives see Hollis, Pauper Press, pp.171-93.

87. Gauntlet, 10 Mar. 1833, p.66, 14 Apr. 1833, pp.145-6, and 16 June 1833, pp.289-90. Here Carlile identifies himself with Christ and Brougham with death, alluding to 1 Cor. 15:25-7.

88. Gauntlet, 14 Apr. 1833, p.146. The Biblical allusion is to Acts 16, the story of Peter and Silas (not John) in prison.

release from gaol in August, Carlile continued to draw on the Scriptures as a source of comfort and strength. The Mayor and press of Plymouth had been particularly hostile towards him, and in response, he styled himself as a Christ figure, rejected by the authorities of Church and State, especially those of his home town.[89] He reaffirmed his mission in Biblical terms:

> I will resist evil; but I will also return good for evil. If I am reviled, I will not again revile. But in me the spirit shall not be quenched. I have hitherto fought the good fight of faith with success, and I despair not now. With the apostle I can say, that I have not wrestled against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. I am sure that I have the mystery of the Gospel revealed in me, and I will go forth with its armour and extend the revelation.[90]

Here he appropriates the attitudes and affirmations of Saint Paul.[91] It is impossible to say how much is mere posture and how much a result of Carlile's internalising of the language and images of Scripture. It is likely that his psychological and tactical needs overlapped: for he needed both personally and publicly to account for his being rejected, a face-saving and self-respect salvaging exercise as well as an attempt to obtain the propaganda advantage over his opponents.

On his lecture tours of 1833-4 Carlile preached the gospel of true religion. The difference between true and false religion, he explained to an audience at Sheffield on

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89. Gauntlet, 2 Feb. 1834, pp.819-20. Having lived in Devon for the first twenty years of his life, he believed the claim of Christ that a prophet is not honoured in his home town to be applicable to himself (Matthew 13:57). He also cited the well known "suffering servant" passage of Isaiah 53, popularly interpreted as prefiguring the life of Christ.
90. Ibid.
91. See Ephesians 6:12.

3 October, is that the former is founded on the principles of nature, the latter on a personification of those principles. To make an image of the Deity is to break the second commandment, and this has serious consequences: it is "a question of a high degree of useless taxation and unhappiness among the people".[92] Wrong theology results in political and economic oppression. Here is additional evidence of the intimate connection between theological and political reform for Carlile, and it is a consistent characteristic of his discourses on these tours. To a full chapel in Birmingham on Sunday afternoon, 29 September, he expounded the Scriptures in an attempt to show that

> the Bible was to them a political text-book, and not a book for priestcraft; but that allowing of the impositions of priestcraft was altogether the fault of the people. I proposed a religious rebellion, and that they should entirely take the book out of the hands of the priesthood, and read and apply it to their own political purposes.[93]

A religious rebellion achieves political goals. After a visit to Bath, Carlile claimed that his own labour in the cause of reform complemented that of the trade unions. "I have been warmly engaged in Bath," he says, "in preaching that gospel which is the poor man's gospel, the true peace on earth and good will among men".[94]

SOUTHCOTTIAN PROPHETS: JOHN WARD AND JAMES SMITH

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92. Gauntlet, 20 Oct. 1833, p.585. He made the identical point to an audience in Manchester on October 15 and 16. See the Gauntlet, 27 October 1833, p.594. Note that Carlile was a proponent of the "old analysis".
93. Gauntlet, 6 Oct. 1833, p.546. Carlile's purpose here (and of the tours generally) was mobilisational. William Sherwin had made a similar plea in 1818 - when Carlile was his partner. See chapter 2 above.
94. Gauntlet, 5 Jan. 1834, p.753.

The Prompter of 3 September 1831 informed its readers that the Rotunda had been opened on Thursday evenings to "the new Jesus Christ and his disciple", who "will give the mysterious Bible a reasonable interpretation". Carlile believed they would appeal to a wider audience than Taylor, who was said to appeal to the more intelligent and strong-minded.[95] The new Jesus Christ was John (Zion) Ward (1781-1837), a shoemaker born in Ireland, who had become a self-styled Southcottian prophet.[96] The Prompter continued to publicise Ward's Rotunda meetings throughout September and October, and praised his interpretation of the Bible as "most surely inspired".[97] When Ward and his companion, William Twort, were sentenced to eighteen months in gaol for blasphemy in August 1832, their cause was championed in the pages of the Isis.[98] The purpose of the present discussion is not to give a full analysis of Ward's doctrines, but to suggest some intersections with Carlile's moral allegory, which may account for Carlile's support of him despite some important differences between their ideas.

From the time of his childhood Ward had been haunted by the fear of eternal damnation (he had been brought up a Calvinist); he tried many sects but failed to find comfort and peace. His life was transformed by a "powerful spiritual visitation" which commenced in 1825 and continued

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95. Prompter, 3 Sept. 1831, pp.766-7.
96. For accounts of Ward's life and doctrines see Harrison, Second Coming, pp.152-60, and Oliver, Prophets and Millennialists, ch.VII. There are also short articles in DNB and BDMBR, Vol. 2. On Joanna Southcott and the "prophets" who assumed her mantle, see Harrison, Second Coming, ch.5 and 6.
97. See the Prompter of 17 Sept., pp.798-9, 8 Oct., pp.841, 847, and 22 Oct., p.880.
98. See the Isis of 11 and 18 August, and 1 and 15 September.

until the end of 1828.[99] This was when Ward realised that he was the Shiloh of Genesis 49:10, to whom Joanna Southcott was to have given birth in 1814 (the year of her death). That had been the time Ward was introduced to Joanna's doctrines. In the interim period he had been a Methodist local preacher and then a follower of the Southcottian leader George Turner. His "spiritual visitation" began after he became a disciple of Mary Boon in 1825, a woman claiming to be Joanna's successor.

The doctrine which Ward developed was based on an allegorical understanding of Scripture. He believed that the Bible was recorded as history in order to confound human wisdom. It actually referred to a future incarnation of God "whereby all the Old Religion, founded on the letter of the Bible, and the mere opinions of men, was proved fallacious, and totally superseded by the new spiritual knowledge communicated of the Eternal Love, and man's perfect freedom from sin against God".[100] Ward had been dealt with by God as "the type or representative" of the human race: the fall, the crucifixion and the resurrection were stages of his inner being. He first received the love of God, but fell from this blissful state by returning to a belief in historical Christianity. The new "light" was thereby crucified, leaving him comfortless. He then suffered spiritual hell and damnation until the old principle was totally destroyed. Having realised that he had been deceived by false religion, he was "raised from the dead, a

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99. See C.B. Holinsworth, Memoir of John Ward...published to commemorate the one hundredth anniversary of his birth (Birmingham, 1881), p.3.
100. Ibid., p.4.

new and immortal spiritual being". Sin, hell and the grave were destroyed and "life and immortality brought to life".[101] Ward rejected religious ceremonies and observances - which all pointed towards the work performed in him - and his followers were held to share the same life imparted to him and could be assured of everlasting life after the death of the body.[102]

One can immediately begin to see points of convergence with and departure from Carlile's brand of Christianity. The main similarity is the understanding of the Bible as an allegory referring to future rather than to past events. Belief in a God of love and the fallacy of inherited sin are also common doctrines. Oliver argues that Ward was advancing "an antinomian solution to the problem of evil and the torment of conscience;...a universalist doctrine which would dissolve guilt and fear by establishing the unreality of sin and punishment".[103] Unlike Carlile, however, Ward seems to have believed in a transcendent God, not a principle of knowledge. He was able to refer to God as "the eternal King", surely an impossibility for Carlile.[104] Furthermore, God would appear to have intervened in human history by his dealing with Ward; the Bible foretold this specific event rather than a recurrent type of event. Hence a "new dispensation" was dated by Ward's followers from the visitation of God in 1825.[105] The millennium had arrived: an anti-clerical broadsheet of Ward's published in London in

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101. Ibid., pp.4-6.
102. Ibid., pp.6-7.
103. Oliver, Prophets, p.164.
104. Isis, 8 Sept. 1832, p.475.
105. Harrison, Second Coming, p.154.

1831 declared that "THE LORD IS HERE!", and was dated "May the 21st --- 6th Year of the Millenium [sic], or 1831".[106] This millennium was inaugurated by this first coming of Christ to the world; it was not the second as traditional Christian doctrine anticipated. (Since the Bible foretold future events, Christ had not been born in Palestine in the first century A.D.)

The anti-clerical intention of the handbill strikes another chord with Carlile. Ward's millenarian Christianity was antagonistic towards virtually all existing Christian churches and sects. And it linked institutional Christianity with oppression. In a letter to Spencer Perceval published in the Isis Ward specified the purpose of his own mission in God's unfolding plan for humanity: the epistle of Peter told of salvation to be revealed in the end time; that salvation consisted of new knowledge about the Scriptures, given "to save the human race from religious error and delusion, which has been the very foundation and cause of all the oppression under which they have groaned".[107] Perhaps Ward's closest identification with Carlile's doctrines was enunciated in the same letter, where he cast the contemporary struggle between freedom and persecution (referring particularly to his own imprisonment) in terms of right reason versus false reason. False reason, he said, thinks of God's justice as entailing punishment of wicked people, hence the imprisonment of blasphemers.

> But right reason is humble, and it esteems others better than itself; and it reasons that God is love, and no respecter of persons; and it reasons that God hath

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106. A copy may be found in HO 64/17, fo.83.
107. Isis, 27 Oct. 1832, p.555.

> made no man for damnation, but that he hath made man to be happy; and it reasons that one part of man should not rob another of his rights and privileges; and he now begins to exert his powers to obtain his freedom, and to deliver himself from the cruel fangs of his oppressors; and the time is come when my assertion will prove true, viz. that right reason is God, that will crush the Devil, false reason.[108]

Isis used of the imprisoned Ward and Twort the same Biblical paradigm that it had used of Carlile and Taylor: they were said to be "like Moses and Aaron, sympathizing with their oppressed countrymen, and seeking to deliver them; and for all that they have offended Pharaoh and all the Egyptians of the Church".[109]

It seems that in formulating his doctrines Ward was influenced by Carlile and Taylor. Oliver argues that in his encounter with Carlile's rationalism around 1827 "the enlightenment of the philosophes flowed to meet native English millennialism"; the resulting amalgam rejected most of the supernatural elements of religion, but Ward remained a Deist.[110] And Ward's mission retained an essentially spiritual dimension. Although desiring the material improvement of the common people, this was not his raison d'etre. This is made clear in a letter to one of his followers, written from his prison cell in 1832. Evidently Owenism had attracted some of his flock. While approving of Owen's plan, Ward reminded them that they had been called, not to Owenism, but "to the spiritual work, and of course you stand nearer unto God".[111] Universal peace

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108. Ibid., pp.555-6.
109. Isis, 18 Aug. 1832, p.418.
110. Oliver, Prophets, pp.160-3.
111. Ward to Bradley, 29 Nov. 1832, published in John Ward, Zion's Works: New Lights on the Bible from the coming of Shiloh, the Spirit of Truth (London, 1899-1904), vol.XV, pp.113-17.

and good would be achieved only by attending to this work, the objective of which was to bring about agreement on the meaning of the Bible. He explained: "Man is a religious being, and he cannot help it, and it will be impossible for [society] to agree in outward things, till the great essential thing is understood".[112]

At one level the argument is redolent of Carlile's: because in England the Bible was regarded almost universally as an authoritative book (but people disagreed about its meaning), an interpretation was required which made it consistent with the aims of popular radicalism, and acceptable to all Christian parties as the right interpretation. In a letter to Carlile, Ward cast his own mission in these terms. Priests, by their interpretation of the Bible, kept people in religious and political bondage; but knowledge of the Bible's mysteries had been revealed to Ward, who would use it to destroy priestcraft, which was "the very root of all the evils that men endure".[113] Ward was in favour of free expression of opinion. If everyone were permitted freely to publish their views of the Bible, what might happen is that

> among the many, such a clear Revelation of the meaning of the Scripture might appear, to which all would be compelled to agree and so become one body, united in one mind, and that long wished-for state of society be effected, I mean, having one Religion, one Life, one Grand Principle (the Truth of the Bible), upon which all would act in love, and in perfect conformity to God...and in union one with another.[114]

Presumably he envisaged the triumph of his own

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112. Ibid.
113. Ward to R. Carlile, 14 Aug. 1832, in Zion's Works, XV, pp.69-70.
114. Ward to Pierce, 4 Aug. 1833, in Zion's Works, XV, pp.328-47.

interpretation. But at another level a genuinely spiritual aim was being pursued.

Ward foresaw a time when "there will be on this earth but those only who worship God in spirit and in truth".[115] This is not, presumably, a result of God having divided the sheep from the goats, and banished the goats to hell or extinction, but the result of Ward's interpretation of the Bible having gained universal acceptance.[116] Worship of God in spirit and in truth is probably meant in a literal (although not orthodox) sense, for Ward, as noted above, continued to believe in a transcendent God. If Carlile had written of worship of God in spirit and truth he would have meant something like showing one's commitment to knowledge by attending lectures and reading rational works, and acting justly towards others. This was to be done for the sake of humanity, and not at all in honour of or obedience to a supernatural being. Ward's concept of worship probably entailed acting justly too (rather than singing hymns); as well as making the world a better place to live, however, such worship pleased a God, who was other than the physical world.

Ward and Carlile disagreed with each other's allegory, and Carlile tried to convert Ward and his disciples during 1833-4.[117] The similarities and differences between the two have been sufficiently documented above to explain both

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115. Ward to Bradley, 29 Nov. 1832, Zion's Works, XV, pp.113-17.
116. Ward's denial of the existence of hell was, in the eyes of the judge who sent him to prison, his worst offence. See Ward to Carlile, 14 Aug. 1832, Zion's Works, XV, pp.72-3.
117. See Oliver, Prophets, p.163.

their disagreement, and Carlile's support of Ward in the Prompter and Isis. In Carlile's eyes Ward was an asset in undermining the prevailing understanding of the Bible as history, that understanding which sanctioned the social and political status quo. (Carlile also praised the Christian Corrector because it represented the Bible as sanctioning reform.[118]) Although not devoid of superstitious elements, Ward's doctrines functioned similarly to Carlile's. They freed humanity from the curse of sin and directed people's attention to the earth as the only human habitat, which needed to be made a fit place for all to live, a place of liberty, justice and peace. Like Carlile, Ward had been prepared to suffer imprisonment for the cause.

In August 1832, when Carlile, Taylor and Ward were all in gaol, James Smith arrived in London, having come from Edinburgh where he had led a small group of Southcottians. He took over Ward's Borough High Street chapel, and his lectures were published in the Isis. Born in Glasgow, Smith was trained as a minister of the Presbyterian church. He was converted to millenarianism in 1828 when he heard Edward Irving preach.[119] His contact with Southcottian beliefs happened the following year, when, in Ashton-under-Lyne, he taught Hebrew to the members of John Wroe's congregation (a Christian Israelite sect).[120] Failing to secure leadership of the sect in 1831 when Wroe was disgraced, he returned to Edinburgh before moving on to London. In London Smith became associated with Owenism, editing Crisis for a

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118. See chapter 4 above.
119. On Irving see Oliver, Prophets, ch.V.
120. On Wroe and his sect see Harrison, Second Coming, pp.138-52.

period. This study is concerned only with his lectures during the Autumn and Winter of 1832 at the Borough High Street chapel.[121]

Smith's discourses occupied increasingly more space in the Isis from the time of their first appearance on 20 October until the final issue of 15 December. The following analysis of the major ideas of these discourses is made with the aim of comparing and contrasting them with Carlile's ideas at this time, thus helping to answer the questions to what extent Smith, Carlile and Ward were theological fellow travellers, and how Biblical allegories functioned in the service of popular radicalism. For Smith, too, advanced an allegorical interpretation of the Bible. Like Carlile he believed that infidels needed to claim the Scriptures "as their own" and use the Bible as a weapon against Christians. Using a military metaphor, he explained that the Bible was "the general of Christianity, there the whole campaign is laid out in secresy, there the movements and counter movements of providence are seen".[122] Disputes about its historical accuracy were unproductive. Smith implied that he had not reached a firm conclusion on the issue himself; being written by men, it was likely that errors would have been made out of ignorance. His aim was to undermine it, for it exercised "a most pernicious influence over the fate of mankind". It was like a riddle which, when solved, would

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121. This sketch of Smith's life to 1832 is based on the BDMBR article by Royle, vol. II, pp.463-7. See also John Saville, "J.E. Smith and the Owenite Movement, 1833-1834" in Robert Owen: Prophet of the Poor, ed. Sidney Pollard and John Salt (London and Basingstoke, 1971), ch.5, especially pp.115-25, and the DNB article (XVIII, pp.472-3).
122. Isis, 20 Oct. 1832, p.536.

cease to be destructive, and "be deposited along with other curiosities, in some of our natural museums".[123] What follows is Smith's solution to the riddle.

God and Satan were the two opposite and contending principles of passion and reason respectively. The God of the Bible was said to be "a perfect model of tyrants". The serpent was the Biblical image of reason, wisdom and liberty. It appears, for example, in the Garden of Eden as the advocate of liberty, opposing the law against the acquisition of knowledge.[124] And it is emblematical of the true Christ, "the serpent wisdom, who when he is lifted up will draw all men unto him". When reason has overcome passion a true state of civilisation will have been attained.[125] Passion and reason may be compared to Carlile's necessity and liberty; the difference is that in Smith's schema the reason/liberty is represented by Satan, and passion/necessity by God, whereas in Carlile's allegory the reverse is true. Smith's doctrine also differed from Carlile's in that the opposite forces were considered to be one: this was the basis of his concept of polarity, which postulated the unity of good and evil.[126]

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123. Ibid., p.537. In a private letter to Robert Taylor in 1831 Smith affirmed his belief in the truth of the historical Bible (although he conceded it contained factual errors). While warmly supporting Taylor's cause, he believed that it was handicapped by its denial of the truth of history. If he were to acknowledge the historical, as well as the allegorical truth of the Bible, his sword would be two-edged. See James Smith to Robert Taylor, n.d. [1831], Carlile Papers.
124. Note the allusion to the stamp duty on newspapers.
125. Isis, 20 Oct. 1832, pp.531-8. The quotation alludes to John 12: 32, 34.
126. For an outline of this concept see Harrison, Second Coming, p.156, and for a statement on the subject by Smith himself, Isis, 1 Dec. 1832, pp.603-4.

Evil was declared to be a result of law. Murder, theft, fraud and other crimes were "the works of righteousness, or the law"; after all, had not Saint Paul said that "The law entered that the offence might abound"? (Romans 5:20) Smith went on to define and account for evil in such a way as to vindicate a radical view of the wrongs of society:

> What is it that makes men quarrel and fight, but the poverty and rapacity which is occasioned by tyrannical governments, by monopolies of trade and commerce, by the vast accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few, by laws of entail and primogeniture, by the ambition of kings and princes, by press-gangs and conscriptions, to muster unwilling troops, to lead to the slaughter; by taxations and capitations to defray their expenses, by pillaging of fields, burning of crops, to gratify their villanous [sic] pride, and humble their enemies and enslave their own subjects.[127]

The popular radical belief that property originated in conquest, and was maintained by the laws of the owners of property and capital, is here not only perpetuated, but, within the context of theological discussion of the nature and origin of evil, it is given Biblical sanction. Crimes are seen not as the product of man's propensity to sin, but as the consequences of economic deprivation. The "fall" did not endow future generations with a depraved nature, but a love of liberty, which entailed a preference for good morality. By resisting the edict of a tyrannical God, the man and woman gave birth to the law of liberty; thus we learn that sovereignty rightly resides in the people. The repetition of this scenario is desirable at the present time: "God" represents tyrannical governments which forbid unfettered access to knowledge.[128]

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127. Isis, 17 Nov. 1832, pp.583-4.
128. Ibid., p.583.

Smith urged people, therefore, to "attain unto a full and unrestrained enjoyment" of sin. He equated sin with liberty and knowledge, and the greatest sin was

> to shake off the oppressive burdens of tyranny and the thraldom of priests; to read, think, and judge for yourselves, and boldly resolve to live no more as the dupes of fanatics, and the half-starved slaves of Egyptian task-masters.[129]

These are words which Carlile could have written. Although sin in his moral allegory retains its pejorative associations, by making it denote ignorance, Carlile asserted the same values for the same reasons. An enslavement of the mind had made possible an enslavement of the body. To begin to think for oneself was the prerequisite of being able to choose no longer to accept a life of misery. Freedom was a matter of will. Believing that orthodox Christianity made people accept their chains, both Carlile and Smith sought to undermine it from within: that is, by advancing an allegorical interpretation of the Bible favourable to social and political radicalism. To mobilise people it was critical to redefine sin.

Heaven and hell also needed to be redesignated as earthly consequences of people's actions. Smith made them two sides of the same coin (consistent with his doctrine of polarity), hell being the place where evil is destroyed, heaven where good triumphs. To cast the wicked into hell meant to destroy evil principles by means of good principles.

> The Hell of the New Testament...is a reformation of manners, a destruction of the tyrannical and oppressive principles of human action: when, according to the parable of Dives, and Lazarus; Dives, or selfish luxury and oppression in society, shall be destroyed and cast into hell, and Lazarus, or honest poverty, shall be

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129. Isis, 17 Nov. 1832, pp.579-85.

> exalted to her proper rank and privileges: the first shall be last, and the last first; the mighty shall be humbled, and the poor and needy exalted.[130]

The orthodox interpretation of Jesus's teaching cited here would have been that he was speaking of a reversal of fortunes, of rewards and punishments after death in places other than the earth. Smith used it to help achieve a social revolution on earth in the present. Anti-radicals, as we saw in chapter 3 above, sometimes tried to divert the minds of the poor from their present suffering to a life of bliss in heaven. Smith was attempting to redirect that attention to the oppression currently obtaining, and to convince people that it could and should be eliminated. This was the meaning of the book the priests told them was a revelation from God.

The Christian churches correctly denounced each other as anti-Christ, for they were all the progeny of Jesus, who confessed his intention to send not peace but a sword. This prophecy was fulfilled by his church which "has been a cruel oppressive system of intimidation, a fleecing and not a feeding of the flock, a sowing of discord instead of a mediation of peace".[131] The goodness of Jesus's life and teachings veiled his evil intentions; he shrouded his teachings in mystery, knowing that "men would fight and quarrel about his words, that torrents of human blood would be shed in support of the most insignificant points of doctrine, that families would be scattered by the cruel frenzy of his fanatical worshippers".[132] By implication

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130. Isis, 27 Oct. 1832, pp.556-7, 552. The parable may be found in Luke 16:19-31.
131. Ibid.
132. Ibid.

Jesus was a false Christ. The essentially anti-clerical thrust of this teaching would also have won Carlile's approval.

CONCLUSION

Carlile's substantive beliefs had not changed much since he had abandoned Deism and embraced materialism in 1822. His professed conversion to Christianity in 1832 was something of a theatrical stunt, a tactical move which should be seen in the contexts both of his accommodation (beginning in 1826) to the popular infidel-sectarianism and millenarian milieu of the late 1820s and early 1830s (signified by his partnership with Robert Taylor and patronage of prophets like Ward and Smith), and of the swelling agitation for reform in 1830-2. Carlile consciously began to deploy Biblical language in political discourses in the critical phase of the progress of Grey's second reform bill (October 1831). During the early months of 1832 the moral allegory was developed in detail and publicised in Eliza Sharples's discourses at the Rotunda and the pages of the Isis. In May, shortly before the peak of popular agitation directed towards securing the passage of the third reform bill through the House of Lords, Carlile announced his conversion. He was attempting, in a sense, to ride the wave of the popular mobilisation, and to seize for himself and his theological and political aims a measure of mass support. This entailed, he had come to believe, appropriating the mythological basis of Christianity. In the revised version of the myth Carlile himself was the incarnated spirit of reason, suffering persecution - he was

in prison at the time - for the cause of liberty.

The life of Elizabeth Sharples illustrates the successful operation of the moral allegory. It facilitated her transition from social and political conservatism and orthodox Christianity to infidel-radicalism. At the same time, it must be conceded that her orthodoxy was already crumbling under the stress of grief, and Carlile the man was perhaps as important to her conversion as was his message. The allegory did not win many converts. In 1833 Carlile deployed it for tactical purposes in his criticism of the new Whig government in the pages of the Gauntlet. He hoped to maintain and direct the course of the popular mobilisation, an aim which he pursued - without success - in his provincial tours after his release from gaol in August 1833 (having failed to rebuild his London following). It seems that the moral allegory fell between two stools. As allegory the Bible did not have the appeal of flesh and blood, and was unlikely to win Christians satisfied with their faith. To the infidel of the Paineite tradition on the other hand, the allegory probably conceded too much to the Christianity he had already abandoned. It certainly met with objections from both of these directions.[133]

Carlile's true religion, although in some respects similar to the true religion of Carpenter, Hetherington and O'Brien, was not fitted to attracting the support of people holding a range of views on speculative theological questions. Like the exponents of the "new analysis", Carlile attempted to

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133. See Isis, 26 May 1832, p.242, and the Gauntlet, 23 Mar. 1834, p.936. There may also have been non-religious reasons for Carlile's lack of popularity - his rejection of Owenism and the co-operative movement, for example.

harmonise the testimony of reason and scripture, and to direct attention to earthly matters as proper objects of Christian concern. In his emphasis on a correct interpretation of the Bible, he too professed to be restoring Christianity to its original purity. An optimistic view of human nature was also common to both. But Carlile pursued uniformity of religious belief as an aim. Not only did he want the Established Church reformed of its material flaws, he wanted it abolished because its doctrines were wrong. Not only did he consciously appropriate Biblical language to advance the cause of political reform, he expounded an interpretation of the Bible in order to destroy Christianity. This true religion was a complete system which demanded a person's total intellectual allegiance, and excluded the worship of a transcendent God.

Conclusion

CONCLUSION

Out of the Paineite tradition of which Carlile was the principal apostle, emerged the atheism of men like Robert Cooper, G.J. Holyoake and Charles Bradlaugh. In the 1840s the attack on the Bible intensified and became more comprehensive. "Genuine" Christianity was less tolerated and the "good" parts of the teaching of Jesus were condemned along with the violent and immoral passages of the Old Testament. Such men ceased to contest the territory of Christianity altogether, spurning it as worthless if not socially harmful.[1] But by mid-century the conditions which had produced the infidel-radical tradition were disappearing and compromise between Christian and atheist became possible. The main factor was the concern for secular reform which was developing among people of all classes and religious opinions, exemplified by the movements to repeal the taxes on knowledge and for secular education.[2] It was upon Holyoake above all that the implications of such a change dawned.

Holyoake realised that it was not true that religious reform was a precondition of social and political reform. His secularism therefore did not attack Christianity *per se*, but judged Christian teaching by the standards of morality and utility. Where it was not detrimental to secular concerns Holyoake ignored religion. And he was willing to work with Christians whose morality passed the test; hence his association with the Christian socialists in promoting co-operation. A new phase of freethought was born, in which

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1. See Royle, *Victorian Infidels*, pp.107-12.
2. *Ibid.*, pp.145-7.

it moved towards that most Victorian of shibboleths - respectability. In Royle's nomenclature, it moved from being a sect to being more like a denomination.[3] The trend towards conciliation even influenced Bradlaugh's more militant and radical National Secular Society (founded in 1866). Thus, by the mid-1870s, freethought was "less against religion than independent of religion".[4]

The militancy of working-class radicalism was also muted as a liberal consensus emerged in the mid-Victorian years. Although they preserved their independence by insisting upon manhood suffrage and forming local associations, working-class people did not, in general, perceive the franchise issue in terms of a conflict with the middle class. Rather than being the precondition of a radical transformation of society, the vote was part of a gradual process of reform, and something which working men had earned by their mental and moral advances in recent times.[5] This change went hand-in-hand with the mellowing of middle-class liberalism in the 1840s, as coercion of the working class gave way to something like partnership in striving towards the common goals of social, economic, intellectual and moral improvement. The harsh utilitarianism of the early 1830s (exemplified by the new Poor Law) was leavened with evangelical moral idealism and

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3. Ibid., pp.152-63.
4. Susan Budd, Varieties of Unbelief: Atheists and Agnostics in English Society 1850-1960 (London, 1977), p.42.
5. See Trygve R. Tholfsen, Working Class Radicalism in Mid-Victorian England (London, 1976), pp.307-20. Some historians, however, emphasise the continuity between the Chartist and mid-Victorian years. See, for example, Royden Harrison, Before the Socialists: Studies in Labour and Politics 1861-1881 (London and Toronto, 1965).

romantic sensibility.[6] It was the legislative expression of this change - Peel's measures which appeased specific working class grievances, such as the reduction of the taxes on consumption and the repeal of the Corn Laws - which rendered anachronistic the militant Chartist language of political exclusion, and, arguably, helps to account for the decline of Chartism in the 1840s - before improved economic conditions had made any impact.[7]

The Enlightenment was central to the emergence of consensus. From the beginning, working-class radicals had strongly believed in the value of knowledge. Indeed they considered it the key to the transformation of the social and political order. It was when the middle class came to believe in the value of education for the working class that a basis for consensus, and for the social cohesion of the mid-Victorian cities, was established. Social conflict was thenceforth over the content rather than the desirability of improvement.[8] This change of attitude may be observed among the Anglican clergy, who were generally suspicious of the early mechanics' institutes, fearing that they stimulated radicalism and infidelity. This hostility generally did not continue beyond mid-century. The expansion of mechanics' institutes in rural areas was often assisted, even initiated, by clergy. And many churches

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6. Ibid., pp.124-54.
7. Jones, "Rethinking Chartism", pp.175-8. R.K. Webb points out that the social legislation of the early and mid-Victorian years should not be seen as an attempt to "buy off" the working class; it was, rather, a product of "moral, political, or administrative necessity", Modern England From the Eighteenth Century to the Present, Second ed. (London, 1980), p.289. It may nevertheless have had the effect of diminishing working-class discontent and militancy.
8. Tholfsen, Working Class Radicalism, pp.156-76.

provided their own adult education facilities, which fulfilled the needs of the religiously minded and were agencies of religious influence in society.[9]

What are the implications of the liberal consensus for the religious component of radical discourse? A secure answer awaits further research. The increasing trend towards the deployment of utilitarian arguments by working-class radicals and their middle-class collaborators undoubtedly contributed in the longer term towards the secularisation of social and political debate.[10] But religious language surely could not have disappeared entirely from the discourse of a society which prized evangelical values and conceived of itself as the flowering of Christian civilisation. It is likely that it continued to be a notable characteristic of single-issue reform campaigns, as it certainly was of the anti-Poor Law movement, which was supported by a large number of clergy.[11] One would be more secure in anticipating the diminishing of the apocalyptic tenor of radical rhetoric, given working-class acquiescence in the expectation of gradual change. It is

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9. See Harrison, Learning and Living, pp.173-202.
10. It is relevant to recall Robert Hole's argument that the Church's shift from the deployment of deontological to utilitarian arguments secularised political discussion, thereby helping to bring about the end of the ancien regime in Church and State in 1828-32. See ch.3 above. Owenism was probably an important agent in promoting the language of utility (as opposed to the language of rights) among working-class radicals; Owenism rejected the claims to natural or historical rights on the part of particular social groups as divisive and therefore belonging to the competitive world which it rejected. See Jones, "Rethinking Chartism", p.125.
11. See John Knott, Popular Opposition to the 1834 Poor Law (London and Sydney, 1986), pp.247-52, and Nicholas C. Edsall, The Anti-Poor Law Movement 1834-44 (Manchester, 1971), pp.60-3.

probable that the climax of the Chartist movement in 1839-42 marks the climax of true religion as a militant instrument of social and political conflict.[12]

While the liberal consensus was being broken down in the late Victorian years, the Church was becoming more sympathetic towards social reform. Belief in the inexorable operation of economic laws was eroded by the works of Arnold Toynbee and Alfred Marshall. Evidence of this change is to be seen in William Booth's In Darkest England (1890). The term "Christian Socialism", which shocked Christians around mid-century, had reappeared by 1880 and became respectable. A number of clergymen helped strikers, offered themselves as mediators in labour disputes and tried to change attitudes within the Church towards social reform.[13] There was a corresponding decrease in hostility among the working class towards the Church. Secularism was no longer dominant among the political left, and there were several key socialist leaders, such as Arthur Henderson, Philip Snowden, Tom Mann and Keir Hardie, who were either Christians themselves or worked with Christians who shared their aims.[14]

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12. After 1832 it would be increasingly legitimate to speak of true religion as the "religion" of the working class, as "the people" for whom radicals sought political representation was coming to mean the working class. See Yeo, "Christianity", pp.112-13. The declaration by the Convention of a "national holiday" to begin on 12 August 1839 elicited the use of apocalyptic language by Christians on both sides. Yeo remarks: "The radical Christian idea of the millennium was of an epochal historical change brought about by human agency; in this civilization the agency was to be the awakened people, or the working classes...." Ibid., p.121.
13. Inglis, Churches and the Working Classes, pp.250-321.
14. Edward Royle, Radicals, Secularists and Republicans: Popular Freethought in Britain, 1866-1915 (Manchester, 1980), pp.239-41.

In the years of confrontation encompassed by the present study, Christianity may be said to have been territory disputed by both sides. The radical version of Christianity may be reviewed with reference to the maverick Anglican clergyman, Rev.Dr. Arthur Wade.[15] At a meeting of the NUWC on 22 January 1833, after speaking about taxation in England and America, Wade observed

> that the principle of our Christian government seemed to be to oppress the poor (cheers.) They went into a house and read prayers, and professed much, but let them learn to love mercy and do justly (hear.)[16]

True religion was a religion of actions rather than words, a religion characterised by benevolence towards one's fellow human beings. Religion served an end. Wade's sermon, A Voice from the Church, was described in a favourable review by the PMG as one in which "the great truths of revelation are made applicable and subservient to the practical operations of life".[17] Wade styled himself as "a Christian and political teacher...for the benefit of the people" and averred that the press should be a teacher of the people, unfettered by taxes. "It was true", he said, "that the laws should be obeyed, but here was a conflict of moral obligation, and the happiness of the greatest number should be the leading principle".[18]

This was not an admission that utility outranked Christian duty, but an attempt to resolve the dilemma of apparently conflicting Christian duties, by suggesting a principle of

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15. On Wade see chapter 4 above.
16. PMG, 26 Jan. 1833, p.27.
17. PMG, 29 Sept. 1832, pp.550-1.
18. Wade was speaking at a meeting of the NUWC on 15 January 1833 to discuss means of relieving Hetherington (then in Clerkenwell gaol for the second time). PMG, 19 Jan. 1833, p.20.

arbitration. (Wade insisted that Hetherington was in prison for "doing his duty to God and to his country".[19]) Such a dilemma arose from the preaching of Romans 13 by conservatives. It has been shown above that the Biblical injunctions to obey governments were qualified in various ways by radicals. The religious strain of radical rhetoric can be understood fully only if examined in the context of anti-radical rhetoric. The relationship between duty and utility implied by Wade's advice - that is, that the performance of religious duty produced desirable consequences - was characteristic of both radical and conservative arguments. Radicals argued that agitation for reform would bring about a just society. This argument served a mobilising purpose, and the sanctifying of reform also served tactical purposes. Conservatives argued that deference to authority would attract the blessing of God (in eternity if not on earth). Their purpose was to counter radical propaganda and thus preserve social order.

In his conflict with the middle-class Birmingham Political Union in 1832, Wade saw himself as emulating Christ. Wade had been instrumental in forming a Midland Union of the Working Classes, which he considered necessary to the promotion of distinctly working-class interests as against the interests of property owners. The BPU threatened Wade with expulsion, Thomas Attwood arguing that he should keep out of Birmingham politics.[20] Wade represented himself as the victim of persecution, and explained his position thus:

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19. Ibid.
20. On Wade's role in the formation of the Midland Union see Lloyd, "Dr Wade", pp.73-4.

> ...as a Christian, humbly following the footsteps of my Divine Master, who courted no political Chieftain, I would rejoice to be persecuted as he was, for siding with the poor, and performing acts of mercy, justice, and humanity; and I further assure you that whenever you or your friends relax your exertions in the cause of the starving and oppressed artizans, I will...be ready to assist the working classes, and the unrepresented...to obtain all their rights, civil, political, and religious, in order that they may enjoy, what God intended they should do, full prosperity and freedom in this world, as well as eternal happiness in the next.[21]

Christ was a potent emblem of the poor man struggling against the religious hypocrisy of the rich and powerful in order to overcome oppression. The true religion espoused by radicals was especially suited to the working class, although popular radicalism was not an exclusively working-class phenomenon. Wade's identification with Christ is typical of working-class reformers. By identifying with Christ, the radical reformer was able to appropriate dignity, authority, courage and hope. He could thus challenge the hegemonic values of society from within, neither surrendering valuable territory to the ruling class, nor submitting to its religious dogma.

A number of Christian preachers, along with Wade, involved themselves in the cause of reform. Harrison and Scholefield were discussed in chapter 2 above. Indeed many radicals were sincere Christians (of various sectarian allegiances). Hone and Carpenter are major examples, and many others are known from their letters to radical periodicals. But many, too, were infidels, Carlile chief among them. The language of true religion - often explicitly Biblical - nevertheless was used by <u>all</u> to construct their criticisms of the present

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21. <u>PMG</u>, 17 Nov. 1832, pp.612-3.

order and their demands for change. For practical Christianity conformed to the morality of Deism, and Jesus was a hero many of them shared with Christians. Indeed Deists contested the legitimacy of organised Christianity's claim to be founded upon his life and teaching, asserting that Christ was a Deist. The growth of freethought during the 1820s did not diminish the importance of Biblical language to radical discourse. Carlile's "conversion" underlines this fact. Atheist materialism failed to supplant Deism, and the sectarian Deism of the 1820s and 1830s cannot be distinguished absolutely from popular Christianity; elements of Christianity remained present in Deist worship and teaching, and professedly Christian sects, like the Freethinking Christians, verged on Deism.

Millenarian modes of thought were common to Christian and infidel radicals in both the post-war years and the early 1830s. At times of economic hardship, social unrest and government repression, an ideology of change was needed, and chiliastic expectation suited. The apocalyptic language used to construct this ideology was often borrowed from the Bible. Thus radicals anticipated the coming of a new heaven and a new earth, and conceived of themselves as providential instruments of change. They placed themselves on the side of good, their opponents on the side of evil. A call to involvement in cosmic drama possessed mobilising power; it helped to bolster courage and nourish faith and hope in dangerous circumstances. Identifying the voice of the people with the voice of God, radicals warned governments of impending catastrophe and demanded reform.

Demands for manhood suffrage and annual parliaments, and a

co-operative rather than a competitive society, may be distinguished from the demands of some sixteenth- and seventeenth-century reformers for simpler Church services, the removal of ornaments from Churches and a presbyterian or congregational Church polity. But the former should not be labelled secular and the latter religious, without qualification of these terms. Especially in a society where Church and State were interdependent, the demands of the former were likely to have religious implications and those of the latter social and political - "secular" - implications. In sixteenth-century England such a dichotomy was scarcely conceivable. By the early nineteenth century the religious and secular could be separated, at least notionally. A number of radical periodicals, Hetherington's, Cobbett's, Wooler's and Sherwin's among them, professed to exclude religion from their pages and discuss politics. In practice, however, this did not happen. Religion and politics were not altogether separable. There was an inextricable religious dimension to secular affairs. God was represented as taking sides, and his words (known through the revelation of the Bible and attested by observation of the natural world) were important to the construction of popular radical ideology in the struggles with conservatives between the end of the wars with France and the beginning of Chartism - and indeed beyond. Popular radicalism was deemed to embody the principles of true religion.

APPENDIX

Glossary for the Bible

(Source: Isis, 7 July 1832, pp.337-40.)

AARON, the first emblem of a mysterious priesthood: the mouth or voice of God, chosen to denounce kingcraft, and to rescue a people from bondage and tyranny.

ABADDON, literally a bad one, the essence of kingcraft, the king of kings and priests, of all the scorpions and locusts of the earth, and of the bottomless pit of royal and priestly iniquity.

ABEL, the first righteous martyr of the Sacred Scriptures, according to the Gospel mystery; the first Lamb of the Divine Flock, that bled under the vengeance of tyranny; the first shepherd in Israel; the first victim of tyranny and ignorance; the remote type of Jesus Christ; the first priest to make a sacrifice of animal life and of the fat thereof to please the Lord of the priesthood; the first bad example recorded; the first emblematical victim of bad passion, of wroth, [sic] and revenge. The character of Abel is mixed; but a sufficient proof, that this book was never meant to be a history of the origination of the human race is, that Eve is not the mother of any daughters. Where and how Cain and Seth found wives, divine inspiration has not recorded.

ABOMINATION, the principle of priestcraft; the viciousness of mystery.

ABRAHAM, the first host of divinity; the first cook; the first baker of cakes; the inventor of melted butter as a savoury sauce to roasted veal; the father of Israel, of the faithful priesthood; the author of tithes; the first contributor to priestcraft.

ADAM, the first scholar that took a lesson from Eve or Divine Wisdom; the first spiritualized or deified man; the first living temple; the first uninquisitive and passive recipient of knowledge; the first parent, under God, of the human mind; the divine father and fountain of human knowledge; the submissive partner, but not the parent of woman; the first subject of petticoat government; the first dupe; the first ninny; the schoolmaster; the inventor of nouns as a part of speech; the first emblem of a married man; the origin of moral evil. Adam also presents a mixed character. God himself is author both of good and evil.

AGAG, a personal specimen of the danger of falling into the hands of the priesthood of a foreign nation. A priest hath no bowels of mercy, and spareth not; a king may be satiated with blood and sacrifice - a priest never.

ALMIGHTY, the powerful god, the adjective description of knowledge.

AMEN, one of the titular names of god.

ANGEL, a messenger of truth; an argument; a reason.

ANTICHRIST, the church of Greece, of Rome, of England, and every church that worships the idolatrous personification of the Deity, whether in unity or trinity, and neglects the great religious principles of human instruction and improvement.

APOLLYON, see ABADDON, the different name of another language for the same thing or quality, like the only difference that is found in all religion: the god of one nation being the devil of another; as we see in this instance, the Glorious Apollo of the Greeks, the name of the CONDEMNED ONE of the Hebrews, and the angel of the bottomless pit of evil!

ARMAGEDDON, the field in which the last battle for human liberty is to be fought, by the scholars, against kingcraft, priestcraft, lordcraft, and all other crafts, wiles, subtleties and assaults of the devil.

BAAL, one of the cast-off names of God.

BABEL, confusion, mystery, the towering arrogance of the priesthood; the confusion of language, by the use of mysterious words that have no relation to things, such as a personified god, soul, spirit, nature, mind; mysterious poetry.

BABYLON, the universal city of united kingcraft and priestcraft; the mother of all the abominations of the earth; to be destroyed by the sons of God, the scholars of the earth.

BALAK, the first and only king who failed in the endeavour to bribe and corrupt a priest, or whose wealth was not so large as the extravagant and unreasonable conscience of the priest.

BALAAM, the first priest, who saw not the Lord in his way, when an ass could see it; who was subjected to a very great temptation, and a wavering conscience, between the will and the fear to take a royal bribe, to curse and injure a people.

BAPTISM, (of infants), first initiation into the use of letters; a mystical dipping, or use of water, as now misunderstood.

BAPTISM, (of adults), the finish of scholastic education; the washing away of the sin of ignorance, in the waters of life, the stream of knowledge, the divine fountain; now sadly polluted and made unholy by the mysteries and abominations of the priesthood, communicating, to those who wash therein, all sorts of mental plagues and disorders.

BELZEBUB, the God or king of flies, locusts, scorpions; a general name for the concentrated essence of kingcraft and priestcraft, and all human evil; the prince of devils.

CAIN, the first murderer; the first tyrant; the first dog that killed a lamb; the first wolf that preyed upon the Lord's fold; the first builder of cities; the first king; the first devil.

CANAAN, any land of the king's enemies that floweth with milk and honey, to whet the royal appetite for war and human blood, for fire and devastation.

CHERUBIM, God, in the figure of a bull, as worshipped in Egypt; in the figure of a cow, as worshipped in India; the Taurus of the zodiac, the emblem of the month of April, Aaron's golden calf.

CHRIST, a learned man; one anointed to teach and save mankind from the sin of ignorance; the synonyme [sic] of Jesus, an emblem of the persecution, passion, crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection of the principle of reason among kings and priests.

CHURCH, a congregation of the people; originally a parish-school; but now the den of the priesthood, perverted to the most wicked of all purposes, the stultification and plunder of mankind. May it soon be restored to its original purpose.

DAVID, a man after God's own heart, a king of Israel; God himself; the father of Jesus; one of the names of God; one of the divine family.

DEATH, extinction or cessation of individual life, the natural means for making room for new individual life, change of state of being, and of sensation, dissolution of organization.

DEMETRIUS, the principle of gain in trade, where the purpose is no obstacle, and where every obstacle to the purpose is sedition and blasphemy; one of Diana's silversmiths.

DEVIL, the spirit of evil, of darkness, of death, of torment; the adversary of man; the enemy of god or knowledge; the common scape-goat of mankind, bearing all the sins of the world; created as an apology for human vice.

EDEN, a garden, a paradise, where the whole earth might be, if it were not for kings, and priests, and lords.

ELECT (the), the literati of the earth; the truly learned; those who have the name of God written in their high intellectual foreheads; the sons of God.

EVE, the personification of wisdom, of liberty, of resistance to tyranny; the mother of human knowledge; the proper help meet for man.

FAITH, a confirmation in the correctness of a principle, and honest adherence to it.

GABRIEL, the strong man of God; a pair of the wings of knowledge; the message from Knowledge to the Virgin Wisdom, and proxy for the Divine Union.

GHOST, spirit, not a person, not visible, other than as a principle or quality.

GOD, the Idol of human nature's imaginary perfection.

GOD, (the Father); life; love; the principle of light and goodness; knowledge; the spirit of truth and intelligence; to be worshipped in spirit and in truth; but not in any idea of a person, which is idolatrous and damnable.

GOD, (the son); O Logos! Reason; the first fruit of knowledge; the mediator between knowledge and ignorance; the saviour of mankind from sin, darkness, and the torment of all the crafts of the world, the flesh, and the devil; the winnower and burner up of the chaff of error; the baptizer with fire; the finishing schoolmaster.

GOD (the Holy Ghost,) proceeding from the Father and the Son; the Holy Spirit; the Spirit of Education; knowledge communicated through the principle of reason, by teaching or discussion; the comforter; the Spirit of Truth received; the principle of human perfection; the spirit of liberty; the angel of knowledge.

GOSPEL, the secret of God, the allegory and personification of the birth, life, passion, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of the principle of knowledge among mankind, the spirit of the Bible.

HEBREW, the name or distinction of one of the degrees in the ancient Pagan mysteries.

HELL, darkness; ignorance; sin; neglect to cultivate the mind; torment; error; the place or seat of evil; bad passion.

HERESY, person-worship, as distinct from a veneration of the principles of truth and knowledge.

HEROD, monarchy, kingcraft, tyranny, ignorance, the personification of the power of hell.

HOLY, one of the names of God such as Al, Allah, El, Eli, Elohim, Holloa.

ISRAELITE, an ancient masonic degree in the secret mysteries.

JEHOVAH, a name of God similar to Jove, and of various physical meaning.

JESUS, Saviour. See God, the Son.

JEW, a name of God, similar to Jehovah, Jove, and Yahouh; a name taken formerly by the adepts and finished students in the ancient Pagan mysteries, and not the name of a people of any particular nation, as now supposed and perverted.

JOHN, (the Baptist), the schoolmaster for children, the teacher of the alphabet and first lessons in reading, the waterer of the tender shoots of the plants of knowledge, the forerunner to prepare the way for Jesus, as the finishing schoolmaster, the first baptizer of infants in the stream of learning, a teacher sent from God, a prophet, a voice in the desert or wilderness of mind to call in the children of men to the kingdom of heaven, a messenger to mankind with a warning not to remain longer in ignorance; the first publisher of the Age of Reason; the first terror of kings and priests.

JOB, one of the names of God, as Jove and Jehovah; but more particularly known in the Gospel Allegory, as one of the heroes of virtue struggling with adversity, but strong in integrity and invincibly righteous, a sight and trial pleasing to God.

KING, a generally useless and mischievous public officer.

KINGDOM OF HEAVEN, a reasonable state of human society, the school of reason, the government of konwledge and honesty.

LAMB OF GOD, the scholars of the earth, always under persecution by kings and priests.

LAMECH, the first polygamist and self-condemned criminal.

LORD, (The), one of the names of God, as also

LORD GOD, (The), is one of the distinctions of God.

MARK, of the Beast; a low unintellectual forehead, resembling in the human being the general foreheads of other animals; the absence of brain from the forehead.

MARK, of the followers of the Lamb, or sons of God; a high intellectual forehead; the brain in the right place.

MELCHISEDEC, the first union of royalty with the priesthood, and the institution of tithes as the consequence.

MICHAEL, a divine warrior, such as is now much wanted.

MOSES, the first array of priestcraft against royal power, the leader of a rebellious people, the saviour of a people; a lawyer; the founder of a commonwealth in opposition to and in supercession of royalty.

MYSTERY, Babylon; an abuse of the human mind, and consequently of human society.

PHARAOH, a personification of royal obstinacy refusing to yield to circumstances.

PHARISEE, a superstitious sect, that vainly imagined the immortality of the individual human life; a heresy now introduced into the church falsely called Christian.

PRAYER, a wrestling with the spirit, a mental exertion to acquire knowledge, an asking of knowledge from one competent to give it, study, contemplation, converse with the spirits.

PROPHET, a scholar, a reasoner, a learned man, a calculator of consequences, a reasoner from cause to effect, a philosopher, a politician, a seer, a poet.

PROPHETESS, a female prophet.

PSALM, an ejaculatory effusion, while contemplating the power and goodness of God. It is a great mistake to suppose that David was a Psalmist. David was the Deity addressed.

RESURRECTION, springing forth of knowledge after apparent death; growth of knowledge, return to the study of science, renewal.

REVELATION, secrecy secreted, confusion confused, or mystery mystified, as it now stands in the Sacred Scriptures; but really found in its original meaning, in this glossary or divine lexicon.

SADDUCEE, the more reasonable of the ancients, who credited human life only for value proved and received.

SAINTS, the learned men among the ancient Pagans.

SAMSON, the strength of God; the Hercules of Knowledge; the slayer of the lion.

SATAN, of various character in the various Gospel Allegories; in the garden scene of Eden, an intelligent serpent; in the book of Job, the most distinguished visitor at the Divine Levee; in the Gospel according to Saint Matthew, an experimentalist upon the nature of divinity; in the latter books of the New Testament, an enemy of mankind. As the etymology of religious personifications brings the whole to one divine root, it was not an absence of wisdom in the woman, who held a light to a painting of Satan, under the influence of the uncertainty of the future.

SAUL, the condemned king of Israel.

SELAH, stir the fire, a holy ejaculation in the mysteries of fire or sun worship, corresponding with the amen of modern churches.

SERAPHIM, man burning with the fire of intellect.

SIN, ignorance, a condemned state of life.

SIN, (original), primitive state of human nature without knowledge.

SOLOMON, a royal personification of the wisdom of being wealthy.

SOUL, life, spirit, knowledge, ghost.

SPIRIT, life, temper, qualification, state of knowledge, angel, messenger, ghost. See **ghost**.

SWORD (of the spirit), the power of knowledge, strength of argument, keenness of wit, force of reason, biting quality of satire and irony, pungency of ridicule and jest; the dart or shaft of malice, when the spirit is evil; a two edged sword.

TEMPLE, a place or house in which the ancients recorded time and worshipped God; a place of learning; emphatically, a church or place of popular gathering to behold divine emblems, now improperly used to receive the dead as well as the living.

VIRGIN MARY, the lamb's mother and wife, the mother of the church, the personification of wisdom, the second birth of Eve, the mystical generation of human knowledge; in physics, the sea, and the Virgo of the Zodiac.

WORD (The), Logos; Reason; the essence of Deity; one of the names of God.

WORD OF GOD, good sense, reason, sound, and critical knowledge.

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