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**The Life and Thought of
the Very Reverend Dr Isaac Milner
and
His Contribution to
the Evangelical Revival in England**

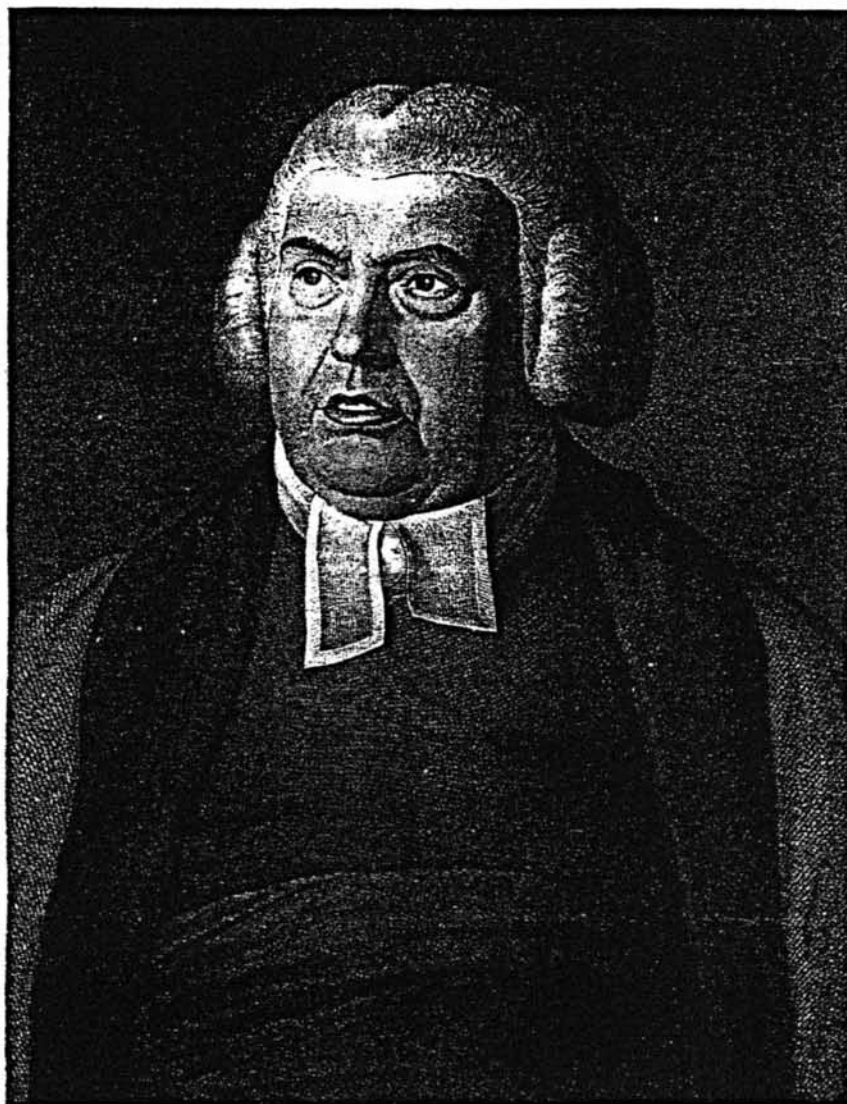
Barbara J. Melaas-Swanson

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**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Ph.D.
University of Durham
Department of Theology
1993**



21 OCT 1993



Isaac Milner
(1750-1820)

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I confirm that no part of the material offered has previously been submitted by me for a degree in this or in any other University.

Signed Barbara J. Melaas-Sumerson
Date 29 March 1993

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Abstract
**'The Life and Thought of the Very Reverend Dr Isaac Milner
and His Contribution to the Evangelical Revival in England'**
Barbara J. Melaas-Swanson

This thesis is a study of the life and thought of the Very Reverend Dr Isaac Milner (1750-1820) and his contribution to the Evangelical Revival in England. Milner is not unknown to students of Evangelical history, but his figure is a shadowy one. This work describes his life, considers the ways in which he contributed to the Evangelical Revival, particularly within the Church of England, and assesses his thought and influence.

Chapter One analyzes Milner's relationship to the Clapham Sect. He was regarded as one of the advisers to 'the Saints' and the nature of his influence is evaluated.

Chapter Two centres on Milner as a scholar, College President and Vice-Chancellor in Cambridge University. An account of Milner's commitment to learning is important to a movement later accused of anti-intellectualism.

Chapter Three examines Milner's position as the Dean of Carlisle Cathedral. Milner held this office for twenty years before another Evangelical succeeded to a like position in the Anglican hierarchy, and his leadership in this capacity is assessed.

Chapter Four is a study of Milner's primary work, The History of the Church of Christ. Co-authored with Joseph Milner, the work made a notable contribution to ecclesiastical historiography and remains an important source for Evangelical history. Of special interest is Milner's detailed study of Martin Luther.

Chapter Five discusses Milner's contributions to nineteenth-century theological debate concerning the sacrament of baptism and the British and Foreign Bible Society. These controversies influenced the development of Evangelical theology and mission, and are important to an overview of the period.

One scholar of Evangelical history, Charles Smyth, asserted that biography presents a primary medium by which to study the history of the Evangelical Revival. This biographical study of Milner is a further contribution toward the picture of the Evangelical movement that has emerged from the pages of history since Smyth's statement over forty years ago. Milner's engagement with the social, ecclesiastical, intellectual and theological spheres of his time allows for the study of a unique cross-section of Evangelical concerns and involvements that helped shape nineteenth-century Britain.

Acknowledgements

The nineteenth-century Evangelicals thrived on community and cooperation, and I am certain they would have appreciated the many kind expressions of support and encouragement that I have received along the way which have made this project possible.

To my supervisor, Dr. Sheridan Gilley, I owe a great debt of gratitude for his thorough and patient reading of my draft chapters. His scholarly advice and example have been invaluable to bringing this thesis to term.

I shall remember with affection the hospitality of Michael and Margaret Hennell whose home has been a point of pilgrimage for fledgling scholars of the Revival for many years. A delightful afternoon spent with Michael pulling books off shelves and talking about Evangelicals marked a turning point in my research. I will always be grateful for his warm interest and support. I would also like to thank John Walsh for his encouragement to pursue this work on Milner, and for sharing with me his knowledge of moderate Calvinism. Thanks are due to Harold Corrigan for reading my final draft, and for his astute suggestions and advice in the last stages of my work. In addition, I thank my husband, Wayne Melaas-Swanson, for diligently managing the compilation and production of the bibliography.

My research would not have been possible without the kind cooperation and assistance of the staff of the following libraries and institutions: the Bodleian Library, the Cambridge University Library, the Birmingham University Library, the Wakefield Public Record Office, Wilberforce House, Hull and the Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, California. I am especially grateful to Mary Clapinson and Sarah Stockwell of the Bodleian Library for allowing me access to the Milner letters that were a part of the then newly-acquired Wrangham collection before they were properly catalogued and made available to the public. Thanks are due to the staff of the Old Library of Queens' College, Cambridge, for their information about Milner's personal library, and also for searching out an important tract that Milner annotated. I am grateful to the President of Queens' for allowing me access to records housed in the College archives. The Dr. Williams's Library has become a second scholarly home and I am grateful to the staff, especially Mrs Janet Barnes, for their patient assistance, not least of all, in allowing me to keep the Milner Life long past its due date. Finally, I will remember with affection and gratitude the staff of the Palace Green Library of Durham University for their cheerful assistance, support and friendship; it was their efforts that made Durham a place of pleasant and fruitful study.

I would also like to thank the Dean and Chapter of Carlisle Cathedral for allowing me to quote material from the Dean and Chapter Minute Book, and also for sharing with me a photocopy of the engraving of Isaac Milner in the Cathedral's possession.

To my family and friends, whose love and support have sustained me through these years of research and writing, I offer my heartfelt thanks. I will especially remember the communities of

Trevelyan College, Durham and St. Anne's Lutheran Church, London and my brother pastors of the Lutheran Church in Great Britain whose interest and support have meant so much to me. Thank you for allowing me to introduce Isaac Milner into our circle of friendship and love. Finally, I would like to express my deep appreciation to my parents, Ira and Alice Melaas, and my dear husband, Wayne, for their unending faith, support and encouragement: to them and to my beloved Dr. Placidius Joseph Leinfelder this work is dedicated with love and thanks.

*For Ira and Alice Melaas,
Dr. Placidius J. Leinfelder (1905-1988)
and Wayne Melaas-Swanson*

** * **

Givers of Life and Light

Yet surely, surely the only true knowledge of our fellow man is that which enables us to feel with him - which gives us a fine ear for the heart-pulses that are beating under the mere clothes of circumstances and opinion. Our subtlest analysis of schools and sects must miss the essential truth, unless it be lit up by the love that sees in all forms of human thought and work, the life and death struggles of separate human beings.

**- George Eliot
Janet's Repentance (1858)**

Introduction

The Evangelical Revival had a profound impact on Georgian and Victorian England. From the humble and even despised beginnings of Gospel preachers on horseback, Evangelical morals and values were woven into the fabric of English society. The abolition of the slave trade in the British Empire was the Evangelicals' greatest triumph, though the reformation of brutal criminal and employment laws, the institution of countless humanitarian and philanthropic societies committed to the alleviation of a plethora of social ills, the creation of a legalized observance of Sunday as a day of rest, the development of moral values with an emphasis upon strong family life, and support of public education, undoubtedly meant a gentler, more humane way of life for many people, though it may be fair to criticize the Evangelicals for their lack of attention to the root causes of the social evils they addressed. Further, the commitment of the Evangelicals to missions in Africa and Asia led to the expansion of the British Empire, while their openness to other theological traditions culminated in a significant ecumenical experiment between Prussia and England in the establishment of the Jerusalem bishopric in 1841. Though they never represented a majority within the Church of England, Evangelicals were influential in many aspects of Victorian society, and it is not unreasonable to suggest that life in the present day ~~might~~ have been quite different had the Revival not occurred.

In his well-known book, Simeon and Church^{Order} Charles Smyth declared that the best way to study the history of the Revival is to study the lives of its leaders. 'For the history of the Evangelical Revival', Smyth asserted, 'is essentially a history of personalities, rather than opinions'.¹ Early Evangelical chroniclers had immediately seized upon this means of telling the story of the Revival as is evidenced by the biographies and journals that were published: Charles Wesley (1841), Erasmus Middleton's Biographica Ecclesiastica (1816), William Romaine (1797), John Newton (1764), Thomas Scott (1798), John Fletcher (1817), Hannah More (1834), John Berridge (1838), Henry Venn (1834), Selina, Countess of Huntingdon (1839), Isaac Milner (1842) and William Wilberforce (1834), amongst others. These studies of the lives and thought of individual Evangelicals provide an essential means for understanding and evaluating the significance, accomplishments and failures of the Revival. Unfortunately, many of these works lie relegated to the dusty shelves of special collections. More than once in my researches I have had to ask for pages in volumes to be cut.

Of course the lives of certain figures of the Revival are well-documented. It is hard to imagine a time that John Wesley will cease to be of scholarly interest and William Wilberforce will never be wholly separated from his Evangelical roots. Henry Thornton, George Whitefield, John Newton, Selina, Countess of Huntingdon, Hannah More, John Venn and Charles Simeon have

¹Charles Smyth, Simeon and Church Order (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940), p. 6.

received the attention of scholars in the past forty years. More recent works have included Hugh Evans Hopkins' study of Simeon (1977) and Michael Hennell's Sons of the Prophets (1979) though it is significant to note the gap which separates these works from those produced during a surge of biographical interest in Evangelical history in the 1950's and early '60's. Several Ph.D. studies as noted in the bibliography have given attention to the lives of Evangelicals, such as Rowland Hill and John Berridge, but they have not been published. Recent general studies including Peter Toon's Evangelical Theology, 1833-1856, David Bebbington's Evangelicalism in Modern Britain and Boyd Hilton's The Age of Atonement have given an important modern critical dimension to an understanding of the Evangelicals. The classic works of Balleine, Elliott-Binns, Moule and Overton remain fundamental to the study of the Revival while other works have been invaluable for the evaluation of its social and political impact. But at its heart, the Evangelical Revival was a religious movement, and elements of its story remain untold. Work on individual leaders continues to contribute to the picture of Evangelicalism that has emerged.

In this thesis, I propose to carry out a study of the life and thought of the Very Reverend Dr. Isaac Milner (1750-1820) and of his contribution to the Evangelical Revival, particularly within the Church of England. This interest in Milner was born out of a more general interest in the attitudes of the parties of the nineteenth-century British Church to Luther's theology. I set off to examine the nineteenth-century Evangelical reception of Luther and discovered Isaac Milner. As I delved deeper into Milner's life and character, I came to know and to appreciate a man who was deeply committed to the renewal of the Church he served. It is fair to point out that none of the Evangelicals associated with the Clapham Sect pour neatly into the mould of what came to be considered the typical nineteenth-century Evangelical: it is this uniqueness that makes their lives so refreshing and necessary to study. But Isaac Milner appears to have marched to a somewhat different drummer than even his peers. As his involvements in the social, ecclesiastical, intellectual and theological spheres of his day will show, a study of his life allows one to engage with a unique cross-sectioning of Anglican Evangelical concerns and activities.

Isaac Milner is not unknown to the scholars of late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Evangelical history, but his presence is a shadowy one. Balleine, Elliott-Binns and Overton provide the best summaries of his work though by the nature of their studies, their presentations of Milner provide no more than snapshots. Other historians refer to him, but it is always in passing reference in connection with the topic at hand. John Walsh's article on the Milner History of the Church of Christ provides a useful introduction to this work and its significance, but there is more to be said, and as with other reviewers, he does not dwell particularly on Isaac Milner as a contributor to the composition of the History. An article published in 1954 by L.J.M. Coleby offers the most in-depth study of any one area of Milner's involvements but it is for the specialist scientist. In his Durham Ph.D. of 1987, Alan Munden considered Milner as Dean of Carlisle Cathedral, but his presentation of him was an exercise preliminary to his study of the work of

Milner's Evangelical successors, Francis Close and Samuel Waldegrave.

Five areas have consistently emerged in the work of previous historians as illustrative of Milner's life and contributions to the Revival, and they provide the basis of my study. His life was long as were his commitments, and his long-term residences in Cambridge and Carlisle encourage a topical rather than chronological presentation of his life to avoid repetition and to promote clarity. The five areas of concentration are as follows.

Chapter One analyzes Milner's lifelong friendship with William Wilberforce, one of the Evangelical movement's primary political and social reformers. Through Wilberforce, Milner developed relationships with other members of the well-known Clapham Sect. Milner was regarded by his peers as an adviser, and the extent and nature of his role and influence as a counsellor to those who formed national policy is evaluated.

Chapter Two centres on Milner's life as a scholar, College President and Vice-Chancellor in Cambridge University. Given prevalent attitudes toward Evangelicals, it is curious that Milner was elected in 1788 to the presidency of Queens' College. This College had developed a strong latitudinarian connection, and no one of the group responsible for his election appears to have been remotely sympathetic to Evangelicals. Though the social gap between college officials and students in the Universities made casual interaction between Milner and his students difficult, his position made it possible for young men possibly disadvantaged by their Evangelical convictions to attend the University with less harassment and fewer obstacles. His tenure as Vice-Chancellor lent him a platform from which he defended the loyalty of Anglican Evangelicals to the Crown. And though a detailed analysis of Milner's scientific pursuits lies beyond the scope of this thesis, some account of his commitment to learning is important to the study of a movement which was accused in later years of anti-intellectualism.

Chapter Three contains an analysis of Milner's position as Dean of Carlisle Cathedral, an office which he held from 1792 until his death. Again, because of doubts cast upon the political loyalties of Evangelicals, Evangelical candidates for significant offices in the Anglican hierarchy were denied appointments. Milner held this office for twenty years before another Evangelical was elected to a deanery in 1812 and then finally to a bishopric in 1815. In addition to his cathedral responsibilities, Milner participated in the founding of a newspaper in 1815 which provided the city of Carlisle with a mouthpiece for Tory concerns alongside the Whig publication which had been circulated since 1792. The face of this northern city was changed by the Industrial Revolution and Milner's leadership as a public figure in the city must be taken into account.

Chapter Four is a study of Milner's primary work, The History of the Church of Christ. Co-authored with his brother, Joseph Milner of Hull, the History stood as an important contribution to ecclesiastical historiography and retained an established place on Victorian bookshelves until the middle of the nineteenth century. Today, the work remains an important source for Evangelical history and theology. Of special interest is Milner's detailed study of

Martin Luther and the German Reformation. It is important to explore the author's interpretation and use of another theological tradition.

Chapter Five concerns Milner's participation in nineteenth-century theological debate. Specifically, he contributed to controversies concerning the sacrament of baptism and the practice of the British and Foreign Bible Society of circulating Bibles without accompanying Prayer Books. These discussions played a part in the shaping of Evangelical theology and mission, and are important to an overview of the period.

A study of Milner's life and contributions poses a significant challenge to the researcher. At his request, many of his personal papers were burned before his death; further, a letter from Milner's great-nephew (another Joseph Milner) to Robert Isaac Wilberforce, who had written to request materials for the writing of his father's biography, confirms that these wishes had been fulfilled after his death. This state of affairs is disappointing, as Milner had been an avid keeper of daily and religious journals which would have obviously been useful to his modern biographer. Fortunately, Milner's primary biographer, his great-niece Mary Milner, managed to transcribe many of his writings for the Milner Life before they were consigned to the woodpile or the forgotten corners of a musty loft. The biography she produced is an essential source for Milner material. Happily, not all of Milner's correspondents were so inclined to dispose of their literary remains, and collections of the papers of William Wilberforce, Henry Thornton, John Venn, the Earls of Hardwicke and Arthur Young provide both letters and personal insights. An inspection of the catalogue of the Huntington Library in San Marino, California while chasing up a Wilberforce lead revealed an unknown cache of Milner's letters in a collection of Zachary Macaulay's papers which had emigrated to the New World. A subsequent discussion with John Walsh revealed that he had already discovered the correspondence, but he had not publicised the existence of the letters. Archival records of the Elland Clerical Society in Wakefield, Carlisle Cathedral and the Queens' College, Cambridge have also yielded important material for this work. I have consulted the biographies and works of Milner's contemporaries as well as the Christian Observer. Secondary source material has included the works of the scholars of Evangelicalism including Michael Hennell, John Walsh, David Bebbington, Peter Toon, George Balleine, Leonard Elliott-Binns, John Overton, Charles Smyth, Doreen Rosman, Katherine Heasman and Ford K. Brown.

Isaac Milner was known and appreciated by his peers as a man of extraordinary breadth of learning and commitments. A proper study of his life necessitates excursions into the realms of science, politics, education, social and ecclesiastical history, and theology. I believe that my study of Isaac Milner will be a further contribution to the understanding of those influences which helped shape the course of nineteenth-century English church history, as well as offer useful insights into the vision of a man who has shared with many individuals before and after him a passionate concern for the life of Christ's Church in the world.

Chapter One: *Spiritual Father of a Spiritual Son: Milner and the Clapham Sect*

Billy shall travel with Milner as soon as he is of age; but if Billy turns methodist, he shall not have a sixpence of mine.¹

* * * * *

I. Introduction

A. Early Days in Yorkshire

Isaac Milner, the third son of a Yorkshire working class couple, was born on 11 January 1750 in Mabgate, Leeds. The family's circumstances were humble, possibly due to the father's unfortunate choice of political loyalties during the Jacobite rebellion of 1745. Still, in spite of modest means, and his own limited education, Milner's father determined to do the best he could for his children, often making education a priority though in leaner days, Mrs. Milner was undoubtedly less than enthusiastic about being sent home a Greek book for her son rather than a joint of meat². By the age of ten, Isaac, who had accompanied his older brother Joseph to Leeds Grammar School since the age of six, could translate Ovid and Sallust into tolerable English, and had demonstrated what would become a lifelong interest in mechanics and tinkering by constructing a sundial during his childhood play.

The father's dream, however, came to an abrupt end in 1760 with his untimely death. For Joseph, the eldest brother, arrangements fell quickly into place to proceed to studies in Cambridge. For Isaac, the future was not so bright, and 'there appeared every reason to expect that the future life of Isaac Milner would be spent in labouring with his hands in the manufactories of Yorkshire'³. The chances of a poor weaver's son from Leeds ever being in the position to travel with the heir-apparent of a successful mercantile family in Hull in fulfilment of a grandfather's prophecy, as quoted above, seemed slim indeed.

But 'the bowels of Joseph yearned upon his younger brother'⁴. Owing in part to his successful academic record at Cambridge, and the recommendations of friends in Leeds, Joseph Milner had found favour with two of Hull's aldermen, William Wilberforce's grandfather (also a

¹Robert Isaac and Samuel Wilberforce, The Life of William Wilberforce, 5 vols. (London: John Murray, 1838), vol. I, p. 7. This ~~quotation~~ is attributed to William Wilberforce, alderman of Hull and grandfather of William Wilberforce of the Clapham Sect.

²Joseph Milner, The Works of the Late Rev. Joseph Milner, A.M., ed. Isaac Milner, New ed., 9 vols. (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1819-1823), 'An Account of the Life and Character of the Author', prefixed to vol. VI (1819), Practical Sermons, p. vi.

³Mary Milner, Life of Isaac Milner, D.D., F.R.S. (London: John W. Parker, 1842), p. 4.

⁴Milner, 'Account of the Life', p. xiv.

William Wilberforce) and George Pryme⁵. Impressed with the young man's capabilities, the two town fathers had successfully presented Milner in 1766 to the mastership of Hull Grammar School. Finding himself in need of an assistant, Joseph Milner sent Yorkshire clergyman Myles Atkinson to pay a visit to Isaac in his workroom where he found the youth seated at his loom with Tacitus and another Greek author within his reach. An impromptu *viva voce* with the labourer convinced Atkinson that the young man's mind had not been dulled by the interruption of his education. Negotiations with the factory master spelled an end to Isaac's indenture, and with the words, 'Isaac, lad, thou art off'⁶, the manufactories of Yorkshire were exchanged for the life of a scholar.

It was at Hull Grammar School, to which the young William Wilberforce had been sent to begin his primary education, that he and Isaac Milner undoubtedly met. There is little evidence in the Milner or Wilberforce biographies to shed light on the day-to-day life in the school, though a Wilberforce chronicler maintained the settlement of Joseph Milner there was an abiding record of Alderman Wilberforce's well-directed influence.⁷ Other sources suggest that some innovations were introduced into the curriculum under Milner's direction: a pair of globes, purchased in 1769, suggests the probable teaching of geography and the usher, who cheerfully in later years taught the young boys of Hull during his holidays, was coaching algebra at a time when mathematics had barely gained a foothold in this level of education.⁸ Perhaps Isaac Milner shared in the elder Wilberforce's gift of prophecy in his discernment of the makings of a future politician and orator in the young William Wilberforce. The only anecdote recorded of William's school-days was by Isaac: 'Even then his elocution was so remarkable that we used to set him upon a table, and make him read aloud as an example to the other boys'.⁹ It is significant to note that Wilberforce attended the Grammar School several years before the celebrated conversion of Joseph Milner to Evangelical Christianity, and the subsequent impact of his ministry on the prospering corporation of Hull.

The usher and the pupil parted company in 1768, the usher destined for the hardly-dared-hoped for life of a scholar at the University of Cambridge and the pupil for a sojourn with Thornton-Wilberforce connections in Wimbledon, a stint with the Rev. Kingsman Baskett of the grammar school at Pocklington, only a short distance from Hull, and then the leisurely life of a fellow-commoner at St. John's College, Cambridge. By the time they were to resume their acquaintance in earnest on the sands of Scarborough in the summer of 1784, the two had walked considerable distances on divergent paths: the usher had been elected a Fellow of his

⁵Wilberforce, *Life*, vol. I, p. 2; John Lawson, *A Town Grammar School Through Six Centuries* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 163.

⁶Milner, *Life*, p. 5.

⁷Wilberforce, *Life*, vol. I, p. 2.

⁸Lawson, *Town*, p. 165.

⁹Wilberforce, *Life*, vol. I, p. 4; Milner, *Life*, p. 5.

undergraduate college and was on the way to establishing his reputation as a scholar of mathematics and natural philosophy within the University of Cambridge. At the ripe age of twenty-one, the pupil had entered Parliament as the promising new member for Hull.

Biographical sources indicate, however, that the contact between the pair had not completely ceased after school-days in Hull. Surely Wilberforce had heard about Joseph Milner's conversion, reputed to have rocked the foundations of Hull, and his winning of the city which subsequently became a stronghold of Anglican Evangelicalism. The Hull headmaster's change in religious sentiments probably accounted for young William's attendance of the Pocklington school upon his return from Wimbledon.¹⁰ Mary Milner claimed to possess correspondence between Isaac Milner and William Wilberforce dating from 1781 or 1782, and asserted 'some of these letters obviously refer to others of a still earlier date'.¹¹ The earliest extant letter of the Milner-Wilberforce correspondence from any collection (either manuscript or printed) is dated 11 March 1782¹², and refers to the tottering position of the Prime Minister. It was politics, in fact, that appears to have been the common ground that drew the pair together again. 'Walked down morning to House to get Milner into gallery'¹³ reads Wilberforce's diary entry for 17 February 1783. Surviving extracts of Milner's early letters to Wilberforce show that he had attended sessions of Parliament, probably at Wilberforce's invitation, and illustrate that familiarity has developed between the two as Milner offered opinions and advice on potentially sensitive topics.¹⁴

B. The Sands of Scarborough

It was in the environs of the fashionable watering place of Scarborough that Wilberforce and Milner met in the summer of 1784, and at this meeting, the young politician had more than just affairs of state in mind. The previous autumn, Wilberforce had accompanied his friends William Pitt and Edward Eliot on a continental tour during which they found themselves both as objects of the lavish entertainment of the French court and the sport of French hosts who, 'amongst the winks and smiles of the company...placed upon the table...a vast joint of ill-roasted beef'¹⁵ in

¹⁰For an account of Joseph Milner's conversion and subsequent ministry in Hull, see Milner, 'Account of the Life', p. xviff.

¹¹Milner, Life, p. 15.

¹²Ibid. This letter may be the one in which Lawson claims Isaac approached Wilberforce on his brother's behalf for consideration of his candidacy for the vacant living of St. Mary Lowgate. Lawson, Town, p. 169.

¹³Bod. Add. MS Don.e.164, 17 February 1783, p. 3.

¹⁴See Milner, Life, pp. 18-19.

¹⁵Wilberforce, Life, vol. I, p. 39. 28 October 1783, letter to Bankes, '...it was not in the power of the amusements of Paris to detain us long from Fountainbleau, where the court is spending a month of gala'. Ibid., p.43.

consideration of their English palates, and Wilberforce had proposed another excursion for the forthcoming winter. Having had his invitation refused by William Burgh of York, Wilberforce made a similar proposal to his former teacher. Milner accepted.

Perhaps the meeting of the former teacher at a critical time in the pupil's search for a travelling companion stirred the latent memories of a then deceased grandfather's prophecy. At least the thrust of the prophecy - that, under the tutelage of the usher, Billy might become Methodist - was not enough to discourage Wilberforce from making the initial offer. In many respects the two men were vastly different. Wilberforce was wispy, flitting and engaged wholeheartedly in the glittering circles of the rich and famous. Milner was solid, steady and seemingly headed for the potentially lonely and unglamorous life of the bachelor-scholar. Yet, Milner's conversational skills and breadth of learning appealed to Wilberforce, his junior by nine years, making him an interesting and attractive prospective companion. Certainly, he had not exhibited any of the enthusiastic leanings of his brother. Such an inclination, Wilberforce emphatically claimed in later years, would have struck Milner immediately off the list of possible travelling companions: '...had I known at first what his opinions were', Wilberforce candidly recalled, 'it would have decided me against making him the offer'.¹⁶

Despite Wilberforce's professed aversion to those of religious inclinations, and in light of his subsequent religious development, it is important to note that he did not grow up in an ecclesiastical wasteland. Beyond the pejorative overtones of the description of his mother as an 'Archbishop Tillotson-type Christian', he spelled out the meaning of this appellation by explaining 'she always attended church Wednesdays and Fridays and had family prayers on Sunday'.¹⁷ Such practice was hardly indicative of a parent bent on stunting the spiritual growth of her son.

Of note to Wilberforce's religious development was his brief stay as a child, upon the death of his father, with his Aunt and Uncle Wilberforce in Wimbledon in 1768. His uncle, another William Wilberforce, had married Hannah Thornton, a half-sister of the early lay Evangelical, John Thornton; Mrs. Wilberforce had, with her brother, embraced Evangelical faith through the ministrations of George Whitefield. During the autumn of 1769, Whitefield had embarked upon his sixth journey to America where he was to find his final resting place, and there is no evidence that the boy ever attended upon the preaching of this Evangelical pioneer. But he certainly heard John Newton who, though at this time ^{he} still had pastoral charge of a parish in Olney in Buckinghamshire, often preached in the City. Newton's ministry and personality undoubtedly impressed the fledgling Evangelical, who later recalled 'reverencing him as a parent when I was a child'.¹⁸ Hannah Thornton's seeds began to take root, but the results were hardly what she or

¹⁶Wilberforce, *Life*, vol. I, p. 75.

¹⁷Bod. Add. MS e.11, p. 123.

¹⁸John S. Harford, *Recollections of William Wilberforce, Esq.*, (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts and Green, 1864), p. 218.

young William would have deemed ideal. The mother, frantic that her son was indeed 'turning Methodist', made a flying trip to the south to pluck her child from the grasp of the ranters; in William's words, she sought to remove him 'lest I should imbibe what she considered as little less than poison, which indeed I at that time had done'.¹⁹

The damage done in Wimbledon, two years in the making, was not easily undone. The aunt and uncle had become as parents, and the break was a difficult one for the young and sensitive boy.²⁰ For a time he attempted a clandestine correspondence with his relatives, bravely persevering despite his mother's heavy-handed determination that he should not even step foot into the High Church at Hull, living in hope that

the Lord was everyday granting me some petition, and I trust I can say that I increased in the knowledge of God and Christ Jesus whom he had sent, whom to know is life eternal.²¹

Another letter, piously speaking a word of comfort to the uncle facing persecution, concluded hastily: 'I cannot write more because it is seen where the letter is to'.²²

The parental efforts to eradicate the Methodist influence had begun in earnest. Pocklington School, an expensive institution only a short distance from a mother's anxious eye and his grandfather's Alma Mater, did not provide an environment in which to nurture enthusiasm of any sort. The Reverend Kingsman Baskett, though recalled by William as 'an elegant tho' not deep Scholar'²³, seems to have cultivated stronger habits of idleness than of study. Wilberforce's peers, having gained intelligence of their school-mate's pious inclinations

tried to root out any impressions of what they thought a wrong kind of religion which I had got. They therefore led me into every scheme of dissipation though not licentiousness they could think of.²⁴

Holidays at home in Hull renewed his contact with the life of a merchant family in a prospering eighteenth-century seaport. Here the young dandy learned to play cards, attended the theatre, partook of great feasts and mixed easily with the landed gentry. The training further continued when in the Michaelmas term of 1776, the seventeen-year-old Wilberforce entered Cambridge University as a fellow-commoner at St. John's College. Here, with even less pressure because of his status as a fellow-commoner, the young man continued to live the reckless, indolent life of the eighteenth-century Cambridge student of independent means, though without the amorous

¹⁹Bod. Add. MS e.11, p. 123.

²⁰Bod. Add. MS c.43, p. 2.

²¹Quoted in Robin Furneaux, William Wilberforce London: Hamish Hamilton, 1974), p. 8.

²²Quoted in Ibid., p. 8.

²³Bod. Add. MS c.43, p. 3.

²⁴Bod. Add. MS e.11, p. 124.

adventures of the irrepressible Don Juan.²⁵ Although the diary Wilberforce kept illustrates his practice of attending religious services,²⁶ the efforts of the parent and friends to give him 'a taste for the world and its diversions'²⁷ had worked. Tolerant enough of church activities and people, had he known that Milner held the religious opinions he had left behind so many years before in Wimbledon, he would never have asked him to accompany him on the journey.

But Milner received the invitation, and though there were obstacles he had to overcome, plans proceeded on a tentative basis. By this time, Milner had assumed both teaching and tutorial responsibilities within the University, and these had to be dispensed with. His letter to Wilberforce dated 19 September 1784 cast a dismal light on the prospects: though he was confident that a colleague would read lectures for him, he was unsure of his crucial petition to Robert Plumptre, then President of Queens'. 'I wrote', Milner penned to Wilberforce,

to the Master of Queen's, to obtain his approbation of my absence, and, till I hear from him, I am not without some suspicion of objection on his part, arising from his very severe notions of regularity and form.²⁸

He had also been appointed Moderator for the next year and there were possible difficulties in obtaining a replacement in the length of time remaining. Whatever the outcome, the prospect of time spent with Wilberforce was appealing, and the letter concluded: 'I endeavour to flatter myself with a hope that something or other will some time happen, that may afford us more frequent and tranquil opportunities of conversation'.²⁹ Little did either friend realize that such an opportunity would begin a conversation to last a lifetime.

II. The Journey of a Lifetime

A. Days of Leisure

The obstacles overcome, the little party, which consisted of Milner, Wilberforce, Wilberforce's mother, sister and two female cousins, embarked on its journey on 20 October 1784. The women travelled with the matriarch while the men began their *tete-a-tete* from the comfort of Wilberforce's post-chaise. Crossing from Dover to Calais, the group made its way through France to Lyons where they set sail down the Rhone to Avignon, '5 days without a Cloud (in Oct)'.³⁰ Nothing from correspondence or journal sources indicates anything of particular interest

²⁵Wilberforce's sons were delicate: 'It was surely of God's especial goodness that in such a course he was preserved from profligate excess.' Wilberforce, *Life*, vol. I, p. 11.

²⁶Bod. Add. MS Don.e.164, 16 February 1783, p. 3, 'Walked after church till almost four'; 6 July 1783, p. 12, 'Persuaded Pitt and Pepper to church'.

²⁷Wilberforce, *Life*, vol. I, p. 8.

²⁸Milner, *Life*, p. 21

²⁹*Ibid.*, p. 22.

³⁰Bod. Add. MS c.43, p. 11.

about this portion of the trip, although an apology appended by the Wilberforce sons to an unedited letter of their father to Lord Muncaster (written during the Rhone journey) defended its inclusion in the *Life* as a means of illuminating significant events of the future.³¹ The travellers appreciated the grand scenery, and admired the points of interest encountered along the way.

Avignon, Aix and Marseilles, 'the most entertaining place I ever saw, all bustle and business'³², wrote Wilberforce, were the next stops of the journey that eventually led to Nice where they stopped to catch their breath and settled comfortably into a house 'separated from the Mediterranean only by a grove of orange trees'.³³ Here they discovered to their relief³⁴ a fine collection of English socialites that included the Duke of Gloucester, Lady Rivers, Pitt, Sir I. Wroughton, Bosanquet, the Duchess of Ancaster, and Lady Charlotte.³⁵ Joining wholeheartedly into the festivities of the English on holiday, their activities centred upon cards and dinner, French wine and balls. Milner, though deemed unpolished yet unashamed of his Yorkshire heritage, mixed freely with the company, exhibiting a familiarity with the royal children who, Milner's niece explained, would have been naturally attracted by his 'child-loving disposition'.³⁶

The freedom with which Milner engaged in the gaieties of Nice did not fail to raise eyebrows, despite the professed liberality of his observers. Wilberforce observed 'he appeared in all respects like an ordinary man of the world, mixing like myself in all companies, and joining as readily as others in the prevalent Sunday parties', and Wilberforce's sons made a point of noting that Milner, though a clergyman, had not thought of reading prayers during the stay in Nice.³⁷ Mary Milner also found her uncle's behaviour awkward, and speculated that his abhorrence of religious affectation might have accounted for his deportment in France. 'It might be', she wrote,

that this hatred, in conjunction with his naturally vivacious and cheerful temperament, occasionally, or even frequently, induced him, at this early period of his life, to participate in diversions, and to accommodate himself to practices, which his judgment might not entirely approve; and he therefore, probably 'appeared' to most persons, [to quote Wilberforce], 'in all respects like an ordinary man of the world'.³⁸

³¹In expressing satisfaction at having cleared his holiday of letters of business, Wilberforce had stated: 'At last they are gone, and the devil go with them'. Wilberforce, *Life*, vol. I, p. 67.

³²Bod. Add. MS Don.e.164, November 1784, p. 36.

³³Wilberforce, *Life*, vol. I, p. 72.

³⁴The group had judged the natives 'in general a wretched set'. Wilberforce, *Life*, vol. I, p. 73.

³⁵Bod. Add. MS Don.e.164, December 1784, p. 36.

³⁶Milner, *Life*, p. 23. Milner's affectionate ruffling of the hair of the young Prince William of Gloucester accompanied by the words 'pretty boy, pretty boy' would have hardly been looked upon with favour by polite London society.

³⁷Wilberforce, *Life*, vol. I, p. 75.

³⁸Milner, *Life*, pp. 23-24.

Milner was not behaving according to preconceived notions of a pre-evangelised Wilberforce. Ironically, it was the orthodox mother who refused invitations on the Sabbath for the ladies.

B. The Conversation Begins

But a strain of the religious had filtered into the conversation. Wilberforce had aimed a slur at James Stillingfleet, the Evangelical Rector of Hotham in Yorkshire, organizer of a local clerical society and the esteemed friend of Joseph Milner whose contribution to The History of the Church of Christ had been largely composed within the walls of Hotham Rectory. Stillingfleet, in Wilberforce's opinion, was a good man but one who, because of his Evangelical zeal, 'carried things too far'.³⁹ This statement from the lips of one who had settled himself in the stream of conventional eighteenth-century Latitudinarian churchmanship and who had dabbled in the heterodoxy of the founding father of Unitarianism, Theophilus Lindsey, might seem perfectly reasonable; to the ears of Milner, whose brother had spent the past decade turning the city of Hull upon its head, the comment was undoubtedly provocative. 'Nor does he carry them too far'⁴⁰ was Milner's measured reply.

Wilberforce initiated and sustained the gambit on the way to Nice. His sons attributed the distance from the experience in Wimbledon of years past as having made him

the more ready to condemn, as extravagance and methodism, all serious attention to religion; and this tendency had doubtless been increased by his attendance at Mr. Lindsey's meeting... 'not from any preference for his peculiar doctrines... but because he seemed more earnest and practical than others'.⁴¹

Pollock⁴² filled in the picture of the conversation to Nice, which Wilberforce's sons judged to have been 'merely speculative',⁴² by citing Wilberforce's unmitigated ridicule of the enthusiastic notions of 'Methodists', including his Wimbledon relatives and Thomas Thompson, a manager of the family business in Hull whom Wilberforce would later consider 'a true Christian as well as a man of great acuteness and tried integrity'.⁴³ Wilberforce further challenged Milner with the Socinian notions he had learned through listening to the preaching of Lindsey, a man whose integrity, upon his adoption of Unitarian theology, had led him to resign his living as a cleric of the Church of England, but who continued to lead his flock in the semblance of traditional Christian worship. Milner, conscious that his slow, deliberate replies would miss their mark against the onslaught of Wilberforce's offensive, refused to be moved. Wilberforce had broached a topic that simply could not be trifled with. 'I am no match for you, Wilberforce, in this running

³⁹Bod. Add. MS e.11, p. 131.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Wilberforce, Life, vol. I, pp. 75-76.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Quoted in John Pollock, William Wilberforce (London: Constable, 1977), p. 33.

fire', the usher wisely warned the pupil, 'but if you really wish to discuss these subjects seriously, I will gladly enter on them with you'.⁴⁴ No evidence of further conversation at this juncture has survived, though future events show that Wilberforce heeded the remonstrance.

C. The Seed is Planted

A note from Pitt, urging Wilberforce to be present at the introduction of his proposition for parliamentary reform, interrupted the idyllic days on the Mediterranean shore. Wilberforce, always ready to respond to his duty to county and country, did not appear to hesitate with his decision to return to England, but did so with the promise of rejoining the others at his earliest convenience. Milner, though freed for the time of academic responsibilities, decided to accompany him on the return journey; the prospect of the company of ladies, not too well known, for an indefinite period, perhaps appeared daunting to a shy and awkward bachelor. Preparations for the departure were made, but not too swiftly to prevent Wilberforce's roving eye to alight on a book belonging to his cousin, Bessy Smith. Taking up the volume of Philip Doddridge, The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul, the pupil asked the tutor the character of the book. 'It is one of the best books ever written', was Milner's prompt reply. 'Let us take it with us and read it on our journey'.⁴⁵

Though Doddridge's book was, and would continue to be, a well-loved and well-thumbed classic, Milner's enthusiastic reception of the discovery of the volume is somewhat surprising. Milner, the loyal Churchman that he professed to be, had little room for dissenters, and Philip Doddridge's call to ministry was beyond the pale of the Anglican establishment. Yet the humanity and solid orthodox theology of the man could not fail to attract the attention and eventual approbation of the strictest Churchman. Anglican priests sent their sons to Doddridge's academy to be educated. Hymns such as 'Hark the Glad Sound!' and 'O God of Jacob' became the property of the church at large. And in reply to the Wilberforce sons' suggestion that their father had derived his views on the Eucharist from the teachings of Doddridge, a Christian Observer writer asserted that Doddridge's theological opinions were thoroughly Scriptural, implying that nothing in them was contrary to the views on this matter held by the Church of England. Further, Doddridge himself presented anything but the image of the stiff-necked puritan that a cursory reading of his background might suggest. Doddridge, despite his devotion to the gospel, smoked a pipe, played cards and had a cheerful temperament that caused Gordon Rupp to note: 'He was on the edge of discovering that levity might be a virtue, and not, as his Puritan fathers considered, a deadly sin'.⁴⁶ William Hey, the eminent Evangelical physician in Leeds, recommended Doddridge's Rise and Progress frequently to those who had sought his spiritual

⁴⁴Wilberforce, Life, vol. I, p. 76.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Gordon Rupp, Religion in England, 1688-1791 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 163.

counsel⁴⁷, and countless Evangelicals (of both Church and Dissent) would have agreed.

First published in 1745, a more suitable book could hardly have come into Wilberforce's hands in the winter of 1785. Diary entries concentrate primarily on the events of the journey: Wilberforce deplored a lack of what 'we should deem indispensable for our comfort even our health'⁴⁸, and Milner's immense strength saved the coach from a nasty plunge, and ensured that the two adventurers lived to tell the tale.⁴⁹ But in Milner's introduction of Doddridge, Wilberforce encountered a man who knew well of what it was to live before God in the eighteenth century. Though not unconcerned with the unconverted Gentile, Doddridge had another audience. Doddridge understood 'religion' as the individual's sense of God's influence on the soul. This perception resulted in a dependence upon God, and the resolution to mould one's conduct in a manner pleasing to the Divine. In order for this realization of dependence and amendment of conduct to take place, the individual first had to hear the good though convicting news of the gospel spoken. Thus, it is unreasonable to expect that one would discover on the African or American continents true models of the religious life.⁵⁰ Bereft of the benefit of the gospel, these people could not help but continue to live life in a corrupted, unredeemed state. But for England, a nation 'whose obligations to God have been singular, almost beyond those of any other people under heaven'⁵¹, the case was different. The grosser sins were obvious: drunkenness, lewdness, injustice and profligacy appeared everywhere, though most shamefully, in a so-called Christian nation. More alarming, however, was the man who wore the guise of the Christian. Such a person, in Doddridge's opinion, was above reproach, at least as far as the eye could see. His behaviour might be judged morally commendable and he might faithfully observe the practice of regular Sabbath worship. He might be generous to his neighbours and live his life in moderation by all accounts. Theologically, Doddridge assumed his listener to be essentially orthodox, believing firmly in the 'existence and providence of God, and the truth of Christianity, as a revelation from him'.⁵² In his sketch, Doddridge had drawn an accurate picture of the typical eighteenth-century Latitudinarian Churchman, and it would not have taken Wilberforce a great leap of the imagination to recognize himself in this portrait.

Having made such a recognition, the reader of Doddridge must then confront himself with a critical question: Am I truly religious? Further assisting his reader, the author asked the

⁴⁷John Pearson, Life of William Hey (London: Hurst, Robinson and Co., 1822), p. 260.

⁴⁸Quoted in Furneaux, Wilberforce, p. 34.

⁴⁹Milner, Life, p. 25.

⁵⁰Philip Doddridge, The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul (Glasgow: Chalmers and Collins, 1825), p. 46.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Ibid., p. 60.

following questions that helped determine an answer:

Is the love of God the governing principle of my life? Do I walk under a sense of his presence? Do I converse with him from day to day in the exercise of prayer and praise? And am I, on the whole, making his service my business and my delight, regarding him as my master and my father?⁵³

Assuming a negative response to the key questions, Doddridge sought to guide his questing reader to the 'one thing needful'. But such guidance he did not deliver in either dogmatic pronouncements or sentimental platitudes that one could easily dismiss. Doddridge's writing bore the appealing stamp of one who guided with conviction and earnestness yet with the sympathy and kindness of one who had known the struggles of the Christian life. Who could resist the exhortation of a man who fully realized the temptation to backslide as a reality of the Christian's battle while firmly maintaining that to give in was to sign one's spiritual death warrant? Doddridge spoke straight to the heart, and it is not surprising that under Milner's guidance, his words should speak to a man of Wilberforce's sensitivity and nature.

Little evidence survived of the conversation on the journey home, although the Wilberforce records suggest that because of their deliberations, he 'determined at some future season to examine the Scriptures for himself, and see if things were stated there in the same manner'.⁵⁴ Early on, the tutor pointed the pupil to the Bible as the measure by which Christian teaching ought to be judged. But there can be little doubt that Milner's introduction of Doddridge to Wilberforce had a profound and memorable impact upon the young politician. Years later when writing to his youngest son, Henry, Wilberforce pointed out to him the passages of Doddridge that he believed were particularly suited to one 'about to enter life and to commence being subjected to the ordeal as it may well be termed of the University'.⁵⁵ In reflections of a conversation with a Yorkshire merchant, he referred to Doddridge as a sound divine in whose work one could find a trustworthy exposition of basic tenets of the Christian faith.⁵⁶ A letter to John Smyth on the topic of the withering of spiritual life cited Doddridge as a useful reference in warding off lethargy:

Then whether we have all our work to begin, or whether we have begun and have to carry it on farther, or like the Laodiceans have to recover from a state of declension, the process is the same; and I know nowhere that it is so well described as in my favourite volume Doddridge's *Rise and Progress*.⁵⁷

And although Doddridge cannot be claimed the sole influence upon the thought of Wilberforce,

⁵³Doddridge, *Progress*, p. 61.

⁵⁴Wilberforce, *Life*, vol. I, p. 77.

⁵⁵Wilberforce House MS F4, William Wilberforce to Henry Wilberforce, 18 September 1826.

⁵⁶'When first he and his wife were impressed for we know that religion does not consist in the assurance of our salvation, so have written all our sound divines Baxter, Doddridge and all'. Bod. Add. MS e.11, pp. 92-93.

⁵⁷William Wilberforce, *Correspondence of William Wilberforce*, ed. R. and S. Wilberforce, 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1840), vol. II, p. 193.

the following reflections on his time extracted from a letter he wrote to Lady Waldegrave revealed his influence:

but the grand peculiar evil of the present day is practical infidelity. How little are the Holy Scriptures read, how little are they understood. I do not, however, mean, that people in general are professed sceptics, or that they believe themselves to be such. Many who in a general way know the Bible to be of divine original, do not believe many of the great truths which it inculcates. There is at bottom, in the higher ranks especially, a profane self-sufficiency; and this produces a great indifference to religion. Honour is, in fact, the God of our idolatry; and where a character is formed on this basis, there is too generally a deep and real, though, perhaps, a disguised contempt for that lowliness and meekness of which our blessed Saviour exhibited so bright a specimen, and which the Apostles so strongly enforce on all His followers.⁵⁸

Conversations of a Cambridge clergyman and a dissenting divine had converged, thus opening new vistas for the pupil, and perhaps for the teacher as well.

The shores of England reached, Milner returned to his responsibilities as Moderator in the University and Wilberforce plunged into the business of parliamentary reform and Irish politics though proposals in both areas resulted in dismal failure. The two friends met once again, embarking in late June to rendezvous with the Wilberforce party in Genoa. From here, they travelled on to Geneva via Mount Cenis, Interlaken, Zurich and Spa. The beauties of the world outside the carriage again enthralled the travellers, but within the confines of the carriage, a conversation had begun that was so absorbing that their companions filed complaints concerning the neglect of the male company. At Milner's suggestion, they had replaced the volume of Doddridge with the Greek New Testament, and the two began a careful study of the doctrines it contained. The continuation of this conversation indicates that the student had modified his tactics to fit the rules of the classroom. But Wilberforce had his questions, and in a suitable manner, pressed his 'various doubts, objections, and difficulties'⁵⁹ which the teacher addressed in turn. Conviction was only a matter of days away and by the time Wilberforce reached his home in Wimbledon in mid-November, the young member from Yorkshire could assert

by degrees I imbibed his sentiments...Milner, though full of levity on all other subjects, never spoke on this but with the utmost seriousness, and all he said, tended to increase my attention to religion.⁶⁰

From the perspective of old age, he stated the impact in a slightly different way:

This conversation led us to discuss the matter and the conclusion of it was that we resolved to read the new testament together. This we did and it pleased God that I got a clear idea of the doctrines of religion; perhaps clearer than I have since but it was quite in my head. Well though I now fully believed the Gospel and was persuaded that if I died at any time I should perish everlastingly.⁶¹

⁵⁸Wilberforce, *Correspondence*, vol. II, p. 25.

⁵⁹Harford, *Recollections*, p. 208.

⁶⁰Wilberforce, *Life*, vol. I, p. 87.

⁶¹Bod. Add. MS e.11, pp. 131-132.

By all accounts of the Milner-Wilberforce tours of 1784-85, Wilberforce had arrived back in England with a new perspective on the major tenets of the Christian faith, and Milner had exerted the fundamental influence which had induced this change of heart. Wilberforce asserted that the sentiments of Milner had become his own. But what precisely were the sentiments of Milner that Wilberforce claimed? Mary Milner's biography remained silent about her great-uncle's early religious development, except for a brief reference to his refusal to sign a petition against subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles while a student at Queens' College.⁶² Whatever his convictions were, they were strong enough to allow him to maintain what have been a difficult stance at a vulnerable and impressionable age. In 1780, he was engaged in extensive study of both Scripture and patristic writers, thus 'laying the foundation of that sound and extensive theological knowledge, which is apparent in the productions of his later life'.⁶³ As noted above, Wilberforce had little reason to suspect from previous contacts with his friend that Milner was nothing but an ordinary eighteenth-century Churchman. And in light of his new-found intellectual assent to Christian beliefs, Wilberforce suggested that Milner, known to posterity as a staunch Evangelical Churchman, was not at this point so firmly ensconced in the Evangelical stronghold as generally believed. For once, Wilberforce's sons resisted an opportunity to insult blatantly their father's Evangelical associations but the manuscript memoirs speak clearly: 'The dean who had the doctrines of religion in his head though not then I think in his heart said, "Nor does he carry them too far."'⁶⁴

One must turn to other sources, then, to gain insight into the Christian teachings to which Milner introduced Wilberforce. Even as the pair had made the mid-tour return to London, Wilberforce's diary entries suggest that a change was occurring. He pursued business and pleasure as one might expect, but then: 'Dined Hamilton's, christening, very indecent and profane, all laughing round'.⁶⁵ His attendance of a staged performance, previously dangled in Hull as a temptation to entice the young convert from the clutches of the fanatical aunt and uncle, received the following reaction: 'Opera - shocking Dance of Festin de Pierre, and unmoved audience'.⁶⁶ He suddenly saw greater responsibility attaching to those who found themselves in possession of great wealth:

Bob [Smith] and I talked - strange that the most generous men and religious, do not see that their duties increase with their fortune, and that they will be punished for spending it in Extravagance, etc.⁶⁷

⁶²Milner, *Life*, p. 7.

⁶³*Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁶⁴Bod. Add. MS e.11, p. 131.

⁶⁵Bod. Add. MS Don.e.164, 3 April 1785, p. 71.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 14 April 1785, p. 72.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 19 April 1785, p. 73.

Back on the continent, letters and journal entries continued to reflect a change in outlook of the popular and carefree pupil who had sparred with the teacher in the autumn of 1784. To his friend Muncaster, Wilberforce expressed his new-found perception of present times and postulated its cause:

I fancy I see storms arising, which already 'no bigger than a man's hand,' will by and by overspread and blacken the whole face of heaven. It is not the confusion of parties, and their quarrelling and battling in the House of Commons, which makes me despair of the republic (if I knew a word half way between 'apprehend for' and 'despair', that would best express my meaning,) but it is the universal corruption and profligacy of the times, which taking its rise amongst the rich and luxurious has new extended its baneful influence and spread its destructive poison through the whole body of people. When the mass of blood is corrupt, there is no remedy but amputation.⁶⁸

It was, however, one thing to make pronouncements about the mass of humanity, and another, the young enquirer realized, to remove the log from his eye. 'Often while in the full enjoyment of all that this world could bestow', he wrote,

my conscience told me that in the true sense of the word, I was not a Christian. I laughed, I sang, I was apparently gay and happy, but the thought would steal across me, 'What madness is all this; to continue easy in a state in which a sudden call out of the world would consign me to everlasting misery, and that, when eternal happiness is within my grasp!' For I had received into my understanding the great truths of the gospel, and believed that its offers were free and universal; and that God had promised to give his Holy Spirit to them that asked for it. At length such thoughts as these completely occupied my mind, and I began to pray earnestly.⁶⁹

Occasional prayer developed into a habit and by 25 October 1785, Wilberforce had begun to practise early morning devotions which were not without their own enlightenment. He wrote:

As soon as I reflected seriously upon these subjects, the deep guilt and black ingratitude of my past life forced itself upon me in the strongest colours, and I condemned myself for having wasted my precious time, and opportunities, and talents.⁷⁰

Milner's rudimentary introduction to the life of 'real' Christianity, despite the student's complaints that his heart had not been touched, was bound to have practical manifestations. Evangelical Christianity had criticised contemporary faith and practice by saying that Christianity had become compartmentalised. Prayers might be read, worship attended and tithes collected. The people wanted their Church and it had its place, but there were areas of life of which Christianity had nothing to say. What had the gospel to do with the cockpit, the horse races or the public hangings at Tyburn? What did the teachings of St. Paul have to do with the theatre, the price of gin or the fact that the rich got richer while the poor got poorer?

In his presentation of Christianity to Wilberforce, Milner countered what had been deemed

⁶⁸Wilberforce, *Life*, vol. I, p. 84.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, p. 88.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*

socially acceptable. The gospel pervaded and influenced the whole life of the professor or it did nothing at all. There might be a vast distance between the chancel and the cockpit, but it was because the Church's teaching said something that mattered that the Christian would decide to stay away. Thus having established that not all in the world proclaiming itself Christian was as it ought to be, Mrs. Crewe's puzzlement at Wilberforce's attitude to the theatre, 'I can think it wrong to go to a play',⁷¹ his adoption of devotional exercises, disregard for flippant behaviour at an otherwise solemn occasion and criticism of the world as he saw it sound like typical responses of the individual bound for an eighteenth-century Evangelical conversion.

Nor did the teacher leave the student theologically bereft. The Evangelicals had never proclaimed war against theology, and the doctrines they claimed as their intellectual foundation were in their eyes perfectly consonant with what they understood as firstly, the teaching of Scripture, and secondly, with the Articles, Homilies and the Liturgy of the Church of England. They taught some doctrines, however, with more detail and emphasis, and it cannot be doubted that the theological grounding Wilberforce received as the carriage rambled through the Alpine scenery was the standard Evangelical outline of the day.

As Milner was the brother of a theologian and preacher of some standing and experience, one can postulate that the instruction Wilberforce received bore a Milnerian stamp. First, one cannot hope or claim to practise true Christianity without the divine light, inspiration or illumination of the third person of the Trinity. Joseph Milner claimed this to be the distinguishing characteristic of Evangelical religion, as no one had within himself the resources of the will and knowledge sufficient to the proper discharge of responsibility to God and humanity. This emphasis placed upon the assistance of the Holy Spirit did not eradicate or marginalise the use of the intellect; rather, the Christian 'prays, he searches the Scriptures, he meditates, he exerts all his natural faculties to the utmost, he guards against presumption, sloth, and licentiousness'.⁷² Still, he remains always the creature before the Creator and can only approach the throne of God at the pleasure of the Deity.

The second pillar Milner would probably have stressed was the complete depravity of man before God. Conversion itself hinged on the realization, given only as a gift by the Holy Spirit, that because of the total bondage of humanity to sin, all attempts to gain divine favour based on human merit must be rejected, and the only approach to God is one made in humility and meekness. God's justice and purity demand eternal punishment of the hopelessly corrupted sinner, but left to their own efforts, human beings can do nothing but multiply their guilt as they constantly rebel against the God whom by their carefully contrived actions they hope to please. Though punishment was commensurate with the seriousness of the deed committed, no one was free from the guilt of humanity's collective sin against God.

⁷¹Wilberforce, *Life*, vol. I, p. 88.

⁷²Joseph Milner, 'On Evangelical Religion', *Works*, vol. VIII (1819), *Selection of Tracts and Essays. Theological and Historical*, p. 202.

But just as God was righteous and just, according to the Evangelicals, so was He also merciful and willing to bring the sinful human being back into his pleasure. This act He accomplished in the offering of the life of His Son whose death atoned for the original sin of the human race. The doctrine of justification by faith alone as understood by an Evangelical such as Joseph Milner was forensic, and maintained God's infinite perfection in both justice and mercy; in justice, Milner asserted

because he [God] inflicts the whole punishment due for the sins of men on his only begotten Son; and in mercy, because he himself has provided and accepted the ransom, and bestows the blessings of pardon and salvation on every believer, without money and without price.⁷³

Of crucial importance to claiming any benefits that belief in this doctrine conferred lay the believer's actual appropriation of Christ's sacrifice on the cross as his or her own as well as God's pardon rendered in the light of this atonement. Having genuinely experienced the pain and despair that accompanied the recognition of one's standing before God, the sinner could trust that the blood of the Son had washed him clean of guilt and condemnation. This just and merciful God then extended to the cleansed sinner a covenant by which the creature's relationship to the Creator was redefined, or at least recast, in the terms God had originally intended for His children.

Having known guilt, experienced pardon and accepted the terms of God's covenant, the converted, or awakened Christian, to be truer to the terminology of the eighteenth-century Evangelical, entered into a new life with God: a new state

attended with prospects and obligations totally distinct from those of any other religionists under the sun, naturally growing out of that relation to God, in which the experience of this doctrine has fixed him.⁷⁴

Though one could pretend to observe these obligations out of fear or selfish interest, or even be capable of performing moral deeds, it was only the awakened Christian that could claim the source of his motives to be the divine love of God. Promises of rewards in the after-life served as further encouragement, but it was the heartfelt and grateful response to God's merciful acceptance of the sinner that formed the guiding principle of the Christian life. According to this system, it made no sense to speak of the moral life or Christian duty as if it could be abstracted from other aspects of human experience. Man lived either in communion with God or not, and the totality of his life reflected the presence or the absence of this relationship.

Insistence on the initiative of the Holy Spirit, human depravity, justification by faith alone and the emphasis that the 'new life with Christ' was necessarily distinguishable from the old formed the 'lineaments of Evangelical religion'.⁷⁵ Firmly Trinitarian, the Evangelicals rarely failed to distinguish their rendering of the gospel from the heresy promulgated by eighteenth-century Deists, Unitarians and Arians, though the primary theological battles on these fronts had

⁷³Milner, 'On Evangelical Religion', pp. 203-204.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, p. 204.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, p. 205.

already been won. The Father whose love had sent the Son was no less God than Jesus Christ whose humanity and divinity were integral to the successful plan of salvation. And how could anyone other than God have prepared and sustained the awakened individual who was always available prey of the Prince of Darkness? Baptism, they held, was the essential rite of entry into the Church, and was appropriately administered to fledgling members of a Christian state though Evangelical theologians differed about what was accomplished in this event. Records of early Evangelical communion services attest to the great emphasis placed upon Holy Communion. And though the individual's spiritual awakening might well be a matter between the sinner and God, the efforts of clergy like William Grimshaw or Fletcher of ^{Madeley} left little room to question the importance of attendance upon the weekly gathering of the local Christian community. Doctrines such as predestination and election were also a part of the Evangelical manifesto, but as they believed these propositions led those interested in them into speculation and controversy, their introduction into the theological system of the newly awakened was viewed with caution, and the minute discussion of these issues postponed until a later time.

D. Bearing Fruit

Under Milner's ministrations, Wilberforce arrived back on his doorstep in November of 1785 a changing if not a changed man.⁷⁶ ^{Milner's} often credited with the conversion of Wilberforce. ^{however,} This terminology, encumbered by its usage in religious jargon, does not faithfully convey Milner's own perceptions of what had transpired as the two friends ambled their way across the heart of Europe. Unlike the Hindu in India, the professed Churchman of England in the eighteenth century lived in a nation where he could find the rudiments of Christian faith all around him. The actual spiritual state of the 'unconverted' sinner or Hindu may well be the same when viewed through the eyes of God, but the very existence of these building blocks and the continued refusal of the unenlightened sinner to pick them up caused a far greater judgement to fall upon ears that refused to hear. 'While many persons in distant countries and climates which the Gospel has yet never reached', Isaac Milner wrote in a devotional meditation, 'are in extreme ignorance, doubt, or apprehension, about their future state, it is our own fault, if we do not both know what belongs to our salvation, and also take care to secure it'.⁷⁶

Thus, the 'conversion' of Wilberforce, as Milner would have perceived it, was not a movement from one context into another but rather an awakening of the Christian to that which was around him. Just as a sleeper expected to awaken to find himself in the same room surrounded by the same furniture and personal effects, so the awakened Christian anticipated the familiarity of rites, church buildings and doctrine. And yet, just as the sleeper could awaken after a night of slumber with fresh resolutions, changed perceptions and new responses to that which an ordinary day would bring, so could the enlightened Christian view the world through different eyes though the mileposts remained.

⁷⁶Milner, Life, p. 62.

Given such an understanding of conversion as awakening or enlightenment, it is not surprising that the world appeared to Wilberforce at the dawn of the 'great change' in largely the same forms it always had. Actions and conventions might be questioned in a manner hardly surprising to discern in the thought of the awakening Evangelical, but the round of dinners, social obligations and habits of life continued in a way that allowed the threat of 'everlasting death' to be held alongside the philosophy summarized by Wilberforce's words: 'Yet, such is man, I went on merry and cheerful and gay'.⁷⁷ The new convert retained a countenance that was anything but gloomy or fanatical, and it was a close friend of Wilberforce's anxious mother, who once again feared the religious inclinations of her only son, who pronounced: 'If this is madness, I hope that he will bite us all'.⁷⁸

But the presentation of a new world view inevitably conflicted with the old, and even before his return from the Continent, Wilberforce's diary began to show evidence of spiritual crisis. Having once before^{had} the jewel of vital Christianity within his grasp, Wilberforce berated himself for committing one of the gravest sins in the Evangelical Black Book: the irresponsible use of God-given time and talents. 'As soon as I reflected seriously upon these subjects', the diary recorded,

the deep guilt and black ingratitude of my past life forced itself upon me in the strongest colours, and I condemned myself for having wasted my precious time, and opportunities, and talents.⁷⁹

Standing self-accused, and proclaimed guilty on this count, he also questioned the possibility of God's acceptance of the condemned sinner. Convinced 'in the true sense of the word, I was not a Christian',⁸⁰ the earnest search for God began. He attended church and faithfully said his prayers. Self-examination led him to deeper insights, and he measured the legitimacy of worldly engagements by their possible spiritual worth. Still, the clouds remained and the Diary revealed:

It was not so much the fear of punishment by which I was affected, as a sense of my great sinfulness in having so long neglected the unspeakable mercies of my God and Saviour; and such was the effect which this thought produced, that for months I was in a state of the deepest depression, from strong convictions of my guilt. Indeed nothing which I have ever read in the accounts of others, exceeded what I then felt.⁸¹

If it was Isaac Milner who planted the viable seed, it was the 'old blasphemer' John Newton who assisted throughout the crisis of labour and brought the spiritual son to birth.

⁷⁷Bod. Add. MS e.11, p. 132.

⁷⁸Wilberforce, *Life*, vol. I, p. 119.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, p. 88.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*

⁸¹*Ibid.*, p. 89.

Astutely, Wilberforce recognized the strain the spiritual questing had brought upon his mind and body, and knew that a conflict of this magnitude ought not to be faced alone. He did not, however, easily make a plea for help, and the young politician, conscious of his social position and possible consequences of going public with his new-found convictions, believed that he must consider the matter carefully before taking action. Even once he determined the course, the letter requesting Newton's attention to his dilemma concluded with a plea that the visit must be discreet: 'Remember that I must be secret, and that the gallery of the House is now so universally attended, that the face of a member of parliament is pretty well known'.⁸² The ex-slave trader threw his door open, and Wilberforce found a ready and sympathetic ear for his soul-searching. Thus began long conversations, prayers and a friendship that spanned two decades. The way forward was not always clear, and despair continued to lurk around the corner, but Newton's guidance of Wilberforce proved sound and consistent. Though not banished completely, doubts receded and by Easter of 1786, Wilberforce could join in 'amidst the general chorus with which all nature seems on such a morning to be swelling the song of Praise and Thanksgiving'.⁸³

Why did Wilberforce turn to Newton and not Milner? Robin Furneaux, the only author of a major Wilberforce study to take note of Milner's absence during the moment of spiritual crisis, dismisses the question in a perfunctory fashion:

Wilberforce badly needed a spiritual rock to cling to in his turmoil. Milner was of no use to him, for when converting Wilberforce he seems also to have converted himself and come to a sudden realisation of his responsibilities and duties as a clergyman. Milner, too, was undergoing a spiritual crisis. In the autumn of 1785 Wilberforce needed a simpler, stronger guide and one who had already overcome his own doubts.⁸⁴

The latter part of this assessment stands up to examination. Thirty-four years Wilberforce's senior, Newton had seen it all, his early adventures having proved adequate 'to supply materials for a dozen penny dreadfuls, and more than enough sin'.⁸⁵ Once the ex-slave trader had been established in a successful ministry, first at Olney in Buckinghamshire, and then at St. Mary Woolnoth in London, people streamed to see him, seeking counsel of one they known to have experienced both the depths of sin and the heights of redemption. A cautious petition from a flourishing young politician would not have surprised Newton to whom

came crowds; and, when they had once come, they came again. The infidel and the doubter, the prodigal and the unclean, came to hear him came back again and again. They wrote to him, when they dared not visit him. They wrote to him without their names, as they thought their names would scandalize him. Some came under cloak of night, to hide their shame. They blushed as they told their

⁸²Wilberforce, *Life*, vol. I, p. 96.

⁸³Bod. Add. MS d.15.151, William Wilberforce to Sally Wilberforce, 16 April 1786.

⁸⁴Furneaux, *Wilberforce*, p. 37.

⁸⁵George R. Balleine, *A History of the Evangelical Party in the Church of England* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1911), pp. 70-71.

story - how they had lived, and in what guilt.⁸⁶

Memories of bygone days in Wimbledon of the preacher a young boy had revered as a father would have encouraged Wilberforce to seek the comfort and guidance of John Newton.

Unfortunately, little literary evidence survives to shed light on the extent of Milner's interaction with Wilberforce during the time of spiritual crisis. Depression, often due to physical debilitation, was already at that point not unknown to Milner. If his conversations with Wilberforce had led him to the point of conversion itself, it must be said that it was one of many 'conversion' experiences yet to come. Mary Milner recorded that shortly after her great-uncle's return from the Continent, a lung disease afflicted him which threatened to prevent his discharge of academic responsibilities. Still, an extract of a letter from Milner to Wilberforce shows that close intercourse between the two friends had hardly ceased, and more significantly, contains expressions of affection and expectations of friendship that suggest concern greater than what one would expect to find between mere acquaintances. A note in Wilberforce's diary also indicates that Milner corresponded with him during this spiritual crisis.⁸⁷ Milner did not play the role John Newton did in Wilberforce's coming to terms with his new spiritual insights, but to assert his uselessness at this time is to undervalue a significant relationship to a man for whom relationships were the stuff of life.

When speaking of the course of his life, Wilberforce never failed to stress the implications of his 'spiritual awakening' for his future commitments and activities. Out of this event had come the two pillars of his political career and social and religious leadership over the next forty-seven years: a leadership which had a profound impact on the course of British history, as the Hanoverian kings made the way for Victoria and the nineteenth century.

Writing in 1787, Wilberforce recorded his statement of purpose: 'God Almighty has placed before me two great objects: the suppression of the slave trade and the reformation of manners'.⁸⁸ Clear to its writer, the statement fails to reveal to future readers the theological presuppositions without which, for Wilberforce, the realization of these commitments was simply not possible, presuppositions accompanied by a way of life to which Isaac Milner had introduced him. Later he was to express the conviction that conversation with Dr. Burgh, his first choice for a touring companion, would never 'have touched on the subject of religion except in the most superficial and cursory way'.⁸⁹ In addition to the occurrence of the trip after his entrance into public life, Burgh's refusal was only another example of what Wilberforce understood as the all-encompassing design of Providence to bring the student and the teacher back together again. In

⁸⁶John Campbell Colquhoun, William Wilberforce: His Friends and His Times (London: Longmans, Green, Reader and Dyer, 1866), pp. 97-98.

⁸⁷Wilberforce, Life, vol. I, p. 330.

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 149.

⁸⁹Ibid., p. 380.

reflecting on the notables of his life, an older Wilberforce recalled

The singular accident, as it seemed to me, of my asking Milner to go abroad with me in 1784. How much it depended on contingencies! - his coming to Hull with his brother; being known to my grandfather; distinguishing himself, & c. If he had been as ill as he was afterwards, or if I had known his character, we should not have gone together.⁹⁰

Never was there doubt that 'a consequent course of living almost without God in the world'⁹¹ had been checked and turned through the instrumentality of Isaac Milner. Significant people come and go throughout the life of an individual. For Milner and Wilberforce, friendship had come to stay.

III. The Service of Friendship

A. An Extended Family

Many details of the Milner-Wilberforce relationship, while interesting, fall beyond the pale of a work on Milner's contribution as an Evangelical leader; it must be acknowledged, however, that this friendship continued to play a significant role in the lives of both men. Letters and diaries contain frequent references to visits made to each other's homes with Wilberforce travelling to Cambridge and Hull, and Milner enjoying Wilberforce hospitality to the extent that he could in later years claim: 'Your house is the most to me home, I will allow, of any home in the world'.⁹² When one man took seriously ill, the other came to his aid, though Wilberforce sometimes made the difficult decision of placing a God-given vocation over friendship as he did when he contemplated risking missing a crucial session during the Abolition debate: 'Heard from Milner, that ill of a fever; but after a short debate found that I must give up the Slave business if I went to him, so resolved against it'.⁹³ Milner did not stand alone in such treatment; Wilberforce's sister Sally received the same under similar circumstances. When the pastorship of Holy Trinity Church in Hull became vacant in 1797, Wilberforce exerted his influence to secure his friend's brother this desirable pastorship. In the same year, Milner dashed to Bath with Henry Thornton to pronounce a verdict on the prospective Mrs. Wilberforce. Of this effort, Wilberforce expressed his lifelong gratitude and remembrance⁹⁴ though neither inspector approved entirely of the match, and could only resolve to make the best of the matter once the marital knot had been

⁹⁰Wilberforce, Life, vol. II, pp. 165-166.

⁹¹Ibid., vol. IV, p. 344.

⁹²Bod. Add. MS d.13.151, Isaac Milner to William Wilberforce, 23 November, no year.

⁹³Wilberforce, Life, vol. I, p. 213.

⁹⁴Cambridge University Library Add. MS 7674/1/L1, Henry Thornton to Marianne Thornton, May 1897 (misdated), p. 117.

tied. Milner stood as godparent for Wilberforce's second son, Robert Isaac,⁹⁵ a significant choice in a society in which godparents were expected to exercise a role in the spiritual upbringing of children. Milner also attained the curious position of Wilberforce's personal health and medical adviser, and he filled pages of correspondence with detailed descriptions of head and bowel ailments and their corresponding remedies. It was undoubtedly Milner who encouraged Wilberforce to use opium for the relief of pain⁹⁶, and he provided advice to the extent that the patient would later write to George Pretyman-Tomline that Milner was 'the means, if not of saving my life, at least of sparing me a long and dangerous fit of sickness in the last spring....When he is at an uncomeatable distance I never have the same sense of security'.⁹⁷ When it came to serious assistance, it was Dr. William Hey of Leeds, Milner's personal medical adviser, to whom Wilberforce turned in time of need.

Milner and Wilberforce's close intimacy which lasted thirty-five years, may be surprising. Born of poor, working-class parents who further distinguished themselves by attending the Quaker meeting house, Isaac Milner appeared to be anything but a natural companion to a man who was born with a silver spoon in his mouth and limitless opportunity at his feet. Temperamentally, the two differed as dramatically as their physical statures. Milner had a slow, deliberate and tenacious approach, an approach which Wilberforce would later declare gave him the appearance 'of being slow in company and had it not been that people knowing his great reputation thought that the fault lay in them he would have been thought stupid'⁹⁸; this bearing contrasted with the quick-witted, often flighty course of Wilberforce's thought. Milner's demand, 'Now Wilberforce listen - for no power will make me repeat what I am going to say'⁹⁹ became such a celebrated warning of the teacher to the student that it survived in the Thornton treasury of memoirs. Vocationally, Providence (so they believed) had called them to very different stations in life: Wilberforce to the goldfish bowl of political life, family responsibilities and the task of carrying the gospel to the upper classes, and Milner to the celibate and possibly lonely life of the scholar.

And yet, the conversion experience and the subsequent common interest in the propagation of revived Christianity in Evangelical terms led to the formation of a relationship that was strong and vital, though it was a friendship which would prove to be trying to Milner. Wilberforce was a man of the world, and he amassed crowds wherever he went. Possessing a delightful wit and

⁹⁵Perhaps Milner could even claim a namesake though Barbara Spooner's father was an 'Isaac' as well.

⁹⁶'However, be not afraid of the habit of such medicines, the habit of growling guts is infinitely worse: there is nothing injurious to the constitution in the medicines, and if you use them all your life there is no great harm, but paroxysms of laxity or of pain, leave permanent evil'. Bod. Add. MS d.15.33, Isaac Milner to William Wilberforce, 16 November 1793.

⁹⁷Quoted in Pollock, Wilberforce, p. 144.

⁹⁸Bod. Add. MS e.11, p. 114.

⁹⁹Cambridge University Library Add. MS 7674/1/L10, pp. 17-18.

irresistible charm, he hardly ever failed to make friends of the people he met, and when his influence in political, ecclesiastical and social circles made his favour worthwhile, his household was besieged with constant petitioners. A descendant of the Clapham clan aptly described the domain of its chief in the following way:

His breakfast-table was crowded by those who came to him on business, or with whom, for any of his plans of usefulness, he wished to become personally acquainted. His ante-room was thronged from an early hour, and its later tenants only quitted it when he himself went out on business. Like every other room in his house, it was well stored with books; and experience had led to the exchange of the smaller volumes, with which it was originally furnished, for cumbrous folios, which could not be carried off by accident in the pocket of a coat. Its group was often most amusing, and Mrs. Hannah More used to liken it to Noah's ark, 'full of beasts clean and unclean.' On one chair sat a Yorkshire constituent, manufacturing or agriculture; on another a Wesleyan preacher; on another a petitioner for charity, or a House of Commons client; while side by side with a negro, a foreign missionary, or a Haytian professor, sat some man of rank who sought a private interview. Pitt, and his other parliamentary friends, might be found there at dinner before the House. Indeed so constant was their resort, that it was asserted, not a little to his disadvantage in Yorkshire, that he received a pension for entertaining the partisans of the minister. Clarkson, Dickson, and other Abolitionists, jocosely named by Pitt Wilberforce's white negroes, were his constant inmates, and were employed in revising and abridging evidence under his eye.¹⁰⁰

To a man of Wilberforce's gregarious nature, such an environment was nothing less than elemental; to a man whose reclusive social needs were best satisfied by an evening of food and music with a select group of friends, the chaos was distressing and highly undesirable. Though Milner was willing to travel a hundred miles to meet Wilberforce to 'sit up till one o'clock eating Anchovy Toast, and abuse a stupid waiter *ad libitum*'¹⁰¹, the complications accompanying a visit from Wilberforce were not always welcomed. In the winter of 1796, Wilberforce proposed to his friend that he extend to him what amounted to an open invitation to take up residence in the Queens' Lodge whenever business or pleasure should take him to Cambridge, regardless of the permanent resident's absence or presence. Citing secondary excuses of college responsibilities and ill health, Milner could only look to the younger man's household and fear for his own. 'We are alike in many respects', he wrote in an attempt to dissuade,

but your hours and capabilities differ much from mine. If it were necessary to add anything more to make you understand my feelings on such an occasion, I would say, that there is no man's house in the world, I like to be in, so much as yours; nor would I voluntarily come up at all to London, but to you. Yet, even in your house, I am often forced to be with fellows for hours more than I like; often meet foul fellows in the breakfast room, whom I wish gone; and then I keep up a deceitful sort of mock character.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰Margaret J. Holland, *Life and Times of Zachary Macaulay* (London: Edward Arnold, 1900), p. 91.

¹⁰¹Bod. Add. MS d.15.32-33, Isaac Milner to William Wilberforce, 16 November 1793.

¹⁰²Milner, *Life*, p. 121.

Though Wilberforce's future visits to the University were hardly precluded, management and foresight were necessary to ensure 'comfort and advantage to both of us'.¹⁰³ A fretful night spent in a public house with 'bells ringing, and fellows going up and down stairs all the night long at the Coffee house' should have been better endured than certain nights in the Wilberforce domain where 'things have often appeared foul enough'.¹⁰⁴

These complaints reveal more than the frustration of a man who sought quiet companionship but was continually confronted with a three-ring circus. Both Wilberforce and Milner recognized that if Evangelical religion was to receive the benefits of the politician's influence and contacts, his vocation must be exercised in the world. Having received wise counsel from John Newton, who encouraged him not to flee the world, Wilberforce resolved to carry forth his mission to draw the people of that world to his side.

B. Guide

1. The Danger of Distraction

A vocation so exercised was fraught with danger. The temptation to seek power, excessive interaction with others and pride could easily deflect one's course, and Milner was in a prime position to offer guidance and support. An incessant stream of company plagued Wilberforce at the retreat in Rayrigg, and he finally declared that 'the banks of the Thames are scarcely more public than those of Windermere'.¹⁰⁵ Milner convinced the young socialite about 'this being a most improper place for me, and resolved upon not continuing the house'.¹⁰⁶ The move made, Wilberforce expressed gratitude for the advice in the pages of the Diary:

Milner's excellent advice at Hull, in addition to his lecture at Rayrigg, de levitate - '*Nihil enim per se amplum est, nisi in quo iudicii ratio extat.*' - of being a man of business, & c. May God enable me to profit from his hint, and make him properly grateful to him for this true proof of friendship.¹⁰⁷

Still, the visitors persisted, and Milner again warned his friend that such entertainments were satisfying only to the devil in that they distracted the Lord's chosen from their God-given work.¹⁰⁸ On another occasion, Wilberforce reported that Milner and another friend had delivered to him 'a most serious and forcible lecture on the necessity of taking care of myself, and of living a more quiet life'.¹⁰⁹ At their insistence, he fled to the waters of Bath for some much needed

¹⁰³Milner, Life, p. 122.

¹⁰⁴Bod. Add. MS c.47.128, Isaac Milner to William Wilberforce, 21 December 1799.

¹⁰⁵Wilberforce, Life, vol. I, p. 183.

¹⁰⁶Ibid.

¹⁰⁷Milner, Life, p. 39.

¹⁰⁸Wilberforce, Life, vol. I, p. 270.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., vol. II, p. 345.

refreshment.

A man of the world must mingle in the world, but with Milner's guidance, Wilberforce learned that he who pursued a course under the banner of Christianity must seek the company of other Christians as well as time for personal reflection and quiet, if he was to continue on the way that God set for him. An entry in the Diary concerning the Rayrigg situation showed he had taken Milner's words to heart, and had learned from them:

The life I am now leading is unfavourable in all respects, both to mind and body...Indolence and intemperance are its capital features. It is true, the incessant intrusion of fresh visitors, and the constant temptations to which I am liable, from being always in company, render it extremely difficult to adhere to any plan of study, or any resolutions of abstemiousness, which last too it is the harder for me to observe, because my health requires throughout an indulgent regimen. Nothing however can excuse or palliate such conduct.¹¹⁰

Christian friends oversaw spiritual discipline over one another, and Milner and Wilberforce initiated a plan which amounted to a kind of confession-in-reverse: instead of each party confessing to the other the individual sins of the day, each illumined for the other the faults and weaknesses that he perceived. In the spirit of Christian frankness, they intended to keep each other alert to the dangers and traps that the world set in the Christian's path. A mutually agreed-upon set of rules for Christian conduct became a part of the system, and each paid fines for infringements. The pair abandoned the scheme because Wilberforce found his pocketbook unable to keep up with his sins, though the pact provided a foundation for Wilberforce's lifelong practice of rigorous self-examination which he entrusted to the pages of diaries and letters to friends. From men of the world, Wilberforce might have come to expect nothing but temptation to abandon the task to which he believed God had called him, but fellow travellers in the faith provided consolation and encouragement. Christianity for the Evangelical of the Milner/Wilberforce type was never a purely private affair.

2. The Danger of Ambition

Ambition to seek higher office, greater prestige and more wealth loomed as another temptation to Wilberforce as he set about the Lord's work amongst the worldly wise. Born into a home of means and with a drive to achieve, few men in eighteenth-century England could have claimed to possess Wilberforce's contacts, opportunities and subsequent temptations. Elected to Parliament at the age of twenty-one, he had not only been chosen to represent the largest county in England by the age of twenty-four, but had also gained the confidence of the Prime Minister and the respect of the leading statesmen of his age. By 1807, his name had been indissolubly linked with the abolition of the Slave Trade in the British Empire and he had, as Furneaux suggested, earned his right to the title of the moral father of the age. Furneaux aptly summarized the extent of Wilberforce's influence in writing:

He was a legend in his own time; when Sir Home Popham was cruising off the

¹¹⁰Wilberforce, Life, vol. I, pp. 180-181.

coast of Haiti one of his ships boarded a boat that had come out under a flag of truce. Almost the first question asked by the Haitians was, 'How is Mr. Wilberforce? He is our friend, and benefactor, and we are all interested about him.' Their interest was widely shared; a visit to him featured in the itinerary of almost every distinguished foreigner who came to Britain. He was presented to the allied monarchs; he became a close friend of Marshal Blücher through his efforts for the 'suffering Prussians', and the Marshall sent him a personal dispatch after Waterloo. Madame de Staël lured him out to dinner, to his immediate delight and subsequent remorse. More humble tourists were taken to look at him, and in 1817 one of them described this experience: 'Another little man, as thin as a shadow, and drawing one side of his body after him, as if paralytic, hurried across the floor with a tottering brisk step, an awkward bow, and said, in substance, that schools in Ireland were most desirable, and should be organised by all means. These few words were extremely well spoken, with peculiar energy of feeling, and in a manner graceful and impressive. This was Mr. Wilberforce. Nothing can surpass the meanness of his appearance, and he seems half-blind.'¹¹¹

Wilberforce corresponded with an astonishing array of politicians (both foreign and domestic), socialites, eminent celebrities and just ordinary folk. It is not an exaggeration to state that for most of his life, Wilberforce had the ear of a nation, if not of the world.

Who could blame a man in his position for harbouring aspirations to positions of greater prestige and more power? Though commended for a decided lack of self-interest and vanity, Wilberforce was aware that he was concerned about his future. When musing over the opportunity of some religious conversation with members of the royal family, he stopped himself:

Yet I distrust myself: I fear my eye is not simple, nor supremely set on God's glory in this scheme. Perhaps I should do better to attend to my proper business, and this is Satan's artifice to draw me off.¹¹²

The prospect of an office in the 1801 administration of Addington evoked an admission of desire: 'I was for a little intoxicated, and had risings of ambition.'¹¹³ Not surprisingly, the desire for public recognition with its rewards received attention in Wilberforce's literary legacy, A Practical View. Always vigilant, the Christian must never fail to scrutinize

his apparent motives, lest he should be prompted to his more than ordinary religious observances, and be kept from participating in the licentious pleasure of a dissipated age, not as much by a vigorous principle of internal holiness, as by a fear of lessening himself in the good opinion of the stricter circles of his associates, or of suffering even in the estimation of the world at large by violating the properties of his assumed character.¹¹⁴

Wilberforce's vocation unfolded in an arena in which competition was stiff, and success made a difference to one's social position. He could hardly escape the temptation to desire prestige and

¹¹¹Furneaux, Wilberforce, p. 273.

¹¹²Wilberforce, Life, vol. II, p. 35.

¹¹³Ibid., vol. III, p. 3.

¹¹⁴William Wilberforce, A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians in the Higher and Middle Classes in this Country. Contrasted with Real Christianity, 11th ed. (Glasgow: William Collins, 1829), p. 273.

recognition.

Friends like Milner exerted a steadying influence amidst struggles with this temptation. He did not object to Wilberforce's claim that God had raised him for a purpose, and reminded the younger man that God had called him and blessed him for a task and that in its execution, he must not fail. Milner did not know and experience the competitive world of power and politics as did Wilberforce, but the desire for ecclesiastical preferment, prestigious collegiate offices and acclaim in the academic world presented temptations no less dangerous than those faced by his friend.

Milner, confessing to the non-judgemental pages of the journal, reflected on his own shortcomings:

I transacted my ordinary business with diligence and credit to myself; but the reasons of my conduct were pride, ambition, love of reputation, hopes of advancement, and such like: to which, however, I may add the pleasure I took in the study and improvement of natural philosophy and mathematics; but all this began and ended in self-gratification..¹¹⁵

Knowing himself the dangers of the seductive ambition, Milner entered into Wilberforce's struggles; nor was he short of advice. In a letter of encouragement when progress with Abolition concerns moved slowly, Milner counselled: 'However, you have great reason to be thankful; for God seems to bless your Labour and I remember I told you long ago, if you carry this point in your whole life, that life will be far better spent than in being prime minister many years'.¹¹⁶ Yearnings for acclaim and reward never ceased to dog the politician's footsteps but in the aftermath of refusing a peerage, Wilberforce could admit:

I will not deny that there have been periods in my life, when on worldly principles the attainment of a permanent, easy, and quiet seat in the legislature, would have been a pretty strong temptation to me. But, I thank God, I was strengthened against yielding to it. For (understand me rightly) as I had done nothing to make it naturally come to me, I must have endeavoured to go to it; and this would have been carving for myself, if I may use the expression, much more than a Christian ought to do.¹¹⁷

Ambition remained always a serious threat to one who sought to win over souls already firmly caught in the net of its influence.

3. Spiritual Pride

Spiritual pride was the third deadly danger lying in wait, and it was one to which the Evangelical was considered to be particularly prone. How could it be any less so for one whose sense of duty rested firmly on the conviction that God had expressly called the Evangelical and had fitted him for the task of bringing salvation to the masses inexorably bound for perdition? Countless examples of Evangelical conversions as well as other life experiences attested to the providential intervention of God in the life of an ordinary Saul; thus Joseph Milner was rescued

¹¹⁵Milner, Life, pp. 56-57.

¹¹⁶Bod. Add. MS c.3.35, Isaac Milner to William Wilberforce, no date though before 1797.

¹¹⁷Wilberforce, Life, vol. V, p. 229.

from the jaws of nominal Christianity in time to preach the saving gospel to the town of Hull, while a miraculous escape from an icy precipice in Burgundy ensured that Wilberforce would live to accomplish the tasks which were to be his. Like the Jews who had been called and set apart to be a light to the world (and had failed), so had the Evangelical remnant been sanctified for no less than the life of a nation. Together, they could unite in song of their unique position:

Oh, may that night be ne'er forgot!
 Lord, still encrease thy praying few!
 Were Olney left without a Lot,
 Rain, like Sodom's, would ensue...

See the commission'd Angel frown!
 That vial in his hand,
 Fill'd with fierce wrath, is pouring down
 Upon our guilty land!

Ye saints, unite in wrestling pray'r,
 If yet there may be hope;
 Who knows but Mercy yet may spare,
 And bid the angel stop?¹¹⁸

As if the perception of one's having been set apart for a divine task and peculiar blessing by God was not enough to fuel the fires of pride, two attending aspects of their faith served to stoke the blaze: the Evangelical perception of those outside the fold, and the success which had accompanied their labours. To have been set apart was clearly to have received God's blessing. In kindlier moments, those who had not been so favoured were seen as objects of Evangelical pity or disdain because of their greed, pleasure and foolish caprice. At other times, they seemed no better than savages (who might at least be pitied for their ignorance of the gospel) and reprobates with whom association must be accompanied by the invocation of God's protection; 10 Hannah More ^{prayed} upon a move to worldly Bath:

O Lord! fit me for the duties and keep me from all the temptations of it. I thank thee that the vain and unprofitable company with which this place abounds, is a burden to me...And do thou remove those prejudices which obstruct the growth of some of my friends in divine things.¹¹⁹

Further, in their success, Evangelicals had set themselves up for a fall. The growth of the Bible and Church Missionary Society and other philanthropic and reforming organizations, the solid presence of Evangelical sympathizers in Parliament and their influence exerted through the legislative process, and the ability to acknowledge one could find 'progress of religion society-wide, and more wide the blessed circle spreads in the elevated walks of life'¹²⁰ were all successes to be celebrated. Still, perceptive Evangelicals worried. Sometime before his death in 1821,

¹¹⁸John Newton and William Cowper, Olney Hymns, in Three Books (London: W. Oliver, 1779), Book II, LXIX, LXIV.

¹¹⁹William Roberts, ed., Memoirs of the Life and Correspondence of Mrs. Hannah More, 4 vols., 3rd ed. (London: R. B. Seeley and W. Burnside, 1835), vol. III, p. 421.

¹²⁰Ibid., p. 407.

William Richardson flashed a warning from Yorkshire:

The scheme of religion, sometimes called Evangelical, spiritual, or experimental, is undoubtedly what I prefer. I see, however, the danger of making Christianity consist in strong emotions and devout affections, and am fully persuaded, that many high professors of religion maintain a good opinion of themselves without humility, charity, or those fruits of good living, which mark the character of a child of God. If ever 'the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy,' appeared upon earth, it is in the person of some of our modern sectaries. Their spiritual pride, their censoriousness, their malignity, their covetousness, and other odious qualities, white-washed with long prayers, frequent acts of devotion, a peculiar garb, and cast of countenance, and a parading, noisy profession, and spirit of proselyting, mark them out as the successors of those celebrated hypocrites, whom our Saviour, mild to all other sinners, treats with such peculiar severity of reproof. Cant and affection, my soul hates, and ever will hate. The mischief it has done to religion, and the souls of men, is incalculable.¹²¹

Isaac Milner, too, recognized the pitfall spiritual pride could be to those who understood themselves as favoured by God, and he purposefully engaged with men of the world rather than spurning them. He believed God had favoured Wilberforce, and he often reminded his friend of the blessings of resources and the few obstacles he had faced, especially in contrast with his own life. 'I do indeed rejoice with you very sincerely', he wrote in a letter from Carlisle in 1799,

and am very thankful that Almighty God smiles so repeatedly upon every thing connected with you. I shall not fail to pray for you all.¹²²

But on other occasions, Milner exhorted his friend never to bask too long in the smiles of Providence; God's favour might indeed be withdrawn, and the Christian must remain forever watchful for some future trial. Humility was the key to right human conduct and friends must be vigilant in serving one another as a kind of brother's keeper. Though Milner did not direct the following lines to Wilberforce, they surely suggest rules which governed his interactions with him as well. To a man simply identified as the son of one of his oldest friends, Milner wrote,

As humility is the life and soul of the religion of Christ, there is perhaps hardly anything which ought more carefully to be avoided, in the intercourse between friends, than the saying or doing of anything which has a tendency to puff up; we are, all of us sufficiently disposed to this evil of ourselves: yet, in the very important duty of self-examination, we are not to affect to be blind to what God has done for us.¹²³

It is undoubtedly in this spirit of concern for Wilberforce and his position that Milner offered one of the most provocative pieces of advice during their long friendship. By 1808, Wilberforce had lived on Clapham Common for sixteen years. Within the security of its boundaries, he had begun his marital and family life and had enjoyed friendships with the leading men of his day. With the help of these friends, he had conceived and had executed strategies

¹²¹William Richardson, *A Brief Memoir of the Late Rev. William Richardson*, 2nd ed. (London: Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy, 1822), p. 49.

¹²²Milner, *Life*, p. 174.

¹²³*Ibid.*, p. 238.

which had led to the abolition of the slave trade, the christianization of India and the reformation of morals that Britain had never before and quite likely would never again experience as a nation.

As a group, the little community around Clapham Common wielded power and influence, and they knew it. Henry Thornton prayed for nothing less than that God would grant 'that Clapham may more and more become the theatre on which elevated piety is exhibited' though he added the hope that this aim might be accomplished 'without affectation and without Extravagance'.¹²⁴ Friendships were cultivated with care as were contacts with the unredeemed as long as they could be of use. They met success with acknowledgement of God's providence though in the light of new calamity, Lord Teignmouth wrote of the Bible Society:

I have even thought, and I must myself plead guilty to the charge, that our exultation at its wonderful success was tinctured too much with a worldly spirit, and that we have taken credit to ourselves for that success which should have been exclusively attributed to Him.¹²⁵

Milner's interaction with the other members of the Clapham Sect will be explored more extensively in a later section; suffice it to say that the Claphamites' highly developed sense of purpose made him wary and fearful once again that Wilberforce had exposed himself to forces which could damage his effectiveness as God's instrument. With Wilberforce already considering the move of a hectic household from the Common to the more tranquil atmosphere of Kensington Gore, Milner suggested 'another incidental benefit, pointing out to him "a danger in living altogether at Clapham - danger of conceit and spiritual pride, and a cold, critical spirit. He imputes this less to me than to some others - but the danger great"'.¹²⁶ Boundless good could result when those of like persuasion pooled ideas and resources, but the temptation to exult in accomplishments and even in God's blessings was deadly to the Evangelical cause. Early in 1808, Wilberforce moved to Kensington Gore.

4. Conflict

Milner, then, conscious of the possible dangers of a person in Wilberforce's position, played an active role in supporting him as one on whom so many Evangelical hopes for success (such as Abolition of the Slave Trade) were hung, and kept him mindful of the dangers of ambition, worldliness and conceit. He also maintained an active interest in the actual measures Wilberforce took to promote Evangelical religion and humanitarian reform. He devoured reports of debates on the Slave Trade, warmly congratulating Wilberforce on the successes and offering encouragement and hope when the progress was slow or the whole campaign threatened. 'Not long ago', he wrote, 'I had no expectation of success respecting the Slave-trade - Then you seemed

¹²⁴Cambridge University Library Add. MS 7674/1/R, 6 November 1814, p. 173.

¹²⁵C. J. Shore, Memoir of the Life and Correspondence of John, Lord Teignmouth, 2 vols. (London: Hatchard and Son, 1843), vol. II, pp. 474-475.

¹²⁶Wilberforce, Life, vol. III, p. 387.

to be carrying every thing - and now we are down in the mouth again; both because 4 years are allowed and because there seems the greatest danger from the Lords'.¹²⁷ Thomas Clarkson, because of his republican leanings, impressed Milner as a doubtful comrade-in-arms, and he urged Wilberforce to exercise caution when enlisting workers for the campaign. Milner wished Mr. Clarkson better health and politics; but

no government can stand on such principles as he appeals to and maintains. I am very sorry for it, because I see plainly that advantage is taken of such cases as his, in order to represent the friends of abolition as levellers. This is not only the case where the converse of a proposition does not hold. Levellers certainly are friends of abolition.¹²⁸

Milner supported wholeheartedly the scheme, well-established by the 1790's and beloved of Wilberforce, John Thornton and Charles Simeon, of buying up livings for the sake of placing desirable Evangelical candidates in parishes by recommending worthy young men from his contacts in Cambridge. That this practice was crucial to allowing a systematic infiltration of Evangelicals into the clerical ranks of the Church is well known, but an extract of a recommendation by Milner to Wilberforce throws light on the characteristics sought ^{by those responsible for filling the posts} in would-be incumbents:

Learning - very decent indeed
Morals - nothing superlative
Talent - fair
Religion - moderate
Voice - very poor indeed
Gentlem. Character - Nothing one way or
another
- a Democrat certainly.¹²⁹

Milner also encouraged and advised Wilberforce in matters that had possible effects on the clergy. Though his direct involvement in the pet projects of Wilberforce and other members of the Clapham group remained limited, ^{largely because he did not reside on the Common,} he was kept well-informed of events, and his counsel was sought and valued in matters which were to have far-reaching effects.

Not every course Wilberforce took met with the Milner's approval, and neither one found this situation comfortable. Their friendship nevertheless had taught them to be forthright with each other, and that new plans and perspectives could be generated from the heat of conflict. At the outbreak of the war in 1793, Wilberforce had committed himself to a peaceful resolution of hostilities, yet he was willing to support the plans of Pitt whom he believed had been forced to a position that maintained war was initially a matter of necessity; still, he thought Pitt would strive for peace. By the summer of 1794, however, the Prime Minister had given Wilberforce little reason to sustain this hope, and in late December, Wilberforce proposed an amendment to the King's Speech from the Throne which called for the cessation of war. This action not only proved painful in that it initiated a rare breach between Wilberforce and Pitt, but it also threw Wilberforce

¹²⁷Bod. Add. MS c.3.35, Isaac Milner to William Wilberforce, no date though before 1797.

¹²⁸Milner, Life, p. 76.

¹²⁹Bod. Add. MS c.47.123, Isaac Milner to William Wilberforce, Tuesday, 1797.

into the arms of a delighted Opposition, branded him a Jacobin in the eyes of a conservative citizenry and infuriated his Yorkshire constituency whose cloth industry in the wartime economy had boomed.

Milner was alarmed by the development, and in a series of letters expressed to Wilberforce both puzzlement and caution. He seems to have guessed what Wilberforce would be inclined to do, and as early as November of 1793, had warned him that the war could only end with the destruction of one of the parties concerned; presumably, the conflict must continue to ensure that France did not emerge the winner.¹³⁰ As the breach became a reality, Milner, who claimed to speak 'plainly, because I wish well to the country, and love you personally'¹³¹ warned his friend that he might be creating a monster: that is to say, a phalanx of insincere supporters and enthusiasts of whom he could lose control. By January, he dropped the niceties, and his letter to Wilberforce was clearly a reprimand: 'On Friday night', Milner wrote

I read over the debates; and I can truly say, I never was so much concerned about politics in my life; I was quite low, and so I continue. There was not any one of the speeches that I liked. In the first place, I never conceived that you had intended to take so decided a part in this business as to lead the opposition against Pitt. There is not the slightest doubt but you will be represented as having gone over to the opposition, nor will it be easy to do away the impression; for 1st, you opposed Government in the great question of peace or war; 2ndly, you made the motion; 3rdly, the opposition approved of it, and hailed the accession of their new forces. I wish I may be mistaken; yet, as I understand your amendment, and the consequent division, it will certainly tend to weaken the Government and to divide the sentiments of the country; to strengthen a factious opposition, and to encourage the French Convention.¹³²

William Pitt's untimely death in 1806 precipitated another conflict. Pitt had represented Cambridge in the Commons and his death necessitated the election of a new member. Lord Henry Petty stood for the post. He had served the Government as Chancellor of the Exchequer and had supported the cause for Abolition by facilitating the 1805 meeting at Lansdowne House which brought together the Wilberforce cadre and leading members of the Opposition sympathetic to the plight of the slave. Wilberforce, probably without much thought, supported Petty's candidacy, partly in appreciation of his cooperation; Milner was not amused. Petty was a Foxite who had attended Trinity College, a place in Milner's opinion notorious for being a haven for heterodox and Jacobin principles.¹³³ Milner had conversed with Petty and insisted to Wilberforce that contemplating opposition to a man who had been so supportive of the Abolition cause was repugnant, especially when the alternative candidate, Lord Palmerston, was thought to be in favour of Roman Catholic Emancipation. Nevertheless, Petty represented a danger that Milner simply

¹³⁰Bod. Add. MS d.15.33, Isaac Milner to William Wilberforce, 16 November 1793.

¹³¹Milner, *Life*, p. 107.

¹³²*Ibid.*, pp.107-108.

¹³³*Ibid.*, p. 161.

could not bring himself to overlook. 'But why not vote for him myself?' Milner questioned Wilberforce,

In one word, because I fear he is likely to be hostile to some of those great constitutional principles which brought about the revolution in this country; and which, in my judgment, cannot be departed from without endangering the whole fabric of British liberty in church and state.¹³⁴

In supporting Petty, Wilberforce further risked the possibility of a closer identification of the friends of the Abolition with republican ideas. Simeon had joined Milner in his concern, and Wilberforce's journal acknowledged

my suddenly promising Lord Henry Petty, (which done too hastily, partly from not thinking I had any interest, partly from being found in a state of wishing to show Lord Henry how much both I and the cause felt indebted to him,) has produced a sad degree of rufflement. Dear Dean much hurt about it for my sake. I am accused of changing sides, and voting for a man, who was going to make a motion which might have terminated in the impeachment of Pitt. Then all sorts of calumnies against Lord Henry Petty - educated by Priestly, &c. I received letters from Dean, volumes; Simeon, *cum multis aliis*.¹³⁵

Milner observed in this incident that the unfathomable had happened: the two had disagreed about politics.

Yet another incident was to result in what was probably the most curious conflict between teacher and pupil. Wilberforce was proud to consider himself independent of party labels, guided always by the wisdom of personal conscience. He sought and valued the opinions and advice of friends, but knew that not every proposal he made would be met with agreement. As early as 1789, Wilberforce had contemplated the composition of a work in which he would seek to explicate the tenets of the Evangelical Christianity he had accepted, but immediately tried to dissuade himself from such an attempt. Wilberforce knew that to publish a work of the sort he had conceived was to risk being labelled an enthusiast. Persons whose respect and favour he had so painstakingly cultivated would possibly be offended by the label, and useful connections might be lost. It was also seriously debatable whether or not the politician was permitted to trespass into the province of the theologian. Still, by 1793, he had laid the 'first timbers of my tract',¹³⁶ and in 1797, A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians in the Higher and Middle Classes in this Country Contrasted with Real Christianity had come to term.

The publisher, Cadell, had been cautious. If Wilberforce agreed to put his name to the work, he would publish five hundred copies. After only a few days with the book vendors, the original run had sold out; within six months it had gone through five editions and seventy-five hundred copies. By 1826, it had reached a fifteenth edition and had been acclaimed in America, France, Italy, Spain, Holland and Germany.

¹³⁴Wilberforce, Correspondence, vol. II, p. 65.

¹³⁵Wilberforce, Life, vol. III, p. 256.

¹³⁶Ibid., vol. II, p. 33.

Praise poured in from all quarters. John Newton exulted in the work and its potential usefulness in spreading the doctrines of their common faith. Remembering when such a piece would never have issued from a Wilberforce pen, he wrote,

You compel me, Sir to say, that I deem it the most valuable and important publication of the present age, that I have seen. Especially as it is yours. There are many persons both in Church and State, who, from their situations, are quite inaccessible to us little folks, what we preach they do not hear, what we write they will not read. But your book must and will, be read; and where else can they meet with a representative of Real Religion, so complete so Totus veres et lotundus, so forcible and yet so gentle, so candid and yet so explicit! The Lord has enabled you to honour him, and now he has highly honoured you.¹³⁷

Legh Richmond, eventually himself the author of another Evangelical best-seller, The Dairyman's Daughter, received his copy from a friend and later attributed to it

the first sacred impression...as to the spiritual nature of the Gospel system, the vital character of personal religion, the corruption of the human heart, and the way of salvation by Jesus Christ.¹³⁸

Fellow Claphamite Henry Thornton exuded enthusiasm, declaring to Zachary Macaulay the book heralded the advent of a new era in the history of Christ's Church and recounting to Hannah More the notable (at least in Evangelical eyes) death-bed conversion of Edmund Burke upon reading the work.¹³⁹ Archbishops, politicians, the rich, famous, ordinary and not-so-ordinary had read Wilberforce's work and even Wilberforce's embarrassed sons were to acknowledge credit where it was due:

It may be affirmed beyond all question, that it gave the first general impulse to that warmer and more earnest spring of piety which, amongst all its many evils, has happily distinguished the last half century.¹⁴⁰

But strangely silent amidst all the rejoicing was the voice of Isaac Milner. Milner's name was missing from the scroll of admirers included in the Wilberforce Life, nor does any of the surviving Milner-Wilberforce correspondence suggest even the most grudging of compliments. For once, one of Wilberforce's avid fans was not clapping.

From its inception, not every one of Wilberforce's main supporters approved the project. In a diary entry for 17 July 1794, Wilberforce indicated that Henry Thornton, John Venn and William Farish had been to see him to discuss his work. He recorded that he had received no benefit from their suggestions, probably because they had failed to agree on important points, and concluded that their criticism would be of greater benefit once he completed the work.¹⁴¹ An

¹³⁷Bod. Add. MS c.3.27-28, John Newton to William Wilberforce, no date.

¹³⁸Thomas S. Grimshawe, A Memoir of the Rev. Legh Richmond (London: R. B. Seeley and W. Burnside, 1828), p. 27.

¹³⁹Cambridge University Library Add. MS 7674/1/L1, Henry Thornton to Zachary Macaulay, 22 May 1797, p. 105; 7674/L/2, Henry Thornton to Hannah More, 20 October 1798, p. 9.

¹⁴⁰Wilberforce, Life, vol. II, p. 205.

¹⁴¹Ibid., p. 61.

unnamed friend quoted in Mary Seeley's work on Evangelicals questioned Wilberforce's expertise, pointing out that "A person who stands so high for talent must risk much in point of fame at least, by publishing upon a subject of which there have been the greatest exertions of genius."¹⁴²

Milner, too, could be numbered amongst those who had not met Wilberforce's plans with wild enthusiasm. His sons stated plainly that Milner had attempted to dissuade him from the attempt¹⁴³ and soon after its publication could do little more than acknowledge receipt of the books and anticipate future discussion of their contents.¹⁴⁴ Milner took a positive step when he admitted to Wilberforce that Joseph Milner had grown to appreciate the book¹⁴⁵; further, a letter in the *Milner Life* reveals Isaac Milner's encouragement of his friend in the face of an apparently slanderous confrontation, and judged 'as to your book, they cannot hurt it, though its contents will provoke them'.¹⁴⁶ Even Milner's biographer, always ready to praise Wilberforce, especially when his accomplishments could be referred back to some positive aspect of the politician's relationship with her great-uncle, remained strangely silent on this occasion, a sure indication she found Milner's attitude to the *Practical View* puzzling or perhaps even embarrassing given its widespread popularity.

Why would Isaac Milner, a great supporter of both Wilberforce and the propagation of the Evangelical interpretation of the Gospel, have been so reserved about, if not blatantly discouraging of, the composition and publication of the *Practical View*? Surely, the theology of the piece could have been taken verbatim from any traditional Evangelical manifesto, and its reception indicates it had reached a primary object of Evangelical missionary activity: the nominal Christian. In significant respects such as tone, structure and purpose, Wilberforce had produced an updated rendition of Doddridge's *Rise and Progress*, a work which has already been noted as highly esteemed by Milner. And unlike Doddridge, Wilberforce stood firmly within the pale of the Church of England. The Evangelicals within the Anglican fold had found in their politician a theological voice, and it had been heard.

Milner's reluctance to bless the *Practical View* stemmed from a concern for the younger man's character and reputation. As stated above, Milner strongly believed in Wilberforce's instrumentality in furthering the Evangelical cause in places where Evangelicals had not before had a voice. God, he believed, had called Wilberforce to be a politician, and it was within the sphere of politics he was meant to exercise his vocation. By his own admission, Wilberforce was not a theologian, and he had asserted in the introduction of his book that, 'it is not improbable that he

¹⁴²Mary Seeley, *The Later Evangelical Fathers* (London: Seeley, Jackson and Halliday, 1879), p. 222.

¹⁴³Wilberforce, *Life*, vol. II, p. 199.

¹⁴⁴Milner, *Life*, p. 125.

¹⁴⁵*Ibid.*, p. 138.

¹⁴⁶Wilberforce, *Life*, vol. II, p. 197.

may be accused of deviating from his proper line, and of impertinently interfering in the concerns of a profession, to which he does not belong'.¹⁴⁷ Milner held firmly to the belief that God had called each individual to his own particular task within the Divine Plan; to subvert God's order by venturing into another sphere of activity was not only to disobey God's command but also to risk upsetting the working out of God's providence in the world.

Through the publication of the Practical View, his support of Henry Petty and in the break with Pitt, Wilberforce had taken positions which set him up for criticism and close public scrutiny. To admit that one was an Evangelical in the last decade of the eighteenth and first decade of the nineteenth centuries was to risk incurring accusations of enthusiasm and fanaticism; Wilberforce had gained the respect and confidence of those who normally would have forgone associating with Evangelicals, and by publishing his book, he risked drawing attention to his religious position which could have negative implications upon his influence and authority. Further, in all three instances, Wilberforce had risked associations with characters whom loyal Churchmen more often than not considered awkward bedfellows: dissenters, republicans and the Opposition to the government. In a letter concerning Wilberforce's behaviour in the dispute with Pitt, the teacher reminded his student that in this, as in the other cases, the eyes of the nation were upon him. 'I think that you are in a very critical situation'. Milner wrote,

both as to the general good, or bad effect, which your conduct may produce in national affairs, and also in regard to the judgment which will be formed of you personally...Let it but be supposed, that you are against the war, that you are for peace, and your name and authority are made use of to a much greater extent than you ever intended. The part you take is of great consequence. I am very low about public affairs, and am looking for something more tremendous: the prospect is constantly before me. We ought, every one for himself, to 'make haste and keep HIS commandments'.¹⁴⁸

To be useful, Wilberforce's reputation and actions must be clear and above reproach, and Milner sought to ensure they remained so.

IV. The Christian Life

We have seen in the preceding sections Milner's various roles during his friendship with Wilberforce. The converted Evangelical was taught at an early stage to choose friends wisely and well, and the endurance of Milner's presence as admonisher, guide and friend should not be underestimated. Though Wilberforce's friendship with Pitt seemed to remain in a class of its own, his crossing into the Evangelical camp was bound to mean significant realignments in even tried and true relationships: a change which he mourned but accepted. Still, Milner had an even more important role to play than those outlined above: that of spiritual companion and guide. During Wilberforce's conversion to Evangelical faith, Milner appeared to have come to a deeper understanding of his own. Though perhaps starting at different places, the two had embarked upon

¹⁴⁷Wilberforce, Practical View, p. 90.

¹⁴⁸Milner, Life, pp. 107-108.

a spiritual journey which they were to share through correspondence and conversation through most of their lives.

The image of the Christian life as a spiritual journey was meaningful to Milner. He considered self-examination to be an integral part of the Evangelical regimen, and as noted above, Milner and Wilberforce each agreed to play the part of the confessor to the other. The value of candidness and honesty between fellow Christians remained with Wilberforce and nine years after Milner's death, he counselled his son Henry to seek friends who could fulfil this role as Milner and Babington had done for him.¹⁴⁹ Though Milner maintained the value of self-examination as a part of monitoring spiritual progress and the individual's relationship to God, the communal dimension of mutual confession and admonition between friends prevented his interpretation of Evangelical Christianity from degenerating into solitary introspection and self-righteousness.

What is most notable in Milner's reflections to Wilberforce was his expression of his understanding of the Christian life. As declared by Milner, conversion meant a radical and fundamental change in the individual's posture toward self, God and the world. From birth, the unredeemed man was less a target of derision than an object of pity. Like a stray sheep, he had wandered from the right domain of his master, separating himself from ready guidance, and offending against what God in His wisdom gave as laws for the government of His community. In England, every man's law was one unto himself, for

we have followed the devices and desires of our own hearts; we have walked according to the course of this world, according to the 'prince of the power of the air;' 'the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience;' we have stifled the dictates of conscience.¹⁵⁰

Though not intended by the Creator, the natural state of a fallen humanity compels it to a perpetual condition of isolation and rebellion against God. It is only the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit upon the human heart convicted of its sinfulness and repentant toward its Maker that could bring it back into a right relationship with God.

Once redeemed, the converted Christian could lay full claim to the privileges reserved to the children of God. For Milner, it was an indubitable fact that the promises of the Gospel were sure and that God could be trusted. But it was also clear that reception into the Christian community did not release the individual from responsibilities that naturally attended adoption into Christianity, or that he would be freed from the sufferings and trials that accompanied the pre-conversion experience. The danger of complacency was serious, especially in a so-called Christian nation which espoused the practice of indiscriminate baptism and equated this rite with regeneration. The individual's understanding that the rite of baptism itself guaranteed salvation, and the damning tendency of Christians to see themselves as 'a purer portion of the Church' were dangerous attitudes; 'then we are apt to be satisfied with our faith, and to substitute f. for

¹⁴⁹Wilberforce House MS F4, William Wilberforce to Henry Wilberforce, 30 January 1829.

¹⁵⁰Milner, *Life*, p. 64.

practice'.¹⁵¹

It was neither the life of complacency nor the unruffled countenance of the Christian John Newton that necessarily lay in store for the converted sinner; rather, for Milner, initiation into life with God inducted one fully into the trials and sufferings of Jesus. It was these sufferings, undoubtedly made deeper for him by lifelong bouts of ill health and depression, that Milner opened fully to his friend. Instead of evoking pious platitudes, the prospect of his brother's death weighed heavily upon him. He said his prayers for resignation and support, but relief was hard to come by, and he knew from experience that patience did not make waiting for God any easier. As the death of a beloved brother drew near, the pain caused him to resolve,

For years past, I have said ten thousand times, I would exhort a youth whom I wished to be happy in the world, to know more people and love them less; yet God does not absolutely give me up to Grief.¹⁵²

When the moment of death arrived, grief threatened to overwhelm him.¹⁵³

Headaches, rumbling bowels and a generally nervous constitution remained constant companions which Milner endured. He pondered the possibility that he had misspent his life, an especially damning prospect in the light of the Evangelical belief that man only borrowed time from God, and he must account for it in terms of wise and faithful investment. He complained often of sadness and melancholy, in one instance anticipating the amazement of others should they ever know: 'Who would believe this? I tell nobody, but I am very much sunk indeed; and I wish I could have the relief of weeping, as I often used to have'.¹⁵⁴ But the worst was the darkness: the pure unmitigated blackness that swirled upon him with murderous intent. 'In the compass of a letter', he wrote to Wilberforce,

I cannot explain to you in how great darkness and temptation my mind has been of late, and, indeed, continues yet, to be a great degree. I can only say, at present, 'All my bodily complaints are nothing to it.' I could rejoice under them if they were double, treble, many-fold, if it did not please God to hide His countenance. I cannot explain myself so to be understood. You would not, could not, believe my narrative; of what passes, and has passed, night and day; - and even in dreams. - I have yet been kept, Blessed be God, from despair; but I really know not where it may end. - If ever it please God that I fairly get out of my present harassed state of mind, a ray of hope sometimes darts 'that I may be happier than ever I have yet been.' I call it a ray of hope, but in reality it rather resembles a flash of lightning in a dreadfully dark and tempestuous night, than the cheering rays of the Sun. Flashes of lightning, at the same time that they dismay and terrify me, partly on their own account, and partly on account of the deep and dangerous ditches which they discover for a moment - these same flashes, I say, for the same moment, show that there is a good turnpike road between the ditches, and enable the traveller also to avoid the danger, and to proceed on his Journey for a time, though under great apprehensions, till another flash comes.

¹⁵¹Milner, *Life*, p. 299.

¹⁵²Bod. Add. MS c.47.123, Isaac Milner to William Wilberforce, Tuesday, 1797.

¹⁵³Milner, *Life*, p. 146.

¹⁵⁴*Ibid.*, p. 174.

This image is taken from what really happened to me in Lincolnshire (the dreadful summer, some few years ago) in the night-time. The stage coachman declared it was as dark as pitch, and stopped absolutely very often till a dreadful flash of lightning shewed him where he was. There was a West Indian in the coach at the same time, who frightened everybody by his horrid Imprecations against the coachman without the least reason.¹⁵⁵

Even the Scriptures which had before proffered him support and consolation only agitated and frightened. As the Psalmist and Luther had discovered, Milner had come to know the hiddenness of God, and he admitted it.

Such an admission, even to a friend as intimate as Wilberforce, should not be taken lightly. Milner had acquired a reputation as a man of faith and an important figure within his own sphere of influence. What was the use of Milner revealing his travails, especially when that cause he represented was on such a precarious footing, and the faith which was the source of the struggle was the bedrock of the Evangelicals' reason for being? Further, given that Milner had stepped from a tradition in which the affective stood as a reliable standard used to measure one's spiritual well-being, was there not a distinct possibility that Milner's conversion could be called into question? Mary Milner herself struggled with this problem when considering the possibility of revealing this angle of her great-uncle's life, but concluded that her readers would understand the religious experience she described, and they would in the end,

not be misunderstood by any who, while they are practically acquainted with the great doctrines of Christianity, are able duly to appreciate the struggle which a belief of those humbling doctrines may sometimes occasion in a mind of such immense power as was that of Dr. Milner.¹⁵⁶

In admitting freely to himself as well to a friend that struggle and doubt were not strangers to the thinking man of faith, Milner honestly portrayed what he believed to be true of the Christian life.

To Milner, tribulation and doubt had meaning and purpose within the life of faith. Man's sufferings were neither meaningless nor evidence of a cruel and arbitrary Deity who would be faithless to the promises He had made. God remained ultimately in charge of His creation and though suffering continued, this was not without either God's permission or God's concern.

In Milner's theology, then, the existence of trials and suffering took on a threefold dimension. Man's conversion did not remove him from the world, nor did it infuse instant holiness; he therefore remained an active participant in the cosmic battle raging between God and the devil who had claimed the world as his rightful domain. The ways of Satan were subtle and ever-present. God's offer of help might appeal in the time of severe need but once ^{the} crisis passed, the world's wares and ways were as beguiling as ever. 'In our distress', he wrote,

indeed, we remember our disobedience and our backslidings, and we call upon the name of the Lord; but no sooner is the storm blown over, than we sink again

¹⁵⁵Bod. Add. MS c.47.129-130, Isaac Milner to William Wilberforce, 21 December 1799.

¹⁵⁶Milner, *Life*, p. 176.

into the miry paths of worldly vanities, pride, ambition, or sensuality.¹⁵⁷

The key to the problem facing the Christian was not just one of outright rejection of the world but also of submitting oneself wholly to God and to His will. One master might be left behind, but another with even more stringent requirements must be taken on. Having been judged by his brother as not regarding God as his summum bonum, Milner often lamented his stubborn will and refusal to submit. But because in time of severe distress, the soul is brought closer to God, so does God himself use human suffering to chastise his wayward followers: God uses these means to test His children and to refine them into the people He has called them to be. Milner's interpretation of suffering inclined most heavily to this understanding and in his view, God can be seen as responsible for the laments of his creatures.

Bodily illness, death, mental affliction, famine and disaster - all these could be sent by God to chasten his children. Bodily affliction, as stated already, was by no means a stranger to Milner's pilgrimage, and an extract from his diary sheds light on his understanding of this condition. 'How much reason have I to be thankful', he wrote,

that it hath pleased God to lay this affliction of bodily sickness upon me! Assuredly I was going in the broad way to destruction. For though there was nothing openly gross or scandalous in my conduct, yet a very little reflection convinces me, that my life had nothing to do with that of a Christian. - GOD was not in my thoughts. I consulted self only - I transacted my ordinary business with diligence and credit to myself; but the reasons of my conduct were pride, ambition, love of reputation, hopes of advancement, and such like: to which, however, I may add the pleasure I took in the study and improvement of natural philosophy and mathematics; but all this began and ended in self-gratification, and, as I had no better motives myself, it was impossible that I should teach others to regulate their conduct by superior or more holy principles than the above mentioned - love of fame, of consequence, and of advancement, and the prospect of much mental pleasure in study. But how self-condemned do I appear, when I recollect that, all the while, I knew better things! There is some excuse for numbers that live around me and with me - they have never been in the way of true instruction; whereas I have been acquainted with evangelical truth for many years, and yet, in defiance of conviction, I have gone on for years breaking God's commandments, and encouraging others to do so by my example. Oh! Lord, forgive me! and have mercy on thine afflicted servant! Oh! let my mouth be stopped, and let me never say, that Thou dealest hardly with me, in continuing the pains of my body.¹⁵⁸

Though repeated chastening increased the risk of breaking the spirit, Milner remained confident that at least for himself, God's will should be accomplished. To Wilberforce, he confided,

There is really nothing of which I can speak positively with more certainty than of the utility which is connected with these repeated chastenings. It is a sad thing that they should be so necessary; but I bless God, that they do not harden, as I should have supposed that in time they would, but on the contrary, soften my heart, and make it more submissive to His will, who knows what is best for

¹⁵⁷Milner, Life, p. 65.

¹⁵⁸Ibid., pp. 56-57.

Submission to God's will was integral to the process of Christian sanctification. Still, God was more than a taskmaster who browbeat his servants into submission; rather, these chastening, if they were from God and true to his nature, had a pedagogic purpose of leading the Christian into a sounder, more secure apprehension of the faith. The experience of authentic chastisement must lead one to self-examination. It was only logical that in order to repent, the sinner must be aware of the offence. To know the kiss of the rod of correction was to come face to face with one's sins as well as the opportunity for amendment.

But to face one's faults squarely was to face them with greater knowledge of God in his anger, justice and mercy. Genuine chastening revealed man at his weakest point, and God, in the midst of his glory and power. Chastisement, then, taught the individual more fully about his human nature, and of the God in whose presence he stood. His weakness exposed, man saw himself for what he was: a stubborn, strong-willed creature whose life was a ceaseless round of attempts to make God conform to his own terms. In the depth of his suffering, man fled to God, claiming rights to the promised never-ending supply of mercy and comfort. But no sooner did 'the darkness disperse, no sooner do the winds and storms abate, than we return to our usual practices of slothfulness, indulgence, and sensuality'¹⁶⁰ as well as to a self-sufficient position which denies God His rightful place of authority and worship. A sense of common decency, self-interest or consideration for another might well keep man from the commission of grosser crimes, but generally little evidence survives in the conduct of the rescued individual to show that God's mercy has been remembered. Ironically, and almost in spite of himself, man, in his unfaithfulness, has become a monument to the patience and forgiveness of God.

The man who enters fully into his suffering, who cries to God of his own insufficiency and recognizes the true state of humanity and weakness, will be granted an encounter with God. Milner referred to this benefit accrued to suffering to Wilberforce upon the occasion of his mother's illness. He wrote in October 1797,

Your dear mother is, I doubt not, under the teaching of the Spirit of God, and will improve by her afflictions: and it is very evident to me, that in her case also afflictions are necessary. When she is better for a few days altogether, I see a strong tendency to relapse and lose ground in spiritual matters; and, so far as that goes, it is a bad sign both in her and myself. It is a bad sign when religious frames depend upon the pulse, yet it is a good sign when the effect of sufferings is to give us a clearer insight into our own character and the character of God; for it is in that way only that we can come to understand our real situation, that is, the relation in which we stand to an offended God.¹⁶¹

This kind of encounter reveals God in his holiness and majesty, and the sinner comes to recognize that he can stand none other than condemned in the face of God's justice and righteousness;

¹⁵⁹Milner, *Life*, p. 134.

¹⁶⁰*Ibid.*, p. 67.

¹⁶¹*Ibid.*, p. 134.

indeed, God's long forbearance 'with us should, in the end, only serve to manifest our greater perverseness and hardness of heart, and to increase our condemnation'.¹⁶²

The tables had turned, and instead of seeing himself as the judge of God, the sinner recognized himself as the condemned man standing before the righteous judge awaiting a deserved sentence of punishment. This knowledge which illuminated the true relationship existing between the Creator and the created could lead one to hopelessness and despair. Even with the possibility of reprieve in the offer of Christ's salvation before one's eyes,

one may easily fancy that God is just and equitable in condemning sinners; when, if you put the case only for a moment to your own heart seriously as a thing likely to happen, the heart will rise against such a dispensation.¹⁶³

Offerings to God in the form of one's vocation could appear hopelessly unacceptable to this demanding God¹⁶⁴, and life would then be threatened with loss of meaning.

But just as the sinking man was thrown the lifeline that saved him from drowning, so was the condemned man standing before God granted the possibility of new life to be lived in fellowship with God. Thoroughly Trinitarian in his theology, Milner perceived the work of the Spirit lying in its 'showing us the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ'.¹⁶⁵ In Christ who had offered his life in the stead of the rightfully condemned sinner, man glimpses the mercy of God and His good will to an erring humanity. Through him, puny human efforts to live in obedience to the command of the Gospel are made acceptable, and he can gaze without despair at God in His majesty. Without Christ, life was naught; with him and through him, life was all. Thus, Milner prayed,

Teach us to know experimentally, that without Christ assisting us by His Holy Spirit, we can do nothing effectually; and, that all our resolutions, endeavours, and prospects of success, will be fruitless and vain. In HIS strength therefore - through HIS assistance, we offer up to Thee our souls and bodies, as a lively and reasonable sacrifice: we commit ourselves to the protection of our Lord, as our king: we rely on Him as our priest to make atonement for us, and we apply to Him as prophet, for wisdom, and instruction in spiritual things.¹⁶⁶

During the Epiphany season of 1804, Milner wrote to Wilberforce: 'To live the life of faith is the thing after all: and a hard matter it is'.¹⁶⁷ The serious Christian must not be deluded. The life of faith, experienced as God's gracious gift, means neither a life of angelic repose, or freedom from temptation. The battle waged between God and the devil is a real one, and conversion leads one straight into the campaign. Temptation remains the constant companion

¹⁶²Milner, Life, p. 59.

¹⁶³Bod. Add. MS c.47.130, Isaac Milner to William Wilberforce, 21 December 1799.

¹⁶⁴Bod. Add. MS d.17.26, Isaac Milner to William Wilberforce, 9 April 1792.

¹⁶⁵Bod. Add. MS c.47.130, Isaac Milner to William Wilberforce, 21 December 1799.

¹⁶⁶Milner, Life, p. 60.

¹⁶⁷Ibid., p. 295.

of the child of God. God's promise of faithfulness and forgiveness made repentance and renewal an actual possibility, though God's call for obedience is a serious one and not to be trifled with.

The threat remains of having

sinned till our hearts are hardened and thoroughly impenitent; we may have rejected the proffered offers of mercy, we may have quenched thy Holy Spirit so often, that thou wilt no longer 'strive' with us - God 'will not always strive with man'.¹⁶⁸

The suffering, from which not even God's Son had been exempt, were to be the lot of the Christian. The image of the lone carriage on the treacherous road in stormy Lincolnshire most aptly conveys Milner's view of the Christian life.

But the scene must not close on this gloomy note. For the restlessness and suffering borne by the sincere Christian is in itself a sign that faith is not dead but alive. 'Always entertain the best hopes', he wrote to Wilberforce,

of those who have the deepest and most abiding sense of the malady of their nature, and are restless till they have applied the proper medicine, and who, when they have applied it and experienced its salutary effects, are still restless to obtain greater doses.¹⁶⁹

Satisfaction and contentment with one's spiritual state may well indicate that all may not be as it seems. Further, the more fully the true Christian enters into the sufferings which lead to deeper knowledge of God, the greater is the increase of Christian virtues of patience, hope and resignation. The way ahead for the children of God may be dark and terrifying, the flashes of light few and far between, but they are there and God's power and faithfulness remain sufficient.

For Milner, the life of the Christian was never static but should move continually toward greater conformity to the will of the Creator. This life of faith which he knew as 'the simplest thing in the world in its nature, the most difficult to practice'¹⁷⁰ was marked with repeated failures and resolutions to repent. Still, the Christian must hope and pray for greater faith and holiness of conduct. Christ had redeemed this world, and it is in this world that the Christian life of holiness and faith was to be lived and the gifts of God to his children enjoyed.

V. The Clapham Sect and other Evangelicals

That William Wilberforce possessed the gifts which inspired men from diverse walks of life to come together and work for a common cause is not easily disputed, but the continuing flowering of Evangelical revival in the Church in Georgian England was not accomplished solely by him. He must, as Colquhoun said, 'have soldiers as well as pioneers, and the mattock and pickaxe of the engineer as well as the advance of the battalion'.¹⁷¹ He understood clearly, like

¹⁶⁸Milner, Life, p. 67.

¹⁶⁹Bod. Add. MS d.15.30, Isaac Milner to William Wilberforce, 31 July 1793.

¹⁷⁰Ibid.

¹⁷¹Colquhoun, Wilberforce, p. 180.

his Evangelical forebear, Selina, Countess of Huntingdon, that the success of his plans depended upon the strategic placement of sympathizers and supporters in positions of influence and power; thus, he chose members of his coterie carefully and well. Concerning this intention, Wilberforce confided in his journal in February of 1814,

I have kept and will keep in the back Ground as much as not injuring to the cause. Tis a great practical Wisdom to set proper men at work on proper business and for this End it is so useful and beneficial, both for this World and the next to form Connections qualified by Talents, Disposition, principles, Habits and to be active and useful.¹⁷²

Little ambiguity surrounded the question of who was to execute what tasks, and this expectation was undergirded by the theological conviction that God had called each to a station that was uniquely his own. In Pollock's estimation, all was well-covered:

Stephen supplied the original mind, fired by passion for the redress of African and West Indian wrongs; Thornton supplied the cool head, decisiveness and patience; Wilberforce, his political skill, Cabinet contacts, and the irrepressible spark of his personality which smoothed awkward corners, reconciled differences, and eased tensions by laughter. Zachary Macaulay, dour, grave, humourless, was their willing drudge, their walking blue-book, who despite being almost blind in one eye could master a long report overnight and keep in his head a vast compendium.¹⁷³

What of Isaac Milner? The Evangelical Revival under the direction of the Claphamites was never an individualistic affair and although Milner's friendship with Wilberforce was a channel for his influence and direction, we must broaden the analysis to include Milner's relations with other Evangelicals of his day.

Undoubtedly, Wilberforce was responsible for Milner's introduction and reintroduction to members of the Clapham clan. By the early 1790's, the years significant to the founding of the 'Clapham system', Milner had firmly ensconced himself behind the walls of Queens' College, from which forays into the households of longstanding Yorkshire friends such as William Hey and the Jowetts satisfied the social requirements of the don. But the enticements of a Wilberforce visit were, on most occasions, hard to resist, and we can thank Marianne Thornton for the childhood recollections which placed Milner so aptly at the centre of Clapham activity:

One of W. Wilberforce's Constant inmates was I. Milner, the Dean of Carlisle, the most curious man it was ever my fate to see in a drawing room. He was a rough, loud and rather coarse man but he used to say all he thought and ask for all he wanted in a way no one else ever ventured in the many Wilberforce houses he visited. The real bond of union between him and WW was that he was a deeply religious man and how clever he was the Records of Cambridge honours show. 'Now Wilberforce listen - for no power will make me repeat what I am going to say,' used to be his rough exclamation when WW was flitting after a Child, a ball, a flower or a new Book when they had much to discuss some important point. At the Wilberforce breakfasts when he chiefly received Company there was the most extraordinary mixture of guests - and an equally

¹⁷²Wilberforce House MS, Wilberforce Diary, 9 February 1814.

¹⁷³Pollock, *Wilberforce*, p. 177.

strange want of the Common usages of life. To use a Yorkshire expression of his, everybody was expected to fend for themselves. He was so short-sighted that he could see nothing beyond his own plate which Mrs. W. took care to supply with all he wanted, till the Dean's stentorian voice was heard roaring, 'there was nothing on earth to eat' and desiring the servants to bring some bread and butter - he would add 'and bring plenty - without limit' while WW would join in 'Thank you, thank you kindly Milner for seeing to these things. Mrs. W. is not strong enough to meddle much in domestic matters'.¹⁷⁴

Yorkshire roots ran deep and Isaac himself, as well as the Milner name, was known to at least some of the Clapham residents. Henry Venn, while serving in Yorkshire, had been first introduced to Joseph Milner in 1771 and wrote to his friend Mrs. Riland that

in my judgment, he is by much the ablest minister that I have ever heard open his mouth for Christ: indeed, his abilities are of the very first rate. I did not design to force myself upon him; but it gave me the highest joy when he came up to me, as I was reading the monuments in the church, and with all the frankness of Mr. Kershaw, invited me to spend the evening with him.¹⁷⁵

John Venn, the future rector of Clapham, was entrusted in tender years to the instruction of Joseph Milner in Hull, and Isaac had the occasional responsibility of conducting the boy from his home in Yelling near Cambridge to the north east. This arrangement seems to have failed to meet expectations, for on a return trip home, the father's eager examination of the academic progress of the son revealed he had 'lost ground during the year he had spent in Hull'.¹⁷⁶ The boy did not return to Hull though Venn excused the teacher's lack of duty: 'Mr. Milner at this time was so deeply engaged in the preparation of his Church History that his scholars were sadly neglected'.¹⁷⁷ Further, the elder Venn had made a special trip to Cambridge for the occasion of Isaac's Divinity Act, an event he considered 'admirable' and a positive sign of the younger man's future usefulness to the Church. Though retired to Clapham, John Thornton kept well-informed of Evangelical progress in his home territory of Yorkshire, and considered Joseph Milner a key figure, consulting him often for advice and offering him livings as suitable ones became available.

Thus it was with an established reputation for scholarship and an admirable Evangelical pedigree that Isaac Milner assumed his position within the Clapham network. The clan, as it grew and encompassed more supporters, operated on the premise that a friend to one was a friend to all, and the Clapham families welcomed Milner into their homes. The Deanery in Carlisle and the president's lodge at Queens' College became points of pilgrimage for those who journeyed beyond the Common. Children, well-used to the extended household of Clapham, were also entrusted to the care of one who undoubtedly struck them as a rather imperious if not frightening man, though

¹⁷⁴Cambridge University Library MS 7674/1/L10, pp. 17-19.

¹⁷⁵Henry Venn, The Life and A Selection from the Letters of the Late Rev. Henry Venn, M.A. (London: John Hatchard and Son, 1834), p. 165.

¹⁷⁶Birmingham University Library CMS Acc. 81 F5.

¹⁷⁷Ibid.

young Tom Macaulay's recollections exude appreciation for one whose 'inexhaustible fund of anecdotes about ventriloquism, legerdemain, the performances of automatons, optical delusions'¹⁷⁸ provided suitable holiday fare for a curious lad.

Of course Milner's remoteness from the centre of Clapham activity prevented him from becoming a frequent participant in the planning of Evangelical strategy and its execution. The journals kept by Henry Thornton and Wilberforce, and the evidence collected by Lady Knutsford of Zachary Macaulay, do indicate that when able, Milner took his rightful place in the 'Councils of War'. Surviving letters tell of a developed correspondence of Milner with Thornton, Macaulay, Venn and Grant and though, as with Wilberforce, much ink was spilled over lamentations about ill-health and the experienced advice of a practised para-physician, he offered guidance and support for plans concerning East India and Africa. He approved wholeheartedly of the Evangelical scheme of placing desirable young clergymen into livings, and wrote many letters of recommendation and introduction to assist with the placement of Evangelical ministers into parishes. Though cautioned by Thomas Robinson in the early days of his ministry at Clapham to exercise great care in his selection of pulpit suppliers,¹⁷⁹ John Venn invited Milner to preach for his congregation, an event Furneaux likens to 'the equivalent of singing at La Scala or playing on the centre court at Wimbledon'.¹⁸⁰ In this role, he was esteemed by one critic not prone to praising Evangelicals unduly as a forcible and good preacher.¹⁸¹ To this assessment, one may add the word 'imaginative' if evidence for a sermon on the unlikely topic of Balaam's character gives any indication of sermon topics.¹⁸²

But it was in his roles as an intellectual and theologian that Milner made his most valued contribution to the work undertaken by his colleagues at Clapham. He had developed great powers of conversation and his extensive knowledge of, and interest in, a variety of subjects, as young Tom Macaulay could appreciate, and this made him an entertaining companion and guide.

You might squeeze and tap him all day long and still you would find fresh
Supplies ready to be drawn off - and besides all his knowledge, his kindness and
a still superior Quality render him a most valuable friend¹⁸³

Wilberforce wrote to his friend Matthew Montagu from Bognor in 1800. 'I have wished for you to overhear Milner's conversation', Henry Thornton wrote to his new bride upon the occasion of

¹⁷⁸Milner, *Life*, p. 561.

¹⁷⁹Birmingham University Library, CMS Acc. 81 C19, Thomas Robinson to John Venn, 20 July 1792.

¹⁸⁰Furneaux, *Wilberforce*, p. 309.

¹⁸¹Cambridge University Library Add. MS 7674/1/R, 31 March 1798, p. 98.

¹⁸²Birmingham University Library CMS Acc. 81 F4, 9 March 1806.

¹⁸³Huntington Library MSS, Montagu Papers, 6739-6762, William Wilberforce to Matthew Montagu, 20 October 1800.

inspecting Wilberforce's proposed marital partner. His letter continued: 'I have also gained from Milner much knowledge of various kinds more than I ever gained in the same time before, for he has let me press him as a pupil would his master'.¹⁸⁴

The incomparabilis¹⁸⁵ of University days had not been forgotten, and the Cambridge cleric donned the cloak of a sage. Later students of the period likened Milner to an Evangelical Dr. Johnson with Sir James Stephen leading the way:

During the last half of his life the Johnsonilatria was at its height; and among the aspirants to the vacant conversational throne, none appeared to have a fairer title than himself.¹⁸⁶

A true Johnsonian figure or not, Milner's authoritative bearing, intellectual accomplishments and breadth of knowledge earned him the reputation of being a man of wisdom and learning.

It may have been John Venn and John Newton who had charge of pastoral direction of the Claphamites, but it was Isaac Milner who could claim the title of theologian. Of course, there was an aura of professionalism about his positions as an academician in a university, as dean of Carlisle and as co-author of an ecclesiastical history. Theology mattered to Isaac Milner, and one must notice in a survey of the literary remains of Clapham commoners that issues of theological import arise as subjects of discussion with the consistency and naturalness that topics related to abolition and East India affairs arose between members of the coterie. Letters to Zachary Macaulay reveal long discussions about stewardship, confession and absolution and the controversy with Marsh concerning the distribution of prayer books.¹⁸⁷ John Shore (Lord Teignmouth) and Macaulay both wrote in support of Milner's contribution to this dispute with a formidable enemy, and Charles Grant suggested an unspecified project by which Milner

might not do a service to the world by a treatise on this deep subject, which would tend to lead men to rest where you rest, and thus guard them both against superficial views, and against intruding into things that are beyond the comprehension of man in his present state of being. I am sure the work would be a valuable gift to the public, and a memorial worthy of your acquisitions and your powers.¹⁸⁸

It is significant to note that the most extensive records of Milner's conversations in which theological issues were recurring topics survive in the literary remains of Henry Thornton. Though an ardent supporter of most of the plans of his contemporaries, Thornton was not a natural lover of Evangelicals and their causes, and his primary biographer maintained that a tension existed

¹⁸⁴Cambridge University Library MS 7674/1/L1, Henry Thornton to Marianne Thornton, May 1897 (misdated), p. 117.

¹⁸⁵Milner had earned this distinction along with succeeding to the title of Senior Wrangler upon the taking of his B.A. degree from Cambridge in 1774. Milner, Life, p. 8.

¹⁸⁶James Stephen, Essays in Ecclesiastical Biography, 2 vols. (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1853), vol. II, p. 363.

¹⁸⁷Huntington Library MSS, Macaulay Papers, MY 657-664.

¹⁸⁸Milner, Life, p. 669.

between the younger Thornton and his father who welcomed Churchmen of a wide range of viewpoints into his drawing room. Instead of exerting a positive influence, this exposure nearly drove the impressionable and sensitive young man from the faith of his father. 'When I entered life', Thornton recalled,

I saw a great deal of dishonourable conduct among people who made great profession of religion. In my father's house I met with persons of this sort. This so disgusted me that, had it not been for the admirable pattern of consistency and disinterestedness which I saw in Mr Wilberforce, I should have been in danger of a sort of infidelity.¹⁸⁹

The worker was kept for the cause, but he was one who could still distinguish another Evangelical from himself as being 'rather in Mr. Newton's way'¹⁹⁰ that engaged Milner in theological dialogue.

Difficult points of Calvinist theology were presented often to Milner for judgement. 'Then disputed with Milner about final perseverance' read Wilberforce's journal entry for 25 August 1799¹⁹¹ and stood as a typical record of their theological intercourse. 'Then talked long with Dean Milner on predestination - my own ideas in some measure confirmed but corrected also'.¹⁹² The teacher was willing to teach, but he was also willing to discuss and to argue: to engage others and to enter fully into the task of doing theology was what kept doctrines alive, and prevented them from fossilizing the life of faith.

But even to those engaged in the formation and execution of revival strategies from the base at Clapham had arisen questions and challenges of the purpose and place of theological debate within their community. Though the ^{Claphamites} had not taken part themselves, the disruptions and disharmony borne out of the Deistic and Socinian controversies of the generation before had encouraged a climate in which peace and concord were to be maintained at all costs. The occasional outbursts of the Calvinist-Arminian debate even within Evangelicalism itself, let alone the simmering conflicts between Evangelicals and their ever-present opponents, had tired the combatants. Difficult and provocative theological questions were often judged best swept under the carpet.

This attitude to doing theology was plainly manifest among Milner's contemporaries. Though never going as far as to usurp the place of doctrine in the experience of conversion (for example, in understanding the work of the Holy Spirit) as a necessary undergirding of the Christian life, it could well lead one to wasteful hairsplitting and pointless argument. Hannah

¹⁸⁹Henry Morris, The Life of Charles Grant (London: John Murray, 1904), pp. 176-177; Wilberforce, Life, vol. I, p. 374.

¹⁹⁰Cambridge University Library Add. MS 7674/1/R, p. 45.

¹⁹¹Wilberforce, Life, vol. II, p. 344.

¹⁹²Cambridge University Library Add. MS 7674/1/R, (date unreadable but before 22 January 1795), p. 29.

More maintained that those questions 'on which hang all hopes and fears'¹⁹³ ought not to be subjected to the same critical inquiry as their counterparts in disciplines which espoused a scientific method of research. Wilberforce allowed that theological speculation might in itself be pleasurable activity but it was not religion¹⁹⁴. True religion gave birth to observable actions subject to the judgement of the community in which they were performed, and did not get lost in the shadows of speculation.

Thornton, in particular, was conscious of what he judged as Milner's over-theologizing, and noted the ground on which they parted ways. Having heard a sermon preached in Clapham, he could appreciate Milner's expression of what he considered orthodox teaching, but he also worried that such guidance might 'leave a Man still endangered by temptations of various kinds'.¹⁹⁵ Moreover, he noted that while there was in what he considered Calvinist doctrines (which included the classic doctrine of the Trinity¹⁹⁶) 'strength which suits my vehemence', he had seen 'much mischief arise from too much Earnestness about them'.¹⁹⁷ True religion, he claimed, was 'different from that doctrinal thing which some make it',¹⁹⁸ and was work of the Holy Spirit which influenced the heart, the temper, the conversation and the conduct, and conformed it to the will of Christ. Enlightenment of the intellect might come but should be sought and received as a gracious gift of the Holy Spirit. Thus, Wilberforce counselled his sister,

Watch and pray; read the Word of God, imploring that true wisdom which may enable you to comprehend and fix it in your heart, that it may gradually produce its effect, under the operation of the Holy Spirit, in renewing the mind.¹⁹⁹

Milner would not have contested the importance of the role assigned to the Holy Spirit in leading human minds to intellectual or spiritual enlightenment, nor would he have disagreed with the concern that excessive speculation and contention were dangerous activities. Though inclined by nature to a good argument, his primary biographer explained he was

little disposed to enter, in conversation, upon abstruse reasonings and disquisitions. 'What is that to thee? Follow thou me,' was a quotation often addressed by him, by way of caution, to persons, especially young persons, who endeavoured to engage him in the discussion of personal election, free-will, and other such topics, which he was well known to have deeply studied.²⁰⁰

¹⁹³Quoted in M.G. Jones, Hannah More (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952), p. 232.

¹⁹⁴Wilberforce, Life, vol. V, p. 156.

¹⁹⁵Cambridge University Library Add. MS 7674/1/R, 31 March 1795, p. 98.

¹⁹⁶Ibid., 7 January 1795, p. 6.

¹⁹⁷Ibid., pp. 4,6.

¹⁹⁸Ibid., 21 May 1803, p. 163.

¹⁹⁹Wilberforce, Life, vol. I, p. 108.

²⁰⁰Milner, Life, pp. 173-174.

Still, as one who stood within the tradition of an earlier generation, the recovery of Evangelical doctrines and their right practice provided the basis for the revival of the Church and the conversion of the individual. Correct belief severed from its natural expression in the performance of works could only degenerate into a dry and lifeless orthodoxy while humanitarian works cut off from Christian faith were no different from the common morality of the age. This separation of morality and faith tempted the individual to self-reliance and complacency, the very antithesis of the Evangelical view of the creature's stand before the Creator. Although Evangelicals tended to emphasize some doctrines more than others, Evangelical beliefs were not seen to be different from those espoused by 'orthodox' Churchmen. As Stephen explained in Volume II of the Essays, the difference between the two groups resulted

from no assignable diversity in the elements of their respective creeds, nor from any dissimilarity in the manner in which, in either class, those elements affected, and united with, each other; but in the degree in which they were combined in each with that caloric - the vital heat of the soul itself - which quickens into animating motives the otherwise inert and torpid mass of doctrinal opinions.²⁰¹

For an Evangelical like Isaac Milner, right belief concerning the nature and actions of God as summarized by the classic doctrines of the Church was the essential basis for the Christian life to be lived out in an arena in which a host of other gods vied for the attention and allegiance of an easily-tempted conscience. His interactions with his contemporaries show that he had made it his personal mission to keep the lamp of theological reflection burning in a community that had perhaps already allowed the oil to burn low.

Spiritual guide and friend, project consultant and theological advisor, such were the various roles Milner fulfilled in relation to that little band of Evangelicals known as the Clapham Sect. They wrote to him for advice, consulted him for their ills, both spiritual and physical, invited him to their councils and sought his entertaining companionship. The coterie at Clapham functioned as a family and Milner, like everyone else, had a responsible place to fill.

And yet, despite the comradeship and cooperation, a certain distance between Milner and the Clapham group as a whole must be acknowledged. To an extent such a distance can be explained by circumstance. Milner, though a frequent visitor to the Common, did not permanently reside there, so his input to its mission was the contribution of a welcome outsider. Further, the Evangelical doctrine of vocation would, in Milner's case, have placed his spheres of influence in Cambridge and Carlisle, and it was in those places he could make his most valuable contribution to the cause.

Even so, it must be said that Milner did not always view the activities of Clapham and their proponents without suspicion and concern. In 1805, an incident occurred which, though seemingly trite, provides an interesting perspective on Milner's relationship with the Clapham commoners.

Launched in 1802 as an Anglican Evangelical mouthpiece to join publications such as The

²⁰¹Stephen, Essays, vol. II, pp. 155-156.

Monthly Review, The Critical Review, The British Critic and The Evangelical Magazine, its founders introduced the Christian Observer as 'an interesting view of Religion, Literature, and Politics, free from the contamination of false principles, as a Clergyman may without scruple recommend to his Parishioners, and a Christian safely introduce into his Family'.²⁰² Besides offering articles of theological importance, news of political interest, meditations and opportunities for reader input, the Observer aspired to advise its audience of relevant works drawn from scientific, philosophical, political, literary and theological fields by providing periodic lists of literature recently published as well as reviews of selected works. Having been one of the first works reviewed by the Observer, it is not surprising to find in the October 1803 issue of the journal a critical review of the fourth volume of the Milners' History. Despite Mary Milner's assertion that Isaac took no public notice of the article,²⁰³ the appearance of an apology in the issue of February 1804 which acknowledged and retracted the errors of the reviewer suggests that the piece had ruffled feathers.

The conflict seems a petty one. The reviewer considered the Milner work a badly needed contribution to the desideratum of English historical scholarship, and he commended the author as one who had more clearly staked out his territory than had been previously done 'by any of his predecessors with whom we are acquainted, for which he is entitled to the gratitude of all true members of the "Holy Catholic Church."'²⁰⁴ The compliments, however, were balanced by criticisms. The reviewer challenged the historian's assessment of Wycliffe's doctrines of absolute necessity and wished for more material on the Great Western Schism and the Lollards. He judged that greater perspicuity of style and felicity of arrangement would have improved the account of Wycliffe; further, like Bradwardine's work against the Pelagians, Milner had devoted too much attention to a topic which the reviewer considered insignificant to contemporary Evangelical concerns. The criticism was offered with gentleness and respect and though it had been made, it did not overshadow the reviewer's enthusiastic and appreciative reception of the work.

Isaac Milner reacted strongly to the review. In a three page letter to an unidentified friend, he revealed the full extent of his displeasure and personal offence. 'Now to be very plain', he wrote,

upon reading such a critique as this, it would be the height of affectation in me to say that I was not considerably displeased with the Christian Observer. However, I believe I shall take your advice as to answering, at present, certainly, - and if ever I do answer, I shall endeavour to avoid everything that looked like the unchristian spirit of returning evil for evil. You know what I think the great defect of the Christian Observer, and I am now glad that I expressed that to you in private long ago, long before their remarks on this work came out. Their treatment of my brother's book will make me in future say, not more but less, on

²⁰²Christian Observer, vol. I ('Prospectus'), p. iii.

²⁰³Milner, Life, p. 289.

²⁰⁴Christian Observer, vol. II (1803), p. 610.

that subject.²⁰⁵

Milner responded to the reviewer's need for more information on the western schism by asserting that his brother had intended a general history and not a minute analysis. The thought that the historian had failed in his task was judged 'a disagreeable slur on the author'.²⁰⁶ Similarly, the Lollards were declared beyond the pale of Milner's design as Mosheim had covered this area thoroughly; further, the author's deep study of Wycliffe had earned him a degree of authority which bordered upon infallibility. The response was strongly defensive, and it seems as if the devotion of a loyal brother had got the best of his critical and reasoning faculties.

Such disputes between the editor of the Observer and its readers were not unknown, and even the beloved Hannah More believed that her Coelebs in Search of a Wife had been maligned. Lady Knutsford recalled the situation in the biography of Zachary Macaulay and asserted that although the review was overwhelmingly positive, the reviewer 'made some observations which wounded Mrs. H. More's susceptible delicacy, although any intentional criticism of the kind was publicly and strenuously denied, and an ample apology offered in the March number'.²⁰⁷

Though the mutual sharing of faults was an important characteristic marking the Evangelical relationship, its practice was no easier for them than it was for anyone else, particularly within a public forum. But more interesting to the question of Milner's relationship to the Claphamites than this sensitive reaction were the remarks he offered about the Observer itself. To the anonymous friend in the letter quoted above, he wrote,

In the critique in question I perceive abundance of self-sufficiency, and vain pretensions to learning, all of which would have been bridled a good deal by real knowledge, but most effectually by a truly humble and godly spirit.²⁰⁸

The reviewer had set himself up as judge over the work of a sincere Churchman, and had censured a piece which he ought to have commended as a unique and necessary contribution to Evangelical self-understanding. Though Milner was confident that the History would stand on its own merits, it is clear he thought that the reviewer had failed to execute his task in the proper spirit of Christian humility.

The Christian Observer was the public voice of the Clapham Evangelicals and their associates. John Venn had conceived the original plan, Josiah Pratt and Zachary Macaulay had undertaken the responsibilities of editor, but all available troops, whether resident on the Common or not, were mustered to support this venture through their literary contributions and editorial skill. In other words, the men whom Milner accused of pride and arrogance in the publication of the review of his brother's work were none other than the people whom he sought to serve as

²⁰⁵Milner, Life, p. 292.

²⁰⁶Ibid., p. 290.

²⁰⁷Holland, Macaulay, p. 285.

²⁰⁸Milner, Life, p. 293.

theologian and friend. Thus it is significant to note that excepting an obituary written upon the death of his close Cambridge friend Joseph Jowett, there is no indication that Milner contributed to the journal.

But this was not to be the sole occasion on which this dedicated supporter of the Claphamites and their causes would voice a charge like this. As already noted, he had seen permeating the vulnerable sanctity of the Common a spirit which threatened to turn this haven of service into a bastion of self-righteousness. Concerned that pride was overtaking the Claphamites as a motivating force, Milner encouraged Wilberforce in 1808, as noted above, to move from the Common. God's demands were exacting, and it was probably just as well his people could rejoice that they had been chosen. To know oneself not only as an object of God's especial mercy but also as his chosen instrument of salvation was dangerous knowledge and tempting, even to the most steadfast Christian. Spiritual pride, Milner believed, converted God's friends into God's enemies as effectively as the 'New Birth' had done the reverse, and ultimately, killed Evangelical revivals.

To be fair to the commoners of Clapham, they had not undertaken their roles oblivious to the danger. Henry Thornton maintained in the Family Commentary that by necessity, religion consists much in...passing over from the company and fellowship of wicked and worldly men, to the society and communion of those who fear and love their God²⁰⁹

but he also prayed that those who had gathered at Clapham might fulfil their God-given tasks with humility. Another Clapham inhabitant, writing in 1826 and the afterglow of years of Evangelical success, voiced to the German Lutheran pastor Steinkopf a similar concern in light of the steady growth of the Bible Society: 'Most cordially do I agree with you, that we have more to dread from flattery than from censure'.²¹⁰

In his assessment of life on Clapham Common, G.O. Trevelyan challenged the suggestion made by Thackeray that the Clapham Evangelicals were narrow. 'There can have been nothing vulgar', Trevelyan asserted,

and little that was narrow, in a training which produced Samuel Wilberforce, and Sir James Stephen, and Charles and Robert Grant, and Lord Macaulay. The plan on which children were brought up in the chosen home of the Low Church party, during its golden age, will bear comparison with systems about which, in their day, the world was supposed never to tire of hearing, although their ultimate results have been small indeed.²¹¹

Typical charges hurled against Evangelicals in the late 1830's and '40's simply do not apply to Clapham in this period. Learning and scholarship such as Milner pursued were valued, and there

²⁰⁹Quoted in Standish Meacham, Henry Thornton of Clapham, 1760-1815 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), p. 27.

²¹⁰Shore, Life, vol. II, p. 475.

²¹¹G. O. Trevelyan, The Life and Works of Lord Macaulay, 2 vols. (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1876), vol. I, p. 62.

was no doubt that the sons of Clapham were to be recipients of a University education. The daughters of Clapham were also carefully taught, though of course within the confines of the schoolroom in the home, and to the standard deemed appropriate for accomplished ladies of their social standing. Though Dorothy Pym judged the selection of books on the shelves at Battersea Rise to reflect a narrow literary taste²¹², casually-mentioned reading lists recorded in the so-called 'pious biographies' suggest an appreciation of Shakespeare, the Latin classics and modern authors of fiction. In their religious education, the terrible and exacting God of a later Evangelical childhood was presented to the children of Clapham as their dearest friend whose life was encapsulated in the liturgical readings of the church year and followed with lively interest.²¹³ Though endowed with the knowledge that God had commended them to a special task, parents discouraged judgement calls, and Leslie Stephen maintained that they thought no more of condemning people who made decisions which differed from their own, than they would of blaming 'people in Hindostan for riding elephants'.²¹⁴ It is fair to say that charity, fortitude, self-control and industry were virtues cherished by the inhabitants of the Common, and that these were communicated to succeeding generations with a commendable degree of humility and open-mindedness.

But to the community of persons who, in Thornton's words, had carefully observed 'those who are truly religious, in order that we may choose them for our friends; and we should flee from wicked doers',²¹⁵ a fine line separated the humble recognition of God's call and arrogance. The Claphamites might well have been able to stave off the more serious illusions of spiritual grandeur but signs of the priggishness and austerity of a succeeding generation of Evangelicals had begun to creep in. The story of young Leslie Stephen refusing to ride a donkey to church because it was wrong to make the beast toil on the Sabbath illustrates an understandable challenge by a young boy who had perhaps already begun to find his environment constraining. His father had gained the reputation of systematically abstaining from the pleasures of life excepting his marriage to Jane Venn, and he approached his day-to-day life with a discipline that one would expect to find in a monastery. The common pursuits of ordinary people such as card-playing, dancing and making music were not considered fit occupations for the redeemed, not because they were intrinsically evil, but a waste of time for which God would ultimately demand an account. The custom of theatre-going stood as an exception and was considered beyond redemption. Every minute of the day was pregnant with evangelistic opportunity, and journals were filled with lamentations of mornings overslept, useless conversations and idleness. At best, lifestyles were

²¹²Dorothy Pym, Battersea Rise, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1934), p. 174.

²¹³Noel Gilroy Annan, Leslie Stephen: His Thought and Character in Relation to His Time (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1951), p. 13.

²¹⁴Leslie Stephen, Life of Fitzjames Stephen (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1895), p. 62.

²¹⁵Quoted in Meacham, Thornton, p. 27.

marked by a moderation which though vital, increasingly threatened to spill into the stifling mould of legalism.

Socially, Milner appears to have marched to the beat of another drum than that heard by his Clapham colleagues. Though in the end he joined in the common Evangelical disapprobation of the theatre, other activities caused him little concern, and he could see them as a source for pleasure and recreation. Unendowed with a talent for singing, musical evenings in Cambridge with the Jowetts and Christian LaTrobe in the Combination Room at Trinity Hall were occasions of great entertainment, and he occasionally attended a public concert. He particularly enjoyed the study of music as a science and often challenged 'his musical friends to supply him with reasons for particular laws of composition, which, in fact, depended upon the natural faculty in which he was deficient'. He also collected books in French and English on the theoretical aspects of the art.²¹⁶ Likewise, though he lacked an eye for form, he appreciated visual art. He indulged in experiments in practical mechanics for the sheer joy of the exercise and had his workshop in the Queens' Lodge fitted with lathes, furnaces, work-benches, grindstones, bellows, blow-pipes and electrical apparatus which provided him with instruments for many hours of tinkering. The predominant image one constructs of Milner's workshop is that it was his playground, and that here he engaged in that highly suspicious activity, at least from the viewpoint of a later, more narrow, Evangelicalism, called 'fun'. He took great delight in conversation for its own sake and loved to load his tables in the Deanery and Queens' Lodge with vast quantities of food and drink for the entertainment of his eager guests. Depression, as already noted, was a well-known companion though the face Milner tended to put to the world was happy and enthusiastic, and he embraced life with an abandon and confidence which undoubtedly turned more than one hair on an Evangelical head grey.

Little evidence suggests that his contemporaries looked askance at his behaviour, though there were a few well-aimed criticisms of the Cambridge college president with the lavish lifestyle. But enough survives within the reminiscences for the devoted but normally reliable biographer to defend what might be considered as unseemly behaviour of a staunch Evangelical. Anything which could be construed as excessive hilarity ought to be understood as a 'counterbalancing and compensating gift of Providence'²¹⁷ granted to one who suffered so acutely. Daniel Wilson, Milner's eulogist, was quick to maintain that he exercised his licence to enjoy the pleasurable things of life with sensitivity to his immediate surroundings: 'His cheerfulness', wrote Wilson, 'was always innocent and inoffensive - always under the control of principle - and when religion became the topic of conversation, always subdued to the most sedate seriousness'.²¹⁸ The niece found it necessary though awkward to explain that he kept a pack of playing cards; through her

²¹⁶Milner, *Life*, p. 323.

²¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 720.

²¹⁸*Christian Observer*, vol. XIX (1820), p. 111.

defence, anyone attempting to understand Milner the Evangelical gains insight into his attitude toward life which began to distinguish him from some of his contemporaries as well as a later generation of Evangelicals. Though quick to assert that her great-uncle never engaged in a card-party, Mary Milner pointed out that this abstinence was not based on a particular principle or judgement of the rightness or wrongness of card-playing but rather out of a Pauline sensitivity for what might give offence to weaker Christians. He realized that a minute and obsessive preoccupation with the outer forms of Christian conduct edged the life received as gift from God into the realm of legalism, and led to dry morality and works righteousness. Or just as deadly, it could set up terrifying though needless obstacles in the Christian's path to God. In responding to a colleague's remonstrance for his keeping a pack of playing cards, he responded: 'While you live, never be afraid of bugbears'.²¹⁹

An ardent admirer of Martin Luther, a man whose influence upon Milner will be discussed later in this thesis, he seems to have appropriated the German Reformer's appeal to the Christian to 'sin boldly'. Though as a Christian, God had called him out of the world, it had been with the sole purpose of being put back into it, a new creature entrusted with the task of bringing others within the household of faith. The perception of one's role and the one who stood behind the commission, while a useful source of comfort, must never beckon one over the precipice of pride. Temptations must be acknowledged as a given of Christian existence, and thus guarded against; still, excessive preoccupation with building the fences around the temptations could easily become a stumbling block. Milner's concern for an Evangelical faith free from the deadening letter of the law, coupled with an attitude toward life which led him to view the choices, opportunities and mundane stuff of day-to-day existence with seriousness but not solemnity, set him apart, if only slightly, from other Evangelicals.

In other respects, he was also distinct. Though the Revival's leaders in earlier days, such as Grimshaw and Walker of Truro, were single, and were thus freed from the constraints of marriage and parental obligations to dedicate themselves wholly to the demands of itineration and pastoral care of the newly awakened, the Evangelicalism of the turn of the century had begun to settle, leading Charles Smyth to maintain the real strength of Evangelicalism lay not in the pulpit or the platform, but in the home.²²⁰ Henry Thornton considered the family the institution through which knowledge of God was passed between generations.²²¹ Begetting children was one practical way to provide God with candidates for the Kingdom if not future soldiers for the Church. Milner, however, remained singularly single. His biographer pointed out this state was not entirely by choice, as there is at least a hint at disappointed love which left him

²¹⁹Milner, Life, p. 54.

²²⁰Charles Smyth, 'The Evangelical Discipline', in Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians, ed. H. Grisewood (London: Sylvan Press, 1966), pp. 103-104.

²²¹Meacham, Thornton, p. 52.

'thenceforward, permanently averse from entertaining the idea of any matrimonial connexion'.²²² For him, the community of fellow-scholars at Cambridge and the community gathered around the deanery at Carlisle became effective substitute families though it is significant to note that besides Charles Simeon, William Farish and the Jowetts, he was the only one of the immediate Evangelical family who did not share his life's work with a spouse of common religious convictions and purpose.

Finally, there seemed to be a deliberate attempt to distance Milner from the 'run-of-the-mill' Evangelical clergy of his time. In discussing George Pretyman-Tomline, the Bishop of Lincoln, Milner recalled an earlier agreement in viewpoint with the Bishop though admitted this had changed: 'Now, I once thought as he does, and opposed the evangelical clergy: but I have, on reflection, seen reason to alter my judgment'.²²³ He was sympathetic with the Evangelical clergy, but did not completely identify with them. Another example of this distancing occurred in a review of Milner's sermons by Daniel Wilson which was published in the January 1821 issue of the Christian Observer. Responding to a link the editor of the sermons had made in the preface between Milner and the Evangelical clergy, Wilson offered the following lengthy though notable disagreement over terms:

Does the seeker imagine, then, that he honours the memory of so great a divine of the Church of England, by converting him into the mere partisan of a particular body, however pious and respectable, while he gives currency, by his language, to the calumnious representation that the persons whom he has designated are guilty of assuming to themselves an obnoxious party-name? Was it not enough to leave the Dean to declare his own sentiments, without attaching to them in the outset a term which would instantly awaken a mist around very determination of his judgment? Or did he know so little of the Dean's sentiments and habits as to be ignorant that nothing would have grieved him much more than, instead of being allowed to expatiate freely in the wide field of our common Christianity, and to appear as the assertor of those reformed doctrines which he loved so warmly and which he had spent his life demonstrating and defending, to be cooped up within the narrow and contracted limits of some petty inclosure of the church, and exhibited as dwindling into the mere partisan of a sect? No man indeed would have avowed more openly his attachments to the great doctrines of the Church of England which he considered to be the purest of all the reformed communities. With what truth can the Dean be said to have been a supporter of the body of clergy which is called Evangelical? What steps did he ever take, what books did he ever write, what proceedings did he ever institute, that should designate him as a member of any particular section of the church, except as he studied most deeply, and maintained most resolutely, the great reformed doctrines on which that church is founded.²²⁴

Despite eighty years of perseverance and success, the description 'Evangelical' for those espousing the cause of revival in the Church still raised red flags: in lifestyle, theology and perception of

²²²Milner, Life, p. 720.

²²³Ibid., 447.

²²⁴Christian Observer, vol. XX (1821), pp. 37-38.

the task at hand, Milner appeared as one in but not always of the Evangelical brotherhood of his day.

VI. Conclusion

In his Essays in Ecclesiastical Biography, Sir James Stephen designated the four Evangelists of the Revival as John Newton, Thomas Scott, Joseph Milner and Henry Venn. As such, each one was in touch with a vital aspect of the teaching of the 'apostles' and had become the guardian of a legacy. Newton stood as the living example of the converted heart, Scott, the interpreter of Scripture, Milner, the preserver of the tradition and Venn, the theologian.²²⁵ But as important as the witness of the Evangelists was to the Gospel of the Evangelical Revival, it must be entrusted to succeeding generations. New interpreters and transmitters of the tradition must arise.

It was the role of the transmitter of an Evangelical tradition that Isaac Milner assumed within the Clapham community. Nearly ten years the senior of most of those who made up the core of the Common, he had been shaped by the first engineers of the Revival, primarily through the influence of his brother who spent his life working in that Goshen of the North, Yorkshire, where the effects of the Revival were far-reaching, and where William Wilberforce, John Venn and Henry Thornton also had their spiritual roots. Milner shared a common social background with many of the early converts before the Revival had become fashionable in the circles of 'those who counted', and could recall an era in which pioneering Evangelicals were the objects of abuse, even mastered by vigilantes of the Establishment who had taken the law into their own hands.²²⁶

Within contemporary Evangelicalism, Milner appears as a man caught between the times. He was in touch with those who first fanned the flames of revival, and understood that the tradition must be accommodated to those of the next generation in order to survive. To be acknowledged as a discernible force in society (or even a 'party') was beneficial, and to have broken into the ranks of 'those who counted' an accomplishment, but one with a cost. Pride must be guarded against as an ever-increasing temptation to fall. And while it might have been all right for John Thornton to organize his ecumenical holidays, by the 1790's, the Methodists had abandoned the ship and the political activities of dissenters had called into doubt their allegiance to Church and King. Milner was suspicious of dissenters, and counselled his peers to exercise restraint and caution in their dealings with those who had left the Establishment. The good works as evidenced in solid social programmes sponsored by hard-working, dedicated Evangelicals were heartily commended, but Milner reminded his peers that they must never be severed from their theological foundations. But finally, the vigilant Evangelical must never allow successes to lull him into a

²²⁵Stephen, Essays, vol. II, p. 99.

²²⁶For the significance of Yorkshire Evangelicalism, see John D. Walsh, 'The Yorkshire Evangelicals in the Eighteenth Century; with Especial Reference to Methodism' (Cambridge University, Ph.D., 1956).

complacent state. To Isaac Milner, the need for revival was urgent. 'It is my prayer', he wrote in 1806 as Napoleon strode across Europe,

that there may be a revival of practical Christianity throughout Europe; as I verily believe, that nothing short of that will cure our present evils as well as those still more dreadful, which appear to hang over us.²²⁷

Academia and the rank and file of the Anglican hierarchy had yet to be converted and in Milner, the Clapham Evangelicals believed they had their man. And so it is time to turn from the Common at Clapham to the precincts of Cambridge and Carlisle.

²²⁷Milner, *Life*, p. 338. The prospects undoubtedly looked grim. Upon the news of Napoleon's victory at Austerlitz in 1805, Pitt had declared: 'Roll up that map [of Europe]; it will not be wanted these ten years'.

Chapter Two: Milner at Cambridge

Studens Vulgaris, or common British undergraduate. Variety: *Cantabrigiensis*. A hardy triennial. *Habitat*: abundant in meadows and by rivers, in winter and spring; has been found also in chapels and lecture rooms. Flowers profusely in May and June. Seeds occasionally later on. Use in the *Pharmacopoeia*: has been recommended as an irritant in obstinate cases of anchylosis, or tutor's stiffjaw.¹

I. Scholarly Pursuits

Released from his weaver's loom, Isaac Milner began studies at Cambridge University in 1770. The college chosen for him, the Queens' College of St. Margaret and St. Bernard, was founded by Andrew Dockett, rector of St. Botolph's in Cambridge, in December of 1446. Queen Margaret reestablished the College in March of 1448 to 'laud and honneur of sexe femenine',² as a way of countering the many collegiate dedications to men. Knowledge of Joseph Milner's Evangelical conversion and activities in Hull does not seem to have worried the administration at Queens'; unlike Henry Venn's failed attempt to enter his son at Trinity College,³ Isaac's entry did not excite comment, nor did his Yorkshire connections appear to have disadvantaged him.⁴ There is no apparent explanation of why Joseph Milner chose Queens' for his brother although the fact that economic assistance had materialised in a sizarship was probably the convincing argument. Isaac's position as a sizar illuminated his social background and financial means, and clearly marked his position within a rigidly stratified and self-conscious society.

It was the position of the lowly sizar that allowed Milner, with hosts of others of limited resources, to attend the University, and it may have been this position that saved him from the

¹Old Herbal. Quoted in John Venn, *Early Collegiate Life* (Cambridge: W. Heffer and Sons, Ltd., 1913), p. 111.

²W.G. Searle, *The History of the Queens' College of St. Margaret and St. Bernard, 1446 - 1560* (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell and Co., 1867), p. 16. Note that as the College was founded by two royal wives, its named spelled in the plural (Queens') is correct; this spelling, however, has not always been observed, so 'Queen's' will appear in quoted material in order to remain faithful to original texts.

³The father's hopes were dashed as 'the tutor and master were disinclined to admit him through fear of Methodism'. John Venn, *Annals of a Clerical Family* (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1904), p. 114. Even the second choice, Sidney Sussex, had to be won over for the members there 'were very averse and injurious for a season, on account of his being the son of a Methodist clergyman'. *Ibid.*, p. 102.

⁴Cf. Rothblatt who asserted 'a distinct dislike was taken to the northerner who brought with him manners regarded as awkward, a dialect that was considered rude, and a personality avoided as prickly. The northerner named most often was the Yorkshireman'. Sheldon Rothblatt, *Tradition and Change in English Liberal Education* (London: Faber and Faber, 1976), p. 93.

grosser vices and temptations besetting the typical Cambridge student of his day. University society was stringently divided into classes of heads of houses, professors, fellows, bachelors, noblemen, fellow-commoners, pensioners and sizars, and there was little movement socially between the groups.⁵ The availability of financial resources determined one's class upon admission, and continued to exert a profound influence upon the way students spent their time. For the nobleman whose admission to the University virtually guaranteed his degree, for the pensioner and the fellow-commoner whose family likely had secure plans for his post-university days, the stint at Cambridge provided the leisure for the gentlemanly pursuits of walking through the Cambridgeshire countryside, fishing, fencing, rowing and hunting as evidenced in the reminiscences of a student such as Philip Yorke.⁶ Private suppers became attractive alternatives to dining in Hall for those who could afford them, though more times than not, they degenerated into occasions for extravagance as friends sought to outdo each other's hospitality. Not surprisingly, excessive drinking during these evenings often led to rowdy and riotous behaviour.

Nor were those entrusted with the care of these young men without fault. 'Is it not then a notorious fact', wrote William Heberden in his searing attack on University discipline,

that the Fellows and Tutors, of almost every College, join frequently, without scruple, that part of their pupils, who by their rank and fortune are most liable to extravagance, in their parties of pleasure, in the most objectionable sources of their expenses; and may I be mistaken, when I add, occasionally in their excesses.⁷

This decay in conduct, coupled with gross professional neglect, certainly affected the standard of learning in the University.

The sizar, however, had neither the means to support himself in such a lifestyle nor the social opportunity of mixing with those who did. He also probably did not have the time to while away in the idleness of his fellows, for in exchange for financial support for tuition and maintenance, the College required the sizar to do 'various menial services...which consisted in the ringing of the chapel bell, the serving up of the first dish to the fellows at dinner & c.'.⁸ It was in the act of performing his duty as sizar that an upset tureen of soup evoked the vow of a more upset Milner, 'When I get into power, I will abolish this nuisance'.⁹ Sizars and their families paid a price for education not borne by other social groups of Cambridge students, and they cultivated

⁵A prominent member of the university used to say that he asked the heads to dinner, but that it was proper to invite the brains to tea-so precise was etiquette'. W.W. Rouse Ball, Notes on the History of Trinity College, Cambridge (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1899), p. 150.

⁶D.A. Winstanley, Unreformed Cambridge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935), p. 208.

⁷William Heberden, Strictures Upon the Discipline of the University of Cambridge, 2nd ed., (Cambridge: W.H. Lunn, 1794), pp. 18-19.

⁸Milner, Life, p. 6.

⁹Ibid., p. 7.

a deeper sense of responsibility toward their studies to the extent that the famed Bishop Richard Watson of Llandaff observed that many learned and leading men had arisen from the sizar class.¹⁰ Isaac Milner's years as a student and his subsequent academic career stand as proof that at least a degree of serious teaching and study was pursued in the eighteenth-century Universities.¹¹

Unlike the case of Philip Yorke, there were few remains of Milner's student days in Cambridge that survived which allow for a complete picture to emerge. Two situations, however, are notable and point the way toward future interests and activities. Since the time of the Reformation, Queens' had developed and maintained a sympathetic posture toward causes advocating liberty and reform. When Luther's books were sought for the woodpile, Thomas Forman, a fellow of the college, reputedly concealed them when 'sought to be burnt', and three altars in the college were dismantled as a result of reformation enthusiasm.¹² Simon Patrick, the leading proponent of latitudinarianism, was a fellow at Queens' in the 1640's and 1650's. Rejecting the 'hide-bound, strait-lac'd spirit that did then prevail'¹³, Patrick and other Queensmen conceived and handed down to their successors the premise that the Christian faith stripped to its barest essentials was the best cure for a Church rife with political and theological dissension.

It is not surprising, then, that during the presidency of Robert Plumtre (1760-1788), a man known to have favoured reforming principles in the University, Queensmen were the 'foremost among the petitioning clergy, who met at Archbishop Tenison's library, for ameliorating the subscription to articles'.¹⁴ Subscription to the Articles, either at matriculation (*Oxford*) or upon the granting of the degree (*Cambridge*), had been introduced as a means of keeping the universities, considered primarily as educational academies for the Church, free from the taint of dissent, and also encouraged loyalty to the Crown. By the early 1770's, however, students had begun to chafe under this form of academic restriction. On 6 December 1771, Robert Tyrwhitt of Queens' proposed a grace to the Senate that would exempt Bachelors of Arts from this requirement. Charles Crawford, also a member of Queens' and later expelled for unseemly

¹⁰Richard Watson, Anecdotes of the Life of Richard Watson Bishop of Llandaff written by Himself at Different Intervals (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1817), pp. 8-9.

¹¹For assessment of learning in eighteenth-century Cambridge, see Winstanley, Unreformed Cambridge, p. 295; Heberden, Strictures, pp. 32-33; Christopher Wordsworth, Social Life at the English Universities in the Eighteenth Century, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell, and Co., 1874), p. 82. Despite the falling standards, Winstanley asserted 'the degree was not lightly acquired, for in keeping his act the candidate was expected to attain a standard of scholarship worthy of the highest intellectual honour which the University could confer. His learning and adroitness were severely tested'. Winstanley, Unreformed, pp. 72-73.

¹²V.H.H. Green, Religion at Oxford and Cambridge, (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1964), pp. 87, 94.

¹³Quoted in Ibid., p. 174.

¹⁴George Dyer, A History of the University of Cambridge, 2 vols. (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1814), vol. II, p. 145.

behaviour, presented to the Vice-Chancellor an argument in favour of this proposition which maintained

that, in consequence of this multiplicity of academical engagements, they have neither the leisure nor the opportunity of inquiring into the abstruser points of theology; that they nevertheless find themselves under a necessity of declaring their unfeigned assent to a set of theological propositions, usually called 'the thirty-nine articles of religion,' apparently of high argument and great importance; or of subjecting themselves to a repulse in their petition for a degree, which they have endeavored to qualify themselves for, with much trouble, and at no little expence.¹⁵

Students canvassed their peers for support; though Mary Milner's assertion that her uncle was the only student of his society who refused to sign the petition may be exaggerated, he was undoubtedly a part of an overwhelmed minority. The dissenting voice at a small college such as Queens' would have been heard distinctly, and it may be supposed that a contrary opinion would be expressed very carefully in the knowledge that the hearers would be those determining the destiny of a possible academic career. It is significant to note that as a student, Wilberforce had opposed these binding declarations, though later he was to advocate the continuation of subscription to the Articles as a part of the student's University obligations.

The second observation to be made of Isaac Milner's student days is his obvious dedication to scholarship, and accomplishments in learning. As already noted, the environment of the eighteenth-century Universities did not encourage excellence in the pursuit of learning; nor did his background support the likelihood of an academic future though the examples of a working-class father who made the education of his sons a priority, and a scholarly brother, were important sources of inspiration. The final examination for the eighteenth-century student consisted of the occasion of 'Keeping an Opponency'.¹⁶ Three weeks before the event, the candidate for the degree chose three propositions from the traditional curriculum (generally two mathematical and one philosophical). The University Moderator then selected three respondents. On the day of the opponency, the candidate for the degree read before a public audience a prepared thesis which he then defended against the arguments of the three opponents who had been chosen for their intellectual compatibility. During the opponency of his final term as an undergraduate, Milner introduced an argument that his biographer claimed to be new though it was subsequently well-known in the University. George Pearce, Master of Jesus College and Moderator for the event, concluded the proceedings with the judgement, 'Domine opponens, argumentum sane novum et difficile; nec pudet fateri meipsum nodum solvere non posse' though he appears to have refuted the argument later that evening.¹⁷ This performance coupled with commendable results in written examinations culminated in his being awarded the degree of Bachelor of Arts in 1774. At this

¹⁵Charles Henry Cooper, *Annals of Cambridge*, 4 vols. (Cambridge: Metcalf and Palmer, 1842-1908), vol. IV, p. 363.

¹⁶For university examination procedures, see Winstanley, *Unreformed*, pp. 43-49.

¹⁷Milner, *Life*, p. 8.

time, Thomas Kipling and Thomas Parkinson named Milner the Senior Wrangler of his year with the distinction of *Incomparabilis*, a recognition of merit not to be bestowed for nearly five decades when Joshua King of his own college achieved similar honours. J.M.F. Wright, in his memoirs of days at Cambridge, noted the importance of this achievement:

At Cambridge, this Senior Wranglership, whatever the rest of the world may think of it, is a thing of mighty consequence. 'To be or not to be' at the head of the youth of Great Britain for any given year 'is the question,' and a momentous question, I should think, it somewhat is. Thus, you see, every individual year, the most desperate struggles in the contest, not only for this 'single Diadem,' as the modern Solomon calls it, but even for the second and third place in the Tripos.¹⁸

In later years, Milner told young Thomas Macaulay he had expected to fail in this exercise, an admission which thoroughly surprised the boy as 'his appearance on that occasion was still remembered, at the distance of nearly half a century'.¹⁹

The accolades continued to go Milner's way. He became the recipient of the first Smith's prize given for mathematical prowess despite an examiner's known favouritism toward another candidate, and shortly after graduation, he was inducted into the Hyson Club, a society whose membership included Waring, Watson and Paley. In 1786, he kept his Divinity Act as part of the requirement for obtaining the Bachelor of Divinity degree, an event which Henry Venn had ridden from Yelling to witness. Venn later recounted this event to a friend:

I also went over to hear Mr. Isaac Milner keep his Divinity Act. His subject was, 'Justification by faith only:' - his Thesis admirable; taken in substance from Jonathan Edwards. He did well. The Schools were crowded, more than ever was seen of late years; and, no doubt, good will come from men of the first-rate abilities holding out to notice Divine Truth. May he preach and live as a minister of Christ! - You will say, Amen!²⁰

Bishop Watson was also present at this disputation between Milner and Henry Coulthurst, and considered the match the best act at which he had ever presided, and one worthy of the title 'real academic entertainment'. Both pioneers of the Evangelical Revival and respected members of the Cambridge community had recognized the budding scholar. They praised his University accomplishments and anticipated a bright and promising future for the young man.²¹

Milner's professional activities and contributions can be briefly described. Elected to the Royal Society in 1780, he had already communicated papers to this body before his admission to its membership on the following topics: 'Observations on the Limits of Algebraical Equations; and a General Demonstration of Des Cartes's Rule for finding their number of Affirmative and Negative Roots' (1777); 'Reflections of the Communication of Motion, by Impact and Gravity'

¹⁸J.M.F. Wright, *Alma Mater*, 2 vols. (London: Black, Young and Young, 1827), vol. II, p. 95.

¹⁹Milner, *Life*, pp. 707-708.

²⁰Venn, *Life*, p. 423.

²¹Watson, *Anecdotes*, p. 22.

(1778), and 'On the Procession of the Equinoxes produced by the Sun's Attraction' (1779). A paper entitled 'The Production of Nitrous Acid and Nitrous Air' appeared in 1789, apparently following correspondence with Joseph Priestley who expressed confidence in Milner's experimentation, and promised to 'mention the facts to my friends; as they cannot but do you great honour'.²² Robert Kirwan, a chemist of the Irish Royal Academy, credited Milner with discovering the secret method guarded by the French for the production of nitrous acid (significant to the manufacture of gunpowder). Of Milner's finding, Bishop Watson wrote:

It is a very high honour to you to have discovered the mode of making the nitrous acid; and though our enemies avail themselves of your ingenuity, yet, it may, in future be of use to your own country. Any unfavourable revolution in India, would leave us as destitute of saltpetre as France would have been without your discovery.²³

Watson further remarked, however, that saltpetre could undoubtedly be imported less expensively than it would cost to manufacture, and no further evidence suggests that Milner's discovery was taken up commercially. Besides those individuals already noted, Milner corresponded with other scientists of his day such as Nevil Maskelyne, the Astronomer Royal, and Thomas Ludlam, a man with whom he was later to parry on theological matters. Closer to home, he maintained contact with Cambridge scientists William Farish and Francis Wollaston.

As observed earlier, Milner loved to tinker, and his curiosity extended to a lifetime of mechanical experimentation. A note in the Queens' College Conclusion Book of 2 June 1794 reveals that an air pump and a pneumatical apparatus were to be purchased and stored in the President's Lodge unless 'the Tutors of the College wish to have use of them for the purpose of instructing their Pupils in their Public Lectures'.²⁴ Mary Milner described a workroom designed to keep any engineer content, and cited the inventions of a water-clock and reading lamp as fruits of Milner's experimental labour. In 1801, the Government requested of him a memorial concerning the construction of a Thames bridge, a significant official affirmation of Milner's scholarship. This request also indicates that not everyone believed that scientific study had fled the University for the more favourable environment of the dissenting and private academies.²⁵

²²Milner, *Life*, p. 37.

²³*Ibid.*, pp. 109-110.

²⁴Queens' College Conclusion Book, 1787-1832, 2 June 1794.

²⁵For analysis of scientific and mathematical study in eighteenth-century Cambridge, see Martha McMackin Garland, *Cambridge Before Darwin: The Ideal of Liberal Education, 1800-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Christopher Wordsworth, *Scholae Academicae* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1877); R.G. Frank, 'Science, Medicine and the Universities of Early Modern England: Background and Sources', *History of Science*, vol. 11 (1973), pp. 194-216, 239-69; R.W.T. Gunther, *Early Science in Cambridge* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1937); W.W. Rouse Ball, *A History of the Study of Mathematics at Cambridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1889); Winstanley, *Unreformed*; T.J.N. Hilken, *Engineering at Cambridge University* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1967.

Finally, Milner maintained a professional membership from 1787 of the Board of Longitude, a body which met in London for

the purpose of taking into consideration, and reporting to the Government, any discoveries calculated to facilitate navigation under dangerous circumstances; and, in particular, any inventions, which, by tending to the perfect and constant accuracy of chronometers; might, in the absence of other means, assist navigators to determine their exact position at sea.²⁶

This academic and scholarly success, despite the native talents and disposition of the man who was so gifted, was not bought without a price. The biographer of William Hey, the celebrated Evangelical surgeon of Leeds, noted that the doctor's acquaintance with Milner began in 1770 when 'a young man, having injured his health, seriously, by too intense an application to academical studies, sought professional assistance by placing himself under the care of Mr. Hey'.²⁷ Appreciative of the talents of his patient, the consultation gave birth to a friendship as well as a professional relationship that lasted fifty years.

Nor did the ailment fail to escape the notice of the ever-watchful eye of an Evangelical leadership anxious about its successors. In a letter dated May of 1775, John Thornton observed to John Newton that Isaac Milner had returned to Hull in bad shape, but concluded with the hope that 'I trust it is only humbling for exaltation'.²⁸ In retrospect, even Milner had to admit to a friend whom he suspected of studying too hard that passion for learning had led him to overlook care of self: 'I thank God', he wrote,

that though far from well, I suffer much less than I used to do, insomuch, that I am able to do business again in a moderate and tranquil way. Let my example be a warning to you not to over-work yourself, till you break down. I have been much to blame in that way.²⁹

His fellow Churchmen received Milner's early academic accomplishments with appreciation. Still, the approval was not unqualified as his supporters remained somewhat anxious and concerned about where these talents might lead.

News of Milner's success had travelled to the far reaches of his native Yorkshire, and it is not surprising that the young scholar should find himself pursued within a system accustomed to rewarding its talented and promising offspring. Having refused the opportunity of tutoring the relative of a Polish prince,³⁰ Milner remained at Queens', where he was elected Scholar and also served as Bible Clerk.³¹ In December of 1775,³² the Bishop of Peterborough ordained him to

²⁶Milner, *Life*, p. 36.

²⁷Pearson, *Hey*, p. 76.

²⁸Cambridge University Library Add. MS 7674/1/A, John Thornton to John Newton, 18 May 1775.

²⁹Milner, *Life*, p. 659.

³⁰*Ibid.*, p. 9.

³¹Queens' College Conclusion Book, 1734-1787, 22 January 1774.

the office of deacon in the chapel of Trinity College. Three weeks later, the fellows of the College elected him to a fellowship, thus securing his future within the community of Queens'.³²

In 1777, Milner proceeded to the degree of Master of Arts and later that year, he advanced to the office of Tutor within the College. This appointment, which lay in the gift of the President, shows how highly his colleagues and peers regarded his scholarship. Though various studies have attempted to redeem the commonly-held image of the eighteenth-century universities mired hopelessly in decadence and negligence of their commission to educate, public lectures at this time were only a secondary source for learning and the vital task of teaching lay in the hands of the college tutors as well as other members so entrusted. D.A. Winstanley described the breadth of tutorial responsibilities in this way:

The duties of a Tutor were both exacting and various. He was expected to be the guide, friend, and guardian of his pupils as well as their instructor. He had not only to teach them, correct their misdemeanors, and enforce discipline; he had to play the far more difficult part of the friendly adviser whose counsel is sought and valued. He was also much concerned with their finances.³⁴

Under some arrangements, the tutors were financially accountable for their students' financial matters, so there was incentive for tutorial staff to involve themselves in the affairs of their charges. Milner himself affirmed the importance of this office when as President of Queens', he felt compelled to go outside the College for tutorial candidates as there were no suitable applicants from within. No evidence survived of Milner's conduct in this office though in a letter preserved in the Life, John Oldershaw claimed to be

greatly indebted to him for his invaluable assistance in my mathematical studies. I had afterwards opportunities of knowing and admiring the extraordinary strength of his understanding, and the great variety and extent of his knowledge; and I retain a high veneration for his memory.³⁵

The subsequent election of Milner to the highest office within his collegiate community further suggests that he pursued his duties in a responsible and commendable manner.

Over the following years, Milner's career advanced in a way that was typical of the eighteenth-century bachelor-scholar. In February of 1778, his college granted him the required testimonial³⁶ and the following month, he was ordained to the priesthood in Trinity College Chapel. His initial pastoral duties seem to ^{have been} vague as he undertook occasional services for friends around the Cambridge countryside. In June of 1778, he was presented to the college living

³²Queens' College Conclusion Book, 8 December 1775; Milner, Life, p. 11.

³³Ibid., 11 March 1777; Milner, Life, p. 12.

³⁴Winstanley, Unreformed, p. 270.

³⁵Milner, Life, pp. 10-11.

³⁶Queens' College Conclusion Book, 1734-1787, 28 February 1778.

of St. Botolph's, only yards from the Queens' College entrance.³⁷ This appointment proves that even Milner could not escape succumbing to one of the sins of his fellow-clergy: non-residence. His biographer attributed his rare appearance at St. Botolph's to his many infirmities, and defended Milner's lack of regular liturgical service, asserting that

as a clergyman, he was indeed unable to undertake much public duty; but he deeply and critically studied both the Scriptures and the writings of the ancient fathers of the church; thus doubtless laying the foundation of that sound and extensive theological knowledge, which is apparent in the productions of his later life.³⁸

Besides his theological research, Milner had ample opportunity to pursue his scientific studies as evidenced by the papers noted above submitted for the consideration of the Royal Society. He served the University as Proctor in 1781-82 and filled the office of Moderator twice, a position deemed by Bishop Watson as 'the most difficult to execute, and the most important to the interests of the University, when well executed, of any that there is, not excepting the Professorship of Divinity itself'.³⁹

Milner achieved his first significant professional break-through when in 1782, he read lectures for the foundation professor of chemistry, Isaac Pennington. It was not uncommon for the professors to deputize their lecturing responsibilities in order to carry on personal research, and they did not always pass on their responsibilities to people who were competent in the fields they set out to teach. Milner entered his lecturing career with more knowledge and experience than many, including Richard Watson who, himself Pennington's predecessor, admitted 'at the time this honour was conferred upon me, I knew nothing at all of Chemistry, had never read a syllable on the subject; nor seen a single experiment in it'.⁴⁰ Outlines of Milner's lectures were published and survive as evidence of his dedication to his subject as well as his commitment to public lecturing when this method of teaching was not in vogue.

By 1783, Milner had begun to establish a reputation in the University as a lecturer and committed scholar in the fields of science and mathematics. Thus, when in that year the Jacksonian Chair of Natural and Experimental Philosophy was founded at the behest of a former member of Trinity College, he stood as the successful candidate. This was the first chair of its kind, and the holder of the post, who was to be chosen from amongst the regent Masters of Arts residing within the University, had to be a man of great versatility and ingenuity. Under the terms of Jackson's will, the professor must agree to deliver each year thirty-six lectures, and to execute thirty experiments in 'anatomy, animal economy, chemistry, botany, agriculture and materia medica' with special reference to 'that opprobrium medicorum called the gout, both in getting a

³⁷Queens' College Conclusion Book, 1734-1787, 9 June 1778.

³⁸Milner, Life, p. 14.

³⁹Watson, Anecdotes, p. 22.

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 28-29.

better history of the disorder itself, and the symptoms preceding, attending and following it'.⁴¹ For this service, the terms of the Chair allowed the recipient to charge fees, though four Trinity men were permitted to attend *gratis*. Before the lecturer could claim the accompanying stipend, eight scholars had to prove they had attended the lectures, thus ensuring that teaching was taking place, and lecturing was not being directed toward empty benches. Milner held this position until 1792 when he resigned from the Chair in order to assume his duties as Dean of Carlisle Cathedral.

In 1798, Milner's teaching and scholarly abilities were again recognized and rewarded by his election to the Lucasian Professorship of Mathematics, a Chair formerly held by a procession of eminent men including Isaac Barrow and Isaac Newton. As with the Jacksonian Chair, the terms of the post obliged the Lucasian professor to deliver lectures, ten of which he had to record and deposit in the University Library. According to Winstanley, however, John Colson disregarded the requirements during his tenure from 1739, and the neglect continued with his successors. Despite Milner's intentions to break this cycle of irresponsibility, as expressed to Wilberforce when he succeeded to the Chair,⁴² he did not lecture. He did, however, engage in the various examinations for mathematical prizes with enthusiasm, and made himself available to students for consultation.⁴³

A thorough analysis of Milner's contribution to the intellectual life of Cambridge lies beyond the pale of a thesis examining his place in the Evangelical Revival. Still, it is significant to note that Milner had undertaken his academic responsibilities in the midst of a critical time for teaching and learning within the University. A new spirit of reconciliation and toleration, born out of the bloody religious conflicts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, challenged an educational system that cultivated disputation, or the pitting of foe against foe, as the means for proving academic excellence. Sheldon Rothblatt summarized the conflict of values:

The purpose of studying logic was not to learn to win disputes according to a particular system of reasoning, or even to persuade; the purpose was to communicate, to bring persons together, not divide them, to teach them to be open-minded, not intolerant. Instead of learning the arts of conversation in order to be agreeable in society, students were being instructed in methods of reasoning guaranteed to lose them friends and gain enemies. A liberal education was supposed to be broadening, but Oxbridge teaching was narrow, a matter of outmoded rules. A liberal education was supposed to emphasize clarity and elegance of thought; instead, students were taught to obfuscate and start hares. A liberal education was supposed to make its recipients attentive to the needs of others; instead, students were taught to be academic snobs, to forget that a little learning was a dangerous thing, and that ultimately a great deal of learning could only be acquired outside the universities in the great world of public affairs.⁴⁴

The ideal of the educated man was changing, and the students emerging from the Oxbridge

⁴¹Winstanley, *Unreformed*, p. 177.

⁴²Bod. Add. MS c.47.126, Isaac Milner to William Wilberforce, 21 October 1798.

⁴³Cambridge University Calendar 1802 (Cambridge: 1796-1950), p. 22.

⁴⁴Rothblatt, *Tradition*, p. 80.

system of the eighteenth century were increasingly viewed as lacking in the skills and knowledge deemed useful and valuable to the society which they were to serve. The new professions, for example, required qualifications that were not being taught in the Universities. Though to its credit Cambridge had devoted some attention to preparation for medicine as a career, the universities generally had failed to address the needs and possible needs of an increasingly specialised world.

University education had come under criticism. An age which bred a spirit of conciliation and encouraged communication was bound to judge a community which governed itself like a monastery as closed off from the world and irrelevant. The thriving dissenting academies, private tuition, and even the continental grand tour had emerged as viable means of education, and the universities had to account for themselves:

Oxford and Cambridge had to defend themselves as best they could against the charge that their education was medieval and scholastic, not Renaissance and liberal, and that the last places in which a young man could receive a proper liberal education were the shaded, isolated, monkish courts of the universities.⁴⁵

The general degeneration of learning helped precipitate a crisis within the Universities. Though many students had come to learn more about the gentlemanly pursuits of shooting and racing than scholarship, their teachers did little to instill lasting habits of study and provided little inspiration to learn. Some professorial appointments were fully a part of a patronage system, and some holders of chairs found themselves with commissions to teach subjects of which they lacked sufficient knowledge. Absenteeism was a problem, though overwhelming requirements placed upon the holders of some chairs, and the prospect of lecturing to empty benches in others, were not incentives to teach.⁴⁶ But the major problem was neglect of responsibility. Wordsworth asserted in his study that it was an exception for a professor to engage in regular lecturing, and the excuse was not always because he lacked knowledge of the subject.⁴⁷ Laying the blame at the feet of the professors who yielded to the temptation of extravagance which led impressionable students astray, Heberden minced no words in his observation of the result: 'A foreigner would scarce believe that fewer works of learning are published from our Universities, than from the same number of men of liberal education anywhere in the kingdom; and yet this is an undoubted fact'.⁴⁸ Though there were instances of careful and conscientious teaching in the University, portraits of eighteenth-century Cambridge suggest that its leaders were more committed to inducting their students into the popular entertainments of the day rather than into sound habits of study.

A third point centred on a general philosophy of education. Instead of encouraging students

⁴⁵Rothblatt, *Tradition*, p. 77.

⁴⁶Winstanley, *Unreformed*, p. 96.

⁴⁷Wordsworth, *Social*, vol. I, p. 83.

⁴⁸Heberden, *Strictures*, p. 47.

to engage themselves actively with their academic subjects, thereby nurturing the development of critical skills, the teaching task was seen largely in terms of communication of knowledge. In general, Frank wrote, this meant that University education 'provided for each generation of Englishmen a common scientific vocabulary, a common foundation of received or mooted theories, and of recognized problems and their possible solutions'.⁴⁹ Furthermore, Newtonian physics and natural philosophy reigned supreme in England, and few Cambridge men 'would have dreamt of such audacity as to attempt to advance upon his discoveries'.⁵⁰ This attitude, complicated by a feud fuelled by personal feelings and national jealousies in the face of a rapidly changing world, threatened the time honoured belief that the University provided a lively and fruitful education. Heberden posed this challenge to his generation:

Where then is the necessary work of reformation to begin? Would you busy yourselves in beautifying the pinnacle of this edifice, till its base decays, or would you not exert your utmost endeavours to save and strengthen the foundation, that you may have your footing sure, while you advance to the upper parts?⁵¹

II. Milner as Educator

Undoubtedly during the first half of the eighteenth century the University was sunk in a lethargy which was only broken by rather sordid disputes and wrangles, very remotely connected with either learning or education. But this was not so during the latter part of the century when a party arose with a programme of reform and prepared to give battle for its opinions. During a few years the University was being continually called upon to set its house in order and to discard the medieval rubbish it had accumulated. It was inevitable that these appeals should be resisted, for they nearly always either threatened vested interests or ran counter to deeply rooted prejudices; and they were nearly always successfully resisted.⁵²

As an educator, Milner appears to stand solidly within the reformist wing and its commitment to the improvement of learning. As Jacksonian professor, he took his commitment to lecturing seriously. This priority he illustrated to Wilberforce in a description of a typical day:

In college I lecture from eight to ten in the morning - from that time till four in the afternoon, I am absolutely so engaged that I can scarcely steal half an hour from preparing my lectures, to dine. At half-past five, I get my coffee, go to chapel, and then lie down for an hour. - I then rise, take my milk - look out various articles, and make notes of natural history, & c., for the succeeding day. This coming every day, keeps me on such a continued stretch, that I am often very much done up with fatigue; and if Mr. Metcalfe, of Christ's Coll., did not assist me, I should not be able to get through...About next Tuesday or Wednesday se'night, I shall have finished the laborious and pressing part of these lectures; and then I shall only have about ten or eleven lectures more to make up the number, and those ten or eleven require no preparation or time, beyond the single hour. I hope I shall be able to get

⁴⁹Frank, 'Science', p. 262.

⁵⁰Wordsworth, *Scholae Academicæ*, p. 66.

⁵¹Heberden, *Strictures*, pp. 17-18.

⁵²Winstanley, *Unreformed*, p. 299.

through, as I have now just turned the middle page of the difficulties.⁵³

From his account, and those of his students, Milner's lectures were well-attended, and he taught with enthusiasm. Convinced that in Milner, he had encountered a man of singular talents,⁵⁴ Henry Gunning declared of the Jacksonian professor as a lecturer:

He did not treat the subjects under discussion very profoundly but he contrived to amuse us, and we generally returned laughing heartily at something that had occurred during the lecture...His experiments in Optics were very little more than exhibitions of the Magic Lanthorn on a gigantic scale. I cannot say that I benefited much by my attendance on these lectures. I was subsequently nominated by my college to attend his Chemical Lectures, (he being deputy for Dr. Pennington). These I understood from persons much better qualified than myself to judge of their merits, were very excellent.⁵⁵

Through his teaching, Milner tried to convey and demonstrate information as well as to encourage his students to engage actively with their studies.

As Jacksonian Professor of Natural and Experimental Philosophy, Milner held a post under the auspices of which the study of engineering was introduced into the University. Only two hundred years had elapsed since intellectual debate had addressed the issue of whether chemistry was a branch of philosophical enquiry, and Milner's position and teaching contributed to the further establishment of the study of the sciences as recognized academic disciplines in Cambridge University. The increased stipend which he successfully negotiated in 1787 reflected not only a regard for his personal contribution but also a more long-term commitment on the University's part to the continuation of this study. As an innovator, Milner's lecture notes 'contain the first notice of instruction in the theory of the steam engine as well as problems involving air pumps and other mechanisms'.⁵⁶ Undoubtedly, his avid building-up of an experimental laboratory and zest for experimentation, demonstration and invention provided an important example to budding Cambridge engineers.

Milner clearly channelled his interests and commitments in the direction of practical mechanics. He had shown promise as a mathematician as an undergraduate and in a more generous moment, one would like to assume that his appointment to the Lucasian professorship presupposed an actively pursued interest in this discipline. There is little evidence, however, of a notable contribution to this study by Milner. Gunning noted with disappointment that in this area at least, Milner had not come through as had been expected: 'It is to be regretted he did not prosecute his mathematical studies with greater energy and perseverance after he had taken his

⁵³Milner, *Life*, pp. 34-35.

⁵⁴'The University, perhaps, never produced a man of more singular talents'. Henry Gunning, *Reminiscences of the University, Town, and County of Cambridge From Year 1789*, 2 vols., (London: George Bell, 1854), vol. I, p. 257.

⁵⁵*Ibid*, vol. I, pp. 259, 260.

⁵⁶Hilken, *Engineering*, p. 36.

degree'.⁵⁷

Still, one must assess Milner the mathematician within his setting. The study of mathematics had only been introduced into the University curriculum in 1663. By the time Milner reached Cambridge, mathematics was still regarded as a gentleman's pursuit, though it was recognized as a valuable tool in teaching logic. The emergence of the mathematical tripos in the 1720's and 1730's, and the continued emphasis placed upon mathematical competence in the Senate House Examinations throughout the eighteenth century further secured this study, but the unapologetic and almost universal acceptance of the Newtonian system in England, made firmer by the emotional dispute centring upon the precedence of Newton or Leibniz as the founding father of calculus, gave the British mathematician little incentive to research. Garland suggests that this ossification placed Cambridge mathematical studies a century behind^{their} counterpart on the continent.⁵⁸

On the surface, Milner appears to fit the mould of the typical University mathematician of his day and yet, several clues suggest his quiet encouragement and support of these studies and their advancement. He continued to examine for the Smith's prize and delighted in challenging candidates with problems that would make them think. Mary Milner stated that some of her uncle's letters 'allude to the interest with which he had "looked over the mathematical works of some of the most celebrated modern analysts"'⁵⁹, and his library of three thousand books bequeathed to Queens' College included works by French mathematicians. Thus, Milner exhibited an acquaintance, if only a cursory one, with continental mathematicians at a time it could be said they were deliberately ignored.⁶⁰ Further, it was during his tenure as Lucasian professor that mathematical ideas from the continent began to infiltrate the University's defences. John Toplis, chosen to be a fellow and a tutor of Queens' in 1811, showed an interest in French analysis and communicated this information to his protegee George Green, who in turn taught French methods in his Grammar School in Nottingham. In 1812, George Peacock, along with John Herschel and Charles Babbage, founded the Analytical Society for the express purpose of introducing continental (Leibnizian) notation into British mathematics; in Babbage's words, they sought to defend 'the principles of pure D-ism, in opposition to the Dot-age of the University'.⁶¹ Three years before they translated LaCroix's work on calculus, Milner examined Herschel and Peacock for the Smith's prize. French mathematics did not arise as a subject though Peacock recalled,

He gave us an intricate question (a cubic equation with possible roots) to solve by

⁵⁷Gunning, *Reminiscences*, vol. I, p. 257.

⁵⁸Garland, *Ideal*, p. 30.

⁵⁹Milner, *Life*, p. 695.

⁶⁰For insight into Milner's mathematical importance and interest, I am grateful to Miss Mary Cannell of Nottingham, Honorary Secretary of the George Green Memorial Society.

⁶¹Quoted in Garland, *Ideal*, p. 29.

means of a table of logarithms; in which we both failed in obtaining a correct answer; a circumstance which made him, very good-naturedly, chuckle and triumph, telling us, that we had not fared worse than our predecessors in a similar trial.⁶²

Milner associated with William Whewell who, during his years teaching at Trinity College, insisted his students learn and apply continental notation and concepts⁶³ and in 1819, he wrote a testimonial for Charles Babbage as a candidate for the Edinburgh professorship of Mathematics, assuring the selection committee that 'Mr. Babbage's talents and attainments, as a person of profound knowledge and extensive acquirements in difficult branches of mathematics and general science, must unquestionably place him in the very highest rank of philosophers of the present time'.⁶⁴ Though it is an argument from silence, it is difficult to believe that Milner did not discuss the 'new maths' with his Cambridge colleagues and at the very least, encouraged its introduction by turning a blind eye.

Though it was in the mid-eighteenth century before the study of mathematics was confirmed as an established discipline within the University, once introduced, it slowly began to permeate and then to dominate the undergraduate curriculum. In his Strictures, William Heberden lamented the degree to which the gospel of mathematics had taken over:

With regard to our selection of studies, the most usual objection made to it is, that it is almost entirely confined to the mathematics, under which name is also included, the theory of natural philosophy. That this is the fact must be confessed; for though many munificent benefactors have instituted prizes for excellence in classical literature, in which they have been greatly assisted by the lectures of each College; and though most of the Colleges also pay attention to morality, metaphysics, the elementary parts of logic, and a few to divinity, still the public honors of the University conferred on taking the first degree in arts, are distributed merely according to mathematical merit, unless one evening dedicated to an examination in morality, to which no attention is paid in ranking the candidates, may be called an exception.⁶⁵

He concluded his comments by noting that the mastery of this subject was the only prerequisite to the taking of a degree. Solomon Atkinson, who had trekked the twenty miles from his home to the Deanery of Carlisle in hopes that a personal interview with the President of Queens' would assist his hoped-for admission to the University, had this to say about his studies:

The period which should have been employed in acquiring information that might have rendered me a useful and enlightened member of society, was wasted in marshalling mathematical symbols, which in the process did not discipline the mind, and which in the acquirement did not prepare it for any useful and active occupation.⁶⁶

⁶²Milner, Life, p. 525.

⁶³Garland, Ideal, p. 23.

⁶⁴British Library Add. MS 37,182,ff.139-140.

⁶⁵Heberden, Strictures, p. 33.

⁶⁶Solomon Atkinson, 'Struggles of a Poor Student Through Cambridge' (The London Magazine and Review, New Series, vol. I, (1 April 1825), p. 492.

The establishment of the classical tripos in 1824 attempted to create an alternative measure for the assessment of academic excellence.

The gradual predominance of mathematics within the University curriculum had begun to worry those concerned for the future of liberal education. It positively alarmed those who had begun to notice the wedge mathematics and the newly revolutionised sciences had placed between the natural world and God, between man's intellectual capabilities and faith. Fully appreciative of the civilising influences of education, Robert Ingram, no friend to Evangelicals, worried that Christian apologetic had gone too far. 'The recent recollection of the pernicious consequences of superstition and fanaticism,' he wrote,

and still more of the vices and enormities, that have been repeatedly committed under the hypocritical mask of religion, has had an unreasonable influence on our minds, and, under the dread of incurring the imputation of hypocrisy, external appearances of piety are cautiously avoided; topics of religious conversation are industriously guarded against; and the offices of devotion are therefore depreciated in the estimation of mankind: all which has necessarily terminated in a general relaxation of the religious principle.⁶⁷

The task of education was to cultivate virtue and utility, and to obviate vicious, unrefined behaviour. Ingram advocated the introduction of more practical divinity studies as better grounds for educating, particularly within an institution which still was engaged extensively in the training of church leaders who then would serve as primary examples within their communities. Thomas Thomason, who served as tutor of Queens' during Milner's tenure, found the situation equally disturbing and reflected in a letter to Marianne Thornton: 'There are reasons for fearing the "mathematical religion" which so prevails here'.⁶⁸ Further, the latitudinarian and Arian leanings of many of Cambridge's more renowned scientists in the past further muddled the connections between science and orthodoxy. Revolutionary methods in science and mathematics had been introduced into the Cambridge curriculum, and there were those who worried that the Christian God would be left behind.

In the midst of these discussions, Milner held the Lucasian Chair of Mathematics for twenty-two years, and in doing so, stood firm for at least a section of Evangelicalism that believed the new sciences and mathematics could be wedded to belief in the Christian God. Not oblivious to the anxiety and discussions of others, he confidently asserted that just as philosophy serves as the handmaid to theology, so could the study of mathematics and natural philosophy pave the way for future service in the Church. Taught in the right spirit, these subjects prepared the student to reason justly, and to develop critical faculties which would be useful in assessing new developments. To this end, Milner asserted that 'a judicious prosecution of the science of mathematics and natural philosophy is among the very best preparatives to the study of theology

⁶⁷Robert Acklom Ingram, *The Necessity of Introducing Divinity into the Regular Course of Academical Studies Considered* (Colchester: W. Keymer, 1792), p. 9.

⁶⁸J. Sargent, *The Life of T.T. Thomason* (London: R.B. Seeley and W. Burnside), 1833), p. 85.

in general, and of Christianity in particular'.⁶⁹

The acquisition of critical skills became especially important in the light of the new scientific methods being applied to the study of divinity. It can hardly be said that Milner embraced the new approach to Biblical criticism developed by the Germans and introduced into England by men such as Herbert Marsh with enthusiasm. Scholars might be extremely knowledgeable about the texts they study, but this competence did not necessarily guarantee Churchmen who were 'remarkable for the soundness of their faith in Revelation, their skill in apprehending its doctrines, nor their zeal in enforcing them'.⁷⁰ Milner could appreciate 'that so great pains have been taken for this purpose',⁷¹ and he voiced the intent to encourage his students to keep up with advances made in the area of Biblical criticism. Such scholarship, he believed, would clarify ambiguities surrounding various passages of Scripture and would further ground the Bible as the authoritative vehicle for Christian teaching and revelation. Mathematics and scientific study within the University proved no threat to God, who had given man the gift of intellect to use. The mastery of scientific knowledge could be put to the Creator's service.

As has already been noted, Milner's intellectual abilities and interest had been noticed and appreciated by his close Evangelical associates, but this recognition was not limited to these circles as his appointments to positions of responsibility and prestige within the University testify. Within fifty years after Milner's death, Augustus de Morgan, a descendant of William Frend, wrote to a correspondent that the Evangelical don stood amongst the 'Cambridge revivers' and included Waring, Paley and Vince.⁷² Only ten years after his graduation, Solomon Atkinson placed Milner within the ranks of the University's intellectual giants whose passing was to be mourned. 'Will any one be hardy enough to deny this?', Atkinson asked those who challenged his claim that mediocrity now characterised the academic life of the University,

I refer him to the history of this University for the last thirty years, and I ask what illustrious men has it produced; I tell him to look among the present race, and ask where shall we find men like Watson, Milner and Paley. These were men that comprehended all the learning of the University, but they did not confine themselves here - they looked beyond the precincts of Alma Mater - they watched the progress of public opinion - they mingled with the mass of its feeling, and they put their shoulders to the wheel, and accelerated or stemmed the progress of public virtue or public error like giants. These intellectual Titans have been succeeded by a degenerate and pigmy race...and that in respect to the quality and degree of knowledge, no one will accuse me of underrating them, if I call them third-rate grammarians and arithmeticians.⁷³

Within the University, Milner had made his mark as a man dedicated to scholarship and the

⁶⁹Milner, Life, p. 545.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 547.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Ball, History, p. 113.

⁷³Atkinson, 'Struggles', p. 503.

advancement of learning.

His intellectual talents should be seen in the light of an Evangelical tradition often accused of having fostered a powerful anti-intellectualism. One need not plumb the depths of the tradition very far to find evidence for the accusation. Their opponents accused Evangelicals of suppressing intellectual questions that arose naturally from an honest wrestling with the life of faith.⁷⁴ Hannah More disparaged the arrogance of the unconverted man who exalted in his 'superiority of understanding over every religious man', and valued the better state of the simple, believing Christian⁷⁵, but as Sir James Stephen pointed out, this smugness led to a similar false valuing of ignorance: 'her most popular teachers had not merely been satisfied to tread the narrow circle of the "Evangelical" theology, but had exulted in that bondage as indicating their possession of a purer light than had visited the other ministers of the Gospel'.⁷⁶ Gladstone, himself a son of an Evangelical home, believed that the Evangelicals had never properly cultivated learning,⁷⁷ while Mark Pattison in his *Essays* offered this damning judgement: '[Evangelicalism] insisted on a "vital Christianity", as against the Christianity of books. Its instinct was from the first against intelligence. No text found more favour with it than "Not many wise, not many learned."'⁷⁸ Later historians of the Evangelical Revival have agreed with this assessment.

The proper relationship between faith and reason, between the role and cultivation of human understanding and divine enlightenment has been a recurrent theme in Christian debate since its founding, and it should come as no surprise to find the Evangelicals wrestling with these issues. Although pronouncements of the fate of the intellectual life within a more narrow-minded Evangelicalism of the latter half of the nineteenth century may ring true, these accusations cannot be laid so surely at the feet of the preceding generation. One of the earliest concerns of both the Anglican and dissenting 'methodists' was education, and the many ragged, Sunday and workers' schools they founded stand as clear evidence of this commitment. As Doreen Rosman points out, their reluctance to teach writing may have stemmed as much from anxiety concerning appropriate Sabbath activity (Bible reading they could justify) as a warped desire to keep the lower classes in ignorance.⁷⁹ Clapham children were educated beside Africans, who were brought to England in hopes that this opportunity might open a better way of life. Charles Simeon berated Evangelical

⁷⁴*Edinburgh Review*, vol. 52 (January 1831), p. 449.

⁷⁵Hannah More, 'Thoughts on the Manners of the Great', *The Works of Hannah More*, New ed., 11 vols. (London, T. Cadell, 1830), vol. XI, p. 42.

⁷⁶Stephen, *Essays*, vol. II, pp. 171-172.

⁷⁷W.E. Gladstone, 'The Evangelical Movement; its Parentage, Progress, and Issue', *British Quarterly Review*, lxx (1879), p. 7.

⁷⁸Mark Pattison, *Essays by the Late Mark Pattison*, 2 vols., ed. by Henry Nettlehip (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1889), vol. II, p. 268.

⁷⁹Doreen M. Rosman, *Evangelicals and Culture* (London: Croom Helm, 1984), p. 217.

scholars like Claudius Buchanan and Thomas Thomason, who fretted that the secular character of their studies was detrimental to their preparation for the ministry. 'You come here for study', Simeon told his students,

for discipline of mind, for the acquisition of knowledge...Your duty to God requires you to devote your time and energy to the University course of study; and your Bible reading (beyond what is needful for daily devotional duties) must be confined to the leisure which you have after spending the proper hours in University study and necessary exercise.⁸⁰

To ignore the acquisition of knowledge, and particularly theological knowledge, was to risk dire results: 'If we neglect it', Lord Teignmouth wrote, 'we shall build our hopes of happiness, both here and hereafter, on a foundation of sand'.⁸¹

Thus, learning and knowledge were cultivated and valued, at least within the preserves of an earlier Evangelicalism. Still, the Evangelicals viewed that ultimate symbol of learning, the University, with fear and trepidation.

Three primary fears lay at the heart of their concern. In the first place, University life represented an experience of the temptation-in-the-wilderness. 'What I saw at Cambridge', Lord Teignmouth wrote to his son Charles in 1813,

would furnish subjects for a volume of reflections. I cannot conceive a situation more exposed to dangerous temptations, than that of a College life; particularly to those whose religious principles have not been duly cultivated, and who are left to their own exclusive guidance, without a conscientious friend or tutor to direct and instruct them. The danger becomes the greater, if, from their rank, they should be exempted from the stricter rules of Collegiate discipline, and be allowed indulgences not permitted to those of inferior stations.⁸²

Social pressures placed upon students to entertain peers far beyond their means, pleasurable diversions such as boating, racing, shooting, flirting, and heavy drinking lurked around every corner. Besides these, Atkinson maintained the presence of

cook's boys and butler's boys, and I know not how many other, all bowing and scraping as if you were the Grand Seigneur. These and the Cambridge tradesmen, all in fact who live by the Colleges, are a set of cringing, knavish varlets, that would stoop to any meanness to empty the pockets of a gowmsman.⁸³

Portraits of eighteenth and nineteenth-century student life point to the frequency students succumbed to these temptations.

Thoughtful sons of Evangelical households were no less sensitive to the dangers, and could even see the Cambridge experience as a rite of passage. Tom Macaulay wrote to his father that he embarked upon his University career in the knowledge that

⁸⁰Abner William Brown, Recollections of the Conversational Parties of the Rev. Charles Simeon, M.A. (London: Hamilton, Adams, and Co., 1863), p. 36.

⁸¹Shore, Memoir, vol. II, p. 306.

⁸²Ibid., pp. 214-215.

⁸³Atkinson, 'Struggles', p. 500.

The evils of Cambridge, from all that I have been able to learn, are evils which must be sought, and from such a depth of moral degradation I trust that the goodness of God, my own education, and the connections which I have formed will preserve me.⁸⁴

John Venn was to be no less clear about his fears:

The very air of Cambridge seems infected by the breath of anti-Christ: everything serious dies in it. The constant company of young men in the bloom of youth and vigour of spirits, whose only aim is to enjoy pleasure and mirth, and whose conversation tends to divert and dissipate all religious thought;...They cherish levity, thoughtlessness and negligence about spiritual things in the extreme, they leave no time for the mind to learn any thing right and indispose it for doing so.⁸⁵

The temptation to become too absorbed in study arose as another danger attending the University career. The danger appears inherent, and to a degree, unavoidable, in a system in which the future of one's academic career depended upon commendable results at examination time. Hard-reading men could see little middle ground as they worked diligently to attain to the highest honours, and hoi polloi found themselves with little ambition to pursue academic excellence. The exertion required to achieve this excellence the Evangelicals saw as potentially soul-destroying. Thomason and Buchanan were not alone in their discomfort with the academic discipline that took away from the pursuit of 'the one thing needful'. Another student declared: 'I feel every day more and more the absolute necessity of watching against the besetting sin of this place, absorption of mind in worldly study'.⁸⁶ The danger also threatened the body and the spirit. Solomon Atkinson spoke of his discovery that 'in another [graveyard] rested some student of great promise, who had fallen a sacrifice to intense study'⁸⁷, and in a letter written in 1775, John Newton mourned the lot of another victim to John Thornton:

But like Mr. Isaac Milner, he has hurt himself much by hard study, tho' not in the same way. He has a weakness upon his nerves, which makes him tremble upon a slight surprize and I am afraid may greatly hinder the exertion of his powers in the pulpit.⁸⁸

Intended to enliven and broaden, education also had the power to consume and destroy.

Finally, engagement with one's studies could tempt the student to illusions of intellectual grandeur and a confusion of priorities. Evangelical parents certainly valued education, and they expected their sons to do well. They saw the task of the student as a legitimate calling from God, which was to be taken with the utmost seriousness, but as with other spheres to which men may

⁸⁴Holland, Macaulay, p. 343.

⁸⁵Quoted in Michael Hennell, John Venn and the Clapham Sect (London: Lutterworth Press, 1958), p. 59.

⁸⁶E. Wilson, Memoirs of the Late Rev. J. H. Forsyth, 3rd ed. (London: T. Hatchard, 1851), p. 55.

⁸⁷Atkinson, 'Struggles', p. 500.

⁸⁸Cambridge University Library Add. MS 7674/1/B, John Newton to John Thornton, 27 May 1775.

be called, the student must not seek a station higher than the one in which God intends the student to find himself. Thus William Hey counselled his son John on the eve of his entrance to University:

You think, that, as your abilities are not great, much study at Cambridge may do you harm, and can bring you no great credit. I know not how far your abilities might enable you to proceed; but diligence in your academical studies is undoubtedly a duty. No desire of academical honours should lead a young man to injure his health by study; and no fear of want of success should deter him from a proper attention to the duties of his station. There is such pride in some students, that they will take no pains because they find they are incapable of attaining a high rank in the university. Be content with a low rank, if Divine Providence has made you incapable of a high one. But remember that one talent is to be improved, as well as ten.⁸⁹

The desire for recognition through the attainment of honours threatened to upset not only contentment with a God-given station but also discernment of vocation. Henry Venn maintained that a deluded perception of one's greatness led to a devaluation of the people the educated man was meant to serve. 'More especially', he wrote,

I look upon it as the great sin and reproach of scholars, that they almost universally neglect their fellow-creatures. They are lamentably selfish: they make no use of their learning, and the influence it gives them, and their ability to teach, as they should do every day, in setting forth the great things of God's Law, and pleading the glorious cause of God against the world and all the deluded votaries of pleasure.⁹⁰

The pursuit of a University career, in Evangelical eyes, was a risky, though necessary, business. Pursued faithfully, with the armour of a family's anxious prayers, it could result in the fulfilment of God's will. Succumbing to its temptations, however, could spell destruction of nothing less than body, mind and spirit.

In light of these concerns, Isaac Milner stood as a steadying and reassuring figure. He had experienced for himself the physical and mental strains resulting from over-indulgence in study, and even admitted that not entirely pure motives inspired his successful bid for the Senior Wrangler's prize. By the time Wright recorded his reflections of University days, Queens' had acquired the reputation of dedication to learning and scholarship, though Milner would not tolerate pretension or showing off. Wright recorded a delightful anecdote of a conversation Milner had with one particularly priggish student who spent all evening telling the Jacksonian professor everything he knew about natural philosophy. When he asked Milner his opinion of the cause of the wind, the answer was 'peas-soup, peas-soup, peas-soup'.⁹¹ On another occasion, a student, probably hoping for a compliment from the Queens' president, informed him of his successful placement upon the list of Wranglers, albeit on a low rung. Milner's pleasure at the news was qualified, and his biographer concluded the account of the incident by commenting

⁸⁹Pearson, Hey, p. 13.

⁹⁰Venn, Life, p. 314.

⁹¹Wright, Alma Mater, vol. I, p. 50.

I suppose, that the joy expressed was rather greater than the circumstances warranted, looked very good-humouredly in his visitor's face, shook him heartily by the hand, and said, 'Very well, very well; it's capital! we'll count from the other end of the list'.⁹²

Finally, Milner recognized the enticements of a life freed from watchful parental oversight. Although behaviour that resulted in 'breaking of lamps and windows, shouting and roaring, blowing of horns, galloping up and down the streets on horseback or in carriages, fighting and mobbing in the town and neighbouring villages'⁹³ was not to be tolerated, he believed that within the general body of undergraduates lay a 'laudable disposition to be attentive to the studies, and obedient to the laws of the University'.⁹⁴

Combining, then, a firm hand with a respectful attitude toward his students, and a dedication to the task of teaching within the University, Milner's presence offered a glimmer of hope to Evangelical families whose sons faced this trial by fire. Regretful that many young men upon entering orders were prone to think that 'they have done with study'⁹⁵, Milner exemplified a man who earnestly devoted his life to an enquiry of the natural world as well as of the things of God, and he believed that he had done so in the service of the Creator. Learning, zeal and discretion were three qualities to be cultivated, particularly amongst the clergy, and as public defenders and propagators of the faith, the priesthood must be intellectually capable of thinking deeply about God and the world. It was logical that such a training of the mind began at University but the experience should induct one into a lifelong process. Milner reminded his Evangelical colleagues that this learning, hardly to be feared, should be received and cherished as a gift from God.

III. The President of the Queens' College

What did Milner actually do to encourage the establishment and growth of Evangelical Christianity within the University? The assertions of historians who knew Evangelicalism well are clear and unequivocal: through Isaac Milner's influence and ministrations, the precarious future of Evangelical education within the University became an assured reality, and the number of Evangelical students swelled. Understandably, a renewed Evangelical presence in the University of the early nineteenth century was at first concentrated within Queens' College, and to an extent, Magdalene College, but it eventually spread and touched other areas of the University. Sir James Stephen asserted that Milner's establishment flourished as a nursery for Evangelical neophytes⁹⁶

⁹²Milner, *Life*, p. 409.

⁹³*Ibid.*, p. 399.

⁹⁴*Ibid.*

⁹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 516.

⁹⁶Stephen, *Essays*, vol. II, p. 369.

and Overton noted that it was greatly owing to Milner that 'Cambridge was not marked, as Oxford was, by hostility to Evangelicalism, and that so large a proportion of the Evangelical clergy were always Cambridge men'.⁹⁷ Probably the most famous of the judgements, Balleine asserted:

Under his benevolent despotism the college prospered mightily. Evangelical parents sent their sons; young Evangelicals seeking ordination came from all parts of the country, and before long, instead of being one of the smallest colleges, Queens' became one of the largest in the whole University. Even his appointment to the Deanery of Carlisle made no difference to his work. He gave his vacations to the cathedral, but the terms to his college. In the course of a long and honourable life he gained many distinctions, but we remember him as the man who fought and won the battle, which made a university education possible for avowed Evangelicals.⁹⁸

That Milner had attained to an enviable position of power and influence is plain in these historical assessments. What they fail to recognize is the circumstances that led to Milner's unlikely accession to the presidency of a Cambridge college. His northern connections alone would have cast his possible leadership into doubt as the Yorkshireman had the reputation of being crude and unsophisticated. Still, the fact that certain northern schools had earned fine reputations as centres of mathematical study⁹⁹ and the examples of eminent northern men such as Bentley in classics, Paley in natural philosophy and Watson in chemistry and divinity (despite a predilection for blue-woollen stockings and uncouthness) served to challenge some of the preconceived notions of the capabilities of the northerner.

Of greater significance to Milner's improbable accession to power within Queens' was the character of the college itself. George Dyer believed that in terms of religious opinion, 'none in the University has been so remarkable and prominent, for variety, as Queens'¹⁰⁰, though by the time of Milner's election to the Presidency, Queens' had become known for its espousal of the latitudinarian and republican creeds. Queensmen had been present and actively involved in the presentation of the petition to abolish subscription to the Articles at Archbishop Tennison's library. Robert Plumtre, Milner's immediate predecessor was interested in Cambridge reformist activities and in a letter of 1785 that discussed a Fifth of November sermon, he displayed his colours:

It was on I Pet. 2.16, in the high Spirit of Liberty, and sometimes handling the subject rather as a Lawyer than a Divine, but on the whole not more said than might

⁹⁷John Henry Overton, The Evangelical Revival in the Eighteenth Century, 4th ed. (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1898), p. 82.

⁹⁸Balleine, History, pp. 86-87.

⁹⁹Ben Ross Schneider, Wordsworth's Cambridge Education (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), p. 5.

¹⁰⁰According to Dyer, one need to look only to Queens' picture gallery to confirm this truth: 'So that instead of having Jesus Christ and the royal martyr, as in a picture gallery at Oxford, you have the royal martyr, Charles I and Oliver Cromwell, the usurper: Charles II with General Monk, described as the Joshua, who led up the Restoration, and Hugh Peters, as the Zimri to the opposite party, chaplain to Cromwell: a contrast so remarkable, not to be found, as I recollect, in any college picture gallery in England.' Dyer, History, vol. II, p. 165.

I think be justified on rational and constitutional principles, though perhaps not wanted in the present times + circumstances. He went also into the subject of Religious Liberty as well as Civil, upon which he agreed too well with the heretical principles of the M[aste]r. of Queens for him to find any other fault than that he drew out his matter to too great a length, his whole discourse lasting an hour and 1/4.¹⁰¹

Nor do other sections of the Plumtre correspondence indicate that he would have been particularly receptive to an Evangelical. He identified George Hewitt as 'a steady serious young man, without being an Enthusiast'¹⁰² and in another letter, pointed out that Charles Simeon had upset patients in the local hospital by his religious conversations; the postscript added that the complaint arose as one 'not pointed so particularly against Mr. S., but against Methodists in general'.¹⁰³ Lists of tutors in the Queens' College Conclusion Books reveal that several prominent figures in Cambridge's republican and Unitarian circles frequented the college society during the early days of Milner's residence: Charles Crawford, John Hammond, Martin Naylor and Thomas Fyshe Palmer (ironically, Palmer had inclined toward 'methodism' during his younger days¹⁰⁴). Henry Gunning, sympathetic to the establishment of Whig and reformist principles within the University, declared that under Plumtre's reign, the College 'had been distinguished for its attachment to Civil and Religious Liberty'.¹⁰⁵ One can scarcely imagine a more inhospitable or unlikely place for the Evangelicals to gain a foothold in Cambridge.

No solid evidence survives to illuminate the reasons accounting for Milner's election to the Presidency of Queens'.¹⁰⁶ But several clues suggest that for whatever the reason, Milner had in fact been selected and then groomed for this office. An enigmatic statement Plumtre made in a letter to Lord Hardwicke assured the peer of Milner's support in a political matter as 'I have a considerable claim upon him for such a favour'.¹⁰⁷ Nothing further sheds light on the nature of this obligation, though one can conceive that negotiations concerning the future had taken place between a promising fellow and his Master. Milner's appointment to the tutorship of Queens' also provides another clue as according to Winstanley, this office was 'often a stepping-stone to the

¹⁰¹British Library Add. MS 35,629,f.190, Robert Plumtre to the Earl of Hardwicke, 5 November 1783.

¹⁰²*Ibid.*, p. 160, 21 May 1783.

¹⁰³*Ibid.*, p. 243, 12 April 1785.

¹⁰⁴Dyer, *History*, vol. II, p. 159.

¹⁰⁵Gunning, *Reminiscences*, vol. I, p. 262.

¹⁰⁶Queens' College Conclusion Book, 1787-1832, 11 October 1788. On this date, Milner's name simply appears on a list of college officers with no mention of Robert Plumtre.

¹⁰⁷British Library Add. MS 35,629,f.54, Robert Plumtre to Lord Hardwicke, 15 July 1780.

Mastership'.¹⁰⁸ A disgruntled student who published a pamphlet to protest his being passed over for a fellowship under Milner's tenure as Tutor pronounced that Milner had 'gained by his cunning the entire disposal of the heart of so great a personage as the master of the college'¹⁰⁹; a few pages later, the perceived designs of the Tutor became more explicit: 'Mr. Milner has an eye to the mastership, which upon a vacancy is filled by the votes of the fellows'.¹¹⁰ This accusation provides a curious hint that plans may have been in the process of being made for Milner's future as early as 1780. In this respect, the office of Tutor would have provided suitable training for the possible president waiting in the wings as he was entrusted with a significant portion of college administration and pastoral oversight of students. Further, Charles Bowdler contended in his account of the presidential election dispute immediately following Milner's death in 1820 that the College had appointed Milner to the living of St. Botolph's, Cambridge in 1778 in order for him to secure the financial backing required for a serious bid for the presidency.¹¹¹

Thus, several clues, coupled with the tradition that presidential incumbents of Queens' tended to enjoy long terms of office, suggest that it was intention and not a fluke of fate that had governed the election of 1788. Moreover, portraits of Milner suggest he was a strong man gifted with an authoritative bearing, and Twigg points out these qualities may account for his election.¹¹² Milner's conduct in situations such as the trial of William Frend, the related expulsion of Thomas Fyshe Palmer and the disciplinary actions taken against students in 1810 demonstrate the strength of his character. Yet, no firm evidence shows Milner was favoured for this reason or even that Plumptre and his colleagues saw discipline as a particular problem in Queens'.¹¹³

Winstanley, however, maintains that the mastership of a college was the crown of an academic career¹¹⁴, and this assertion may point to as adequate an explanation as any. Though

¹⁰⁸Winstanley, *Unreformed*, p. 276.

¹⁰⁹Reginald Bligh, *The Defence of the Rev. Reginald Bligh* (London: J. Almon and J. Debriet, 1780), p. 6.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 14

¹¹¹'And this dept. further saith, that he also understood and believes, that it was generally understood by the Fellows that the said I. Milner for several years held the living of St. Botolph's, in Cambridge, (which was tenable with his Fellowship,) for the express purpose of possessing the income necessary to make him eligible to the said office of President'. Charles Bowdler, *The Case of the President of Queen's College* (London: Joseph Butterworth and Son, 1821), p. 48.

¹¹²John Twigg, *A History of Queens' College Cambridge, 1448-1986* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1987), p. 171.

¹¹³Mary Milner, however, did claim Milner's reform of Queens' abuses as one of his presidential accomplishments. Milner, *Life*, p. 40.

¹¹⁴Winstanley, *Unreformed*, p. 276.

only thirty-eight years of age at the time of his election, Milner had distinguished himself as a scholar. Through the appointment, the college had chosen a leader who embodied excellence in learning and thus, would possibly attract students of high calibre. Milner also could claim expertise in fields (mathematics and natural philosophy) that the society had deemed relevant to a changing world. Nor had Milner exhibited any of the enthusiastic signs of the 'typical' Evangelical that may have dispelled any hopes for his candidacy.

Milner lacked Evangelical support within Queens' College; nor did the wider University afford a hospitable environment for identifiable Evangelicals. Evangelicalism had initially secured a foothold in Cambridge through the work of a group which included Francis Okely, William Hammond, Richard Forster and William Delamotte. This group, active in the late 1730's and early 1740's, organized themselves into a society similar to the one began by the Wesleys in Oxford and engaged in the exercise of Christian discipline and acts of charity. Such was the extent of their organization and activity, that Charles Wesley wrote enthusiastically in January of 1738 to his brother John, 'Brother William [Delamotte] and mother exceedingly zealous for the Lord of Hosts. William has raised a party for God at Cambridge. These are already stigmatized for Methodists'.¹¹⁵ The group began to disperse in the early 1740's with some of them (Okely, Delamotte, Hammond and Lawrence Batty to name a few) joining the ranks of the Moravians.¹¹⁶ The case of the students at St. Edmund Hall, Oxford, for which judgement had been given in 1768, undoubtedly quashed much ambition to reestablish the Evangelical foothold in the Universities. Rowland Hill attempted to revive a society with David Simpson, Thomas Pentycross and Charles de Coetlogon in association with John Berridge, but this experiment died out by 1771. Berridge, whose proximity to Cambridge would suggest a possible source for encouragement of young scholarly Evangelicals, had forsworn the value of the learning which had once enthralled him; he could no longer be looked to for sympathetic leadership. The picture brightened with the beginning of Henry Venn's ministry in 1771 when he assumed his responsibilities in Yelling. Many young men patiently rode the twenty miles separating Cambridge from Venn's parish in order to sit at this pastor's feet.

As has already been noted, Henry and John Venn experienced firsthand University prejudice against Evangelicals. Charles Simeon faced conflict in his Cambridge parish for years, and in later life, he recalled

the time that I was quite surprised that a Fellow of my own College ventured to walk with me for a quarter of an hour on the grass-plot before Clare Hall; and for many years after I began my ministry I was 'as a man wondered at,' by reason of the paucity of those who showed any regard for true religion.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵John Wesley, The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, ed. by John Telford, 8 vols. (London: The Epworth Press, 1931), vol. I, p. 368.

¹¹⁶John D. Walsh, 'Cambridge Methodists' in Christian Spirituality: Essays in Honour of Gordon Rupp, ed. Peter Brooks, (London: SCM Press LTD., 1975), p. 263.

¹¹⁷H.C.G. Moule, Charles Simeon (London: Methuen and Co., 1905), p. 72.

Perhaps Isaac Milner beat the news of his brother's Evangelical conversion to Cambridge or perhaps the Queens' latitudinarian society fancied itself broad enough to absorb one of this undesirable persuasion.

Maligned and disadvantaged they were, but Evangelicals had begun to infiltrate the University in the decade following Milner's entrance as a student. A beacon of hope shone from Magdalene College when, in the absence of a negligent master, the Evangelical tutorial team of Samuel Hey, William Farish and Henry Jowett quietly arranged the admission of Evangelical students while earning reputations as trustworthy teachers with whom anxious parents could entrust the University education of their sons. By the time of Milner's accession to the presidency of Queens', Evangelicals had regained a foothold, albeit an unsteady one, within the University, though like William Romaine toiling away in his London parish by the flicker of a lone candle, they worked and studied in tiny and fragile enclaves.

Four primary considerations went into the selection of a Cambridge college in the eighteenth century: fashion, the existence of family and social connections, quality of teaching and care for students and the availability of economic assistance. By all accounts, Queens' College was one of the smallest and least well-known of the colleges when Milner took the helm in 1788; shortly after his death, it had grown to number the third largest, following only St. John's and Trinity which had been popular choices for many years. How did Milner go about establishing and building the Evangelical stronghold for which he was to be remembered?

Milner would not have cared a mite about Queens' being fashionable and, if anything, the reputed uncouthness which characterized the northerner had survived and perhaps had even been cultivated through Milner's tenure. Based on recollections of Henry Venn of C.M.S. fame and member of Queens' from 1814, his son, another John Venn, claimed that fellows of the College were 'of a very rough and uncultivated character'.¹¹⁸ The second and third criteria for college selection Milner paid considerable attention to. In a discussion concerning the distribution of college fellowships, he maintained the importance of connexions: 'In a small college', he wrote,

when several fellows are, at one time, of the same, or even of neighbouring counties, we find that they are apt to continue so to the exclusion of other counties; and this, not, perhaps, from any particular affection for a person's own county, but because admissions of pupils are generally owing to the existing master and fellows and their connexions, and these pupils are the materials for making future fellows.¹¹⁹

To win the trust of parents who sent their sons off to that wilderness of the University, the College had to prove its staff could provide the appropriate role models, and would instill the favoured doctrine.

Milner's first step in his strategy of reform, then, was to purge the society of fellows of questionable morality or heretical principles, either theological or political. Only one member

¹¹⁸Venn, *Annals*, p. 153.

¹¹⁹Milner, *Life*, p. 270.

faced outright dismissal. The president and fellows expelled Thomas Fyshe Palmer, granted a leave of absence from the College in 1790,¹²⁰ on 16 January 1794 'on account of his seditious Conduct'.¹²¹ Upon his departure from Cambridge, Palmer went to Scotland where he became a Unitarian clergyman and associated with the Society of the Friends of Liberty in Dundee. An address he wrote which advocated universal suffrage, along with the total subversion of the government, resulted in a conviction handed down from the Government, and a sentence of seven years' transportation to Botany Bay. The unfortunate man began the journey back to Britain at the appointed time but died along the way.

Although Palmer's case was the only one resulting in an actual dismissal, Henry Gunning suggested that Milner had other effective means of disposing of less desirable characters. John Hammond left the college upon his marriage, Thomas Jordan and Beau Morris accepted livings, and Robert Plumtre entered the bar. Robert Ingram accepted the college living at Seagrave in 1802, and then promptly retaliated with the publication of The Causes of the Increase of Methodism and Dissension, and of the Popularity of what is called Evangelical Preaching, and the Means of Obviating them. Milner undoubtedly felt relieved to have him out of the immediate college community, though Ingram's continuation in a college living may well have been awkward.

From his firsthand observations of Milner's relationships with his college staff, Gunning claimed that the President of Queens' 'soon acquired that entire ascendancy over the Fellows, that, after a few years, no one thought of offering the slightest opposition to his will'.¹²² Still, one must not conclude that Milner's creation of an Evangelical preserve happened overnight. As late as 1797, Milner complained to Wilberforce, 'With us, Queen's, I know but of one man I could trust a youth to, that is, Thomason'.¹²³ Thomas Thomason, though a *bona fide* Evangelical, could not even claim a genuine Queens' pedigree; Milner had enticed him to his college from Magdalene with the promise of a fellowship. In 1798, the President must have found himself in a similarly bereft situation. Milner explained his predicament more fully in another letter to Wilberforce:

The case is this. At Queen's we happened unfortunately to have several clever Fellows, some time ago, who should have filled our offices of trust, as tutors, & c., but were disqualified on account of their principles. I was positively determined to have nothing to do with Jacobins or infidels, and custom has placed in my power the appointment of the tutors, provided they be Fellows of our own College. Our own being very unfit, we went out of college sorely against the wish of several; however, by determining to make no jobs of such things, but to take the very best men I could find, I carried the matter through, in no less than three instances: - Thomason, Barnes, Sowerby. The consequence has been, that a belief has taken place, that we should continue to go out of college for candidates for fellowships, after the cause

¹²⁰Queens' College Conclusion Book, 1787-1832, January 1790.

¹²¹*Ibid.*, 16 January 1794.

¹²²Gunning, *Reminiscences*, vol. I, p. 263.

¹²³Milner, *Life*, p. 136.

had ceased.¹²⁴

Nearly ten years after Milner's election to the Queens' presidency, men of suitable tutorial stuff, (the 'right' sort of principles and exemplary conduct), were not to be found in the precincts of Queens' College.

That Milner had to look afield for his tutorial staff has received attention in the literature addressing the situation of the Cambridge Evangelicals. As noted above, this practice had clearly created conflict within his community. The collegiate system of the last two centuries was tight and closed and Milner himself had experienced its disadvantages when in 1788-89, he had been considered for the Mastership of Trinity College. But the implications of this problem have not been properly addressed. In the first place, Milner, the builder of the renowned Evangelical nursery, did not have at his immediate beck and call nursemaids to look after his young charges. He had conveniently disposed himself of at least some of the questionable figures, but a dearth of candidates existed to take their places.

One source of explanation lies in the management of the College. Twigg pointed out¹²⁵ that it was alleged that between 1776 and the beginning of 1797, not one college fellow had left his position to take up a college living. This lack of movement greatly reduced prospects for fellowships which in turn lessened an incentive used to encourage possible students to choose Queens'. For Milner's purposes, the slow turnover of college staff severely limited the introduction of Evangelical fellows into the Queens' society. The practice of occasionally sequestering what scant fellowships there were to cover other college expenses further limited Milner's opportunities.

Of even greater significance than what this predicament reveals about the state of the senior staff at Queens' is the glimpse it allows of the composition of the student body. Colleges typically chose their fellows from amongst their own students, and Milner's problem strongly suggests that the College was not abounding with suitable candidates of the necessary qualifications of learning, sobriety and doctrinal principles. This is not to suggest that there were not any. The Elland Society, an organisation founded in 1767 by Henry Venn for gathering widely-separated Yorkshire Evangelical clergymen together for spiritual counsel, fellowship and mutual education, had decided in 1777 on a plan of 'raising a Fund for the purpose of educating poor pious young Men for the Ministry'.¹²⁶ The selected recipients of the Society's benevolence 'shall go thro' a regular Education at School, + afterwards at one of the Universities, unless the Society shall think it proper to offer them for Orders without a University Education'.¹²⁷ Through this project, Evangelicals attempted to provide much-needed financial and emotional support to their ministerial

¹²⁴Milner, Life, p. 243.

¹²⁵Twigg, History, p. 169.

¹²⁶Wakefield Public Record Office, Elland Society MSS, c84.3, 19 March 1777.

¹²⁷Ibid.

candidates while making an effort to guarantee the continuation of the Evangelical ministry. It can also be seen as the first Evangelical effort to infiltrate the ranks of the University. Early on, officials of the Society had negotiated places at Magdalene College for Elland students, and Milner's succession to the upper echelons of Queens' offered an alternative, at least on paper. Still, according to Elland records, it was not before 1800 that students were sent frequently to Queens'. Claudius Buchanan, sent to Queens' in 1791 because of his benefactor's (Henry Thornton) acquaintance with Milner, confirmed the lack of Evangelical students in his society and even considered moving to another college. Developing friendships, however, with other 'serious students', satisfied the social need and he remained.¹²⁸

The reasons accounting for the noticeable and surprising lack of Queens' Evangelical students are several. Firstly, the availability of fellowships was a valuable recruiting card held by colleges and the sluggish overturn of fellows in Queens' would have put the College at a disadvantage. Further, the placement of suitable clergy in desirable livings was a crucial part of the Evangelical design and a primary object of clerical societies such as Elland. Queens', unfortunately, had few livings in its gift, and therefore limited preferments for possible clergymen. But finally, Magdalene College had been regarded as a kind of Evangelical preserve. Evangelical families such as the Heys from Leeds had been educating their sons at Magdalene since the mid-1760's. Further, while Queens' could boast a master who could help with the admission of students, Magdalene had the tutorial staff to care for them. A vignette of Hey's conduct in Magdalene affords a view of Evangelical leadership:

In this College discipline had been much neglected when the learned and reverend Samuel Hey was appointed tutor: he immediately began by enforcing a proper degree of attention to study, regularity in attendance on lectures, chapel, etc., by which means the odious term *quiz* (which was first applied to persons of slovenly habit and unpleasant address and deportment) was fixed on every one of our society: but to the credit of our tutors be it added, no college, in proportion to its number of pupils, has since that epoch sent out so many men who have distinguished themselves in the University.¹²⁹

Doubtless, the election of one who essentially became an absentee president, and the subsequent election of Hey as Vice-Master, gave the Evangelicals in Magdalene just the advantage they were looking for. George Burnett, a founding member of Elland, wrote to Lord Darmouth that Elland students

have hitherto been sent without exception to Cambridge, where Mr. S. Hey of Magdalen has exceedingly befriended them; and the tutors Farish and Jowett are both serious men...We have not any rule against sending them to Oxford, but the advantage they have at Cambridge has prevailed in its favour.¹³⁰

¹²⁸Hugh Pearson, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Claudius Buchanan*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1817), vol. I, pp. 49, 55.

¹²⁹Quoted in John Walsh, 'The Magdalene Evangelicals', *Church Quarterly Review*, vol. 159 (October-December 1958), pp. 503-504.

¹³⁰*Ibid.*, p. 502.

But the winds of fortune change, and the Evangelical advantage enjoyed at Magdalene was short-lived. Peter Peckard replaced the miscreant president Barton Wallup in 1785, a man Henry Venn described to his son as 'a most active and daring follower of Socinus'.¹³¹ All, however, had not been completely lost, as the new president remained cordial to Samuel Hey and respected those whose priority was education, despite their religious convictions. His successor, Thomas Gretton, elected in 1797, was to prove more problematic. Gunning recorded that he had actively tried to take action to weaken the Evangelical influence on the values and priorities sewn into the fabric of his college, though he admitted this was a difficult task:

I had heard Dr. Gretton, (who was sixteen years Master of the College) declare, he thought there must be something in the air of Magdalene that made men Methodists; 'for,' said he, 'we have elected Fellows from Clare Hall, from Trinity, and other Colleges, whom we have considered to be most Anti-methodistical, but in a short time they all became Methodists'.¹³²

Of even greater consequence was the loss of tutorial staff. By 1787, Samuel Hey had left the college to assume the duties of vicar at Steeple Ashton in Wiltshire. In 1794, Farish began to lecture from the University's chemistry chair and then in 1813, was elected to the Jacksonian professorship. While Farish's association with Magdalene remained strong, his other teaching obligations (and like Milner, Farish did lecture) naturally limited his involvement in the life of the college.¹³³ Though Magdalene did not lose its connection with Evangelicals, the loss of particular individuals within key positions of leadership coupled with an uncooperative head of house severely limited possibilities for Evangelical growth and influence.

The strength of Queens' leadership emerged in the wake of a weakening Evangelical influence in Magdalene College. Dyer saw this transition happening and wrote,

The members of Magdalene College had been long distinguished for their attachment to the doctrines of the Thirty-nine Articles, in their literal and grammatical sense. This character is now passing over to Queen's College, under the government of Dr. Isaac Milner.¹³⁴

By 1797, the problem that had caused the movement from fellowships to college livings to bottleneck had eased, and with more opportunities for an academic career available, Evangelical students came in greater numbers. This increase can be seen in the students lists in Elland data which indicate that Queens' was favoured after the turn of the century. Further, Milner's orchestration of a kind of tutorial *coup d'état* in his successful placement of non-Queensmen Thomas Thomason, George Barnes and Thomas Sowerby in his society increased the college's

¹³¹Walsh, 'Magdalene Evangelicals', p. 504.

¹³²Gunning, *Reminiscences*, vol. I, p. 263.

¹³³Farish also married; his son, William Milner Farish, bore witness, at least in name, to the close friendship between the two Jacksonian professors.

¹³⁴George Dyer, 'Cambridge Fragments', *Privileges of the University of Cambridge*, 2 vols. (London: Longman and Company, 1824), vol. II, p. 23.

appeal to the Evangelical constituency. Thomason had been an Elland scholar and Sowerby served as a moral tutor, reporting back to Elland officials the progress and the conduct of their students. Barnes undoubtedly presented a pedigree that was similarly attractive.

Twigg contended that Milner chose his tutors 'solely on the grounds of religious character'.¹³⁵ He then referred to a letter in which Milner commented to his correspondent about the suitability of an individual for a tutorship:

Yet if he were deficient in the religious part of his character, I should think it most hazardous to trust him to a youth of your son's years; and that you would very dearly purchase the little good that can be expected - dearly - very dearly - at the hazard of a deterioration of his religious principles, in consequence of irreligious association.¹³⁶

Directly preceding this quotation, however, Milner commended the proposed candidate's intellectual prowess. To pronounce Milner guilty of sacrificing learning to religious principles is simply wrong. Learning remained as much a priority in his consideration of college appointments as other qualifications; thus, concerning Thomason's candidacy, he wrote,

Some time ago, Queen's College, of which I have the honour to be Master, was in want of a Tutor; and, there not being a person of my own College whom I judged proper for this truly important situation, I fixed upon Mr. Thomason, after looking very diligently through the whole University; and I was certainly induced to appoint him Tutor of Queen's College, entirely on account of his high reputation for learning, good principles, and exemplary conduct.¹³⁷

A brief survey of the academic successes of some of Milner's tutors serves to illustrate Milner's insistence on scholarly excellence. Thomas Sowerby had been a Senior Wrangler and First Smith's prizeman, Thomas Thomason claimed the Norrisian Prize in 1795 and graduated as Fifth Wrangler. George Barnes had received the rank of third Wrangler and Joshua King followed the footsteps of his president: his examiners accorded him with the position of Senior Wrangler coupled with a note of distinction, and he carried away the first Smith's prize. As with other Evangelical colleagues concerned with the pursuit of learning, Milner could not escape the tensions between faith and intellect, but he did not abstract the cultivation of excellence in scholarship from the holding of Evangelical principles. The fostering of an academic environment which resulted in the production of Evangelical numbskulls was not a part of Milner's programme.

Still, the cultivation of religious attitudes consonant with the Evangelical interpretation of the gospel within an academic setting was bound to create tensions, and Milner was acutely aware of his role in achieving a balance. In recollections of his perception of Milner's objectives, Sir Edward Alderson, Senior Wrangler of 1809, wrote,

I should characterize his style of examination as being favourable rather to ready and quick students, than to deeply read and learned ones; and I own that my subsequent experience in life leads me to think that he was right in that course. If the

¹³⁵Twigg, *History*, pp. 175-76.

¹³⁶Milner, *Life*, p. 294.

¹³⁷*Ibid.*, p. 344.

University were intended solely, or even mainly, to produce great philosophers in particular sciences or arts, he was wrong; but if he intended, as I believe it ought to be, to produce those who, in the language of our 'bidding prayer,' are 'to do God service both in church and state,' then that course of study and of examination which tends to bring out the most accomplished men, should be pursued'.¹³⁸

Though the encouragement of learning was on the top of Milner's list of priorities, so was the nurturing of the religious convictions and moral conduct that young Evangelicals would carry with them into positions of leadership within church and society. What, then, did Milner's Evangelical nursery look like?

Given Milner's reputation as a strong Evangelical leader, it is surprising to find that his biographer made very little direct reference to the religious life within Queens' itself; if anything, she feels compelled to defend his lack of liturgical leadership, both within the college and the University church, citing his ill health as the underlying reason. Of course chapel services took place, but no picture remains of the vigour or character of its life. Other sources, however, yield hints from which one can draw conclusions. Milner believed strongly in discipline as a useful tool though one that must be used wisely, and a casual comment to a correspondent regarding a prospective student suggests he would have maintained this concern within his community: 'I venture to predict, that, in regard to discipline, we shall have no difficulties whatever'.¹³⁹ Entries in the Conclusion Book suggest that he did not tolerate questionable conduct from his domestic staff and records remain of dismissals because of drunkenness and improper behaviour.¹⁴⁰ He did not exempt his Tutors from scrutiny, and requested his senior bursar Joseph Jee to investigate the behaviour of another fellow John Hubbersty; rumours had circulated that Hubbersty had kept a woman on the side.¹⁴¹ The Conclusion Book further indicates that the Fellows banned dogs from the College in the spring of 1795,¹⁴² possibly as an effort to deter the students from the temptations of shooting and hunting. Finally, that reputation for abstinence from the fruit of the vine which had so characterized the society at Magdalene seemingly infiltrated Queens' as well. 'The Simeonitish members of this college', wrote Wright in the conducting of his mini-tour of Cambridge,

are as famous for abstinence from wine, as for excessive bouts of tea-drinking. In my time it was waggishly said by the gaymen, that a Mr. H. 'of our college' also a Simeonite, had been so deeply infected by intercourse with the Queenites, as to limit his own entertainments at the Holy Trinity to the same sober revellings. Moreover, his parties in other respects, were conducted so far like wine parties, that the pot (of vast capacity), used to circulate like the bottle, the phraseology being,

¹³⁸Milner, *Life*, p. 369.

¹³⁹*Ibid.*, p. 340.

¹⁴⁰Queens' College Conclusion Book, 1787-1832, 20 June 1789, 31 January 1797, 19 November 1799.

¹⁴¹Twigg, *History*, p. 222.

¹⁴²Queens' College Conclusion Book, 1787-1832, 25 April 1795.

'Mr. H. the pot's with you.' This tea-table scandal used to give the gentleman, it was propagated to ridicule, no small uneasiness.¹⁴³

Milner, the Evangelical president, then, expected the behaviour of his staff and students to reflect the dignity of their Christian calling. But he did not forget the value Evangelicals placed upon Christian friendship. 'I have almost always found', he wrote to the Bishop of Meath in 1806, 'that the greatest danger attends the commencement of the academical life, when generous and open-hearted youths are apt to form both too many connexions, and too hastily'.¹⁴⁴ A social gap separated heads of colleges from other members of the University, and yet, Milner was clearly deeply interested in students, and made an effort to befriend those in whom he saw promise.

Sometimes this interest took a surprising and spontaneous form. The University limited undergraduates' library privileges, and the more assertive students would wait outside the Public Library in hopes that beneficent Masters of Arts would permit borrowing in their names. John Wright, in fact only loitering outside the building but presumed by Milner to be awaiting the kindness of an M.A. to this end, suddenly found himself in possession of the much-prized privilege without saying a word of petition.¹⁴⁵ Letters in the *Milner Life* suggest that he knew at least some of his students well, occasionally writing letters of consolation or encouragement when they experienced misfortune, or illness overtook them. He was an imposing man, doubtless made more so by his physical girth and reputation, but he met students well, not apparently too concerned with the social stratification. Atkinson reported that on his trek to the Deanery in Carlisle to sue for admission to Queens', Milner had received him 'with a frankness and a kindness of manner which I shall ever bear in grateful remembrance'.¹⁴⁶ A son of John Shore left a similar picture that reveals Milner's sensitivity and warmth toward young people:

I have a vivid recollection of your eminent relative, Dean Milner. I might perhaps mention, that having been introduced to him, as you remember, by my father, I made a point of calling on him whilst an undergraduate at Cambridge. In my visits, I was accompanied by a friend, who had been also introduced to him, and we made them in company, partly because we felt some degree of awe of one so powerfully gifted. But a few minutes' interview with him at once relieved us from all embarrassment; for he adapted himself to his youthful visitors, and delighted us with his conversation.¹⁴⁷

Milner never forgot students. While he enjoyed socialising with his colleagues and reaped the benefits and privileges attached to his office, he did not forget to whom he owed his primary obligations.

But did he ever discuss religion with his students? Stephen, in his vignette of the

¹⁴³Wright, *Alma Mater*, vol. II, pp. 181-182.

¹⁴⁴Milner, *Life*, p. 340.

¹⁴⁵Wright, *Alma Mater*, vol. I, p. 46.

¹⁴⁶Atkinson, 'Struggles', pp. 495-496.

¹⁴⁷Milner, *Life*, p. 526.

Cambridge Evangelicals, accorded the title of Praepositus to Milner and Archdidascalus to Simeon, maintaining that the former did the gathering, the latter, the training.¹⁴⁸ This assessment, however, underestimated the role of a man who was himself deeply committed to the preparation of Evangelical clergy. He constructed a plan for theological education, and showed interest and concern with budding Evangelical scholars such as Buchanan and Martyn. To William Richardson, he lamented the student-professorial gap, saying,

He [Buchanan] seems, indeed, excellently disposed, and I wish his modesty would let him call upon me oftener than he does; for it would really be a pleasure to me to do a service to such a lad: and those subjects have been so familiar to me for a long time, that it gives me no trouble to assist one in his situation.¹⁴⁹

But one fact remains clear: Isaac Milner was no bigot about his religious faith nor did he attempt to force his convictions upon his students. Anecdotes about Milner's informal examinations of hopeful candidates for his college do not suggest that a particular religious orientation was a requirement for admission. Non-evangelical students were certainly a part of the Queens' society, and non-evangelical tutors were tolerated although they survived longer if they were not Jacobins or infidels. Martin Naylor's continued status as a fellow of Queens' after the Frend affair shows some toleration of political differences. Seeds of the Gospel must be sown and nurtured, but they also must be cultivated with care. Thus, Milner's theological engagement with students, on a personal level, was subtle and unobtrusive, respectful though he was certainly concerned that they grew spiritually. Though somewhat lengthy, the following recollection of a former student offers a valuable insight into the way in which Milner helped shape young Evangelicals entrusted to his care:

Being without piety myself during the first two years of my undergraduateship, I was nevertheless surprised that Dr. Milner, who was reputedly pious, made so few allusions to religion, and took, apparently, so little pains to imbue the minds of the students with holy thoughts. At last I was convinced that he acted upon this principle, that as young men are fantastically jealous of their freedom, so, to offer himself as a guide where there was no predisposition to be led, was doing more harm than good. Accordingly, he was not slow to observe a gradual religious change in my temperament, and he sent for me, ostensibly on another ground; and as a sort of postscript to our conversation, asked me if I had any reason for not appearing at the Lord's Supper. He then very affectionately sought to win my confidence, and entered into a long conference with me. Such a conversation took place twice. I afterwards found, from young men of a religious disposition, that he had frequently had earnest conversations with them, which was a great surprise upon me.¹⁵⁰

A young man with a similar experience was George Pryme who, though he was not himself a member of Queens', could claim a common Yorkshire heritage. 'I entertained similar views on some points of doctrine which I had learnt from Dr. Milner', Pryme wrote in reference to Simeon,

¹⁴⁸Stephen, Essays, vol II, p. 369.

¹⁴⁹Milner, Life, p. 208.

¹⁵⁰Ibid., p. 675.

'but I ventured to differ from him [Simeon] as to the impropriety of theatrical entertainments and card-playing, which latter was then still a general custom'.¹⁵¹ Difference of opinion was tolerated and subsequent discussion of questions posed in a Socratic manner could be opportunities for greater understanding. An unidentified gentleman claimed,

He encouraged young men to the most unbounded confidence. When they affirmed rash and untenable opinions, he always threw down his eyes, appeared slightly embarrassed (as through fear of seeming rough with them), played with some article near enough to be handled, and then corrected their error by a series of questions, as though himself stood in doubt; but the issue was always to leave the incautious speaker ashamed of his haste.¹⁵²

Increased understanding of the vital doctrines that formed the basis of Evangelical faith, attendance upon the proclamation of the Gospel in both Word and Sacrament, and the cultivation of a moral life under moderately-metted discipline were integral to Evangelical spiritual formation, and Milner undertook this responsibility wholeheartedly.

Still, the greatest testimony to the success that he enjoyed as the fruit of his labours came from outside the community, both from those who saw the transformation taking place, and from the recognition of the accomplishments and roles fulfilled by Queensmen long after his death. Henry Gunning, a writer who left posterity one of the most complete contemporary portraits of Milner's Cambridge years, asserted that under his leadership the character of Queens' had changed entirely.¹⁵³ Gunning's contemporary, George Dyer also noted a change:

Now, I understand, it has returned to the doctrine of justification by faith alone, and of the co-equality of the Son and the Holy Ghost with God the Father; the doctrines taught by Luther, with some of the other first reformers, and by the modern Calvinists. Such is human opinion: thus it circulates round colleges and round the world.¹⁵⁴

Upon his entrance to Queens', Henry Venn of C.M.S. found religion (and this cannot, given his background, mean any other but the Evangelical sort) flourishing and Solomon Atkinson was sure that in the Queens' society, a little Evangelical religion could get one a long way.¹⁵⁵ Finally, John Wright, who was introduced to Queens' as the Stronghold of Simeoniteism,¹⁵⁶ left little doubt in his mini-prospectus of the University where Evangelical students belonged:

If your son be of his own accord religiously inclined, QUEEN'S COLLEGE is the

¹⁵¹Alice Pryme, ed., *Autobiographic Recollections of George Pryme, Esq., M.A.* (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell and Co., 1870), p. 141.

¹⁵²Milner, *Life*, p. 675.

¹⁵³Gunning, *Reminiscences*, vol. I, p. 263.

¹⁵⁴Dyer, *History*, vol. II, pp. 145-146.

¹⁵⁵'For the profession of certain theoretical opinions, attendance at a certain place of worship, a thorough conceit of their own goodness...is a surer recommendation than talents and learning, however adorned by beauty of moral demeanour'. Atkinson, 'Struggles', p. 509.

¹⁵⁶Wright, *Alma Mater*, vol. II, p. 179.

place for him. But don't send him there, if, without any manifestation on his part, you only are desirous that he should be so. If you do, I would wager a trifle that he becomes twice as wild and immoral as he would in any other college.¹⁵⁷

By midway through Milner's career, it was evident that the foundation of his Evangelical nursery would stand.

That Queens' continued to turn out strong and notable Evangelicals stands as a sign that Milner had sunk the pylons deeply. Samuel Lee, George Gorham, known for his defence of what he understood as the Evangelical understanding of baptism, Henry Venn and Robert Bickersteth represent the Evangelicals who found an academic home at Queens' and then proceeded to positions of leadership and responsibility within their Church and society. In 1788, Milner's vision to create a recognizable and vital Evangelical presence in the University would have looked like a pipe-dream; he left as his legacy a force that demanded recognition.

IV. Milner and other Cambridge Evangelicals

When Isaac Milner assumed the presidency of Queens' in 1788, the Evangelical presence in the University was barely discernible. And yet, with individuals such as Charles Simeon, William Farish, and Joseph and Henry Jowett toiling quietly, or not so quietly, they had built up a formidable and powerful presence by the second decade of the nineteenth century. What, then, was Milner's relationship to these colleagues with whom he shared similar hopes and problems?

There is little doubt that Charles Simeon carried the Evangelical banner most publicly and probably as a result, emerged as the most controversial and most celebrated of the little Cambridge band. His story is well-known and requires only a brief outline here. Born in 1759 to a family who claimed an enviable clerical lineage, he attended Eton and then, as was customary, proceeded to King's College, Cambridge where he received the Bachelor of Arts degree in 1782. Following his ordination in 1782, he briefly held a curacy at St. Edward's where his church trebled in size. Henry Venn, hopeful about the future of Simeon's ministry, believed this growth to be 'a thing unknown there for near a century'.¹⁵⁸ In November of 1782, he preached his first sermon at Trinity Church, an event which signified the beginning of a ministry that was to span five decades and touch the lives of two generations of clergy and the respective parishes they served. Aware of the deficiencies of University education in the preparation of parish pastors, Simeon organised his famous sermon classes and conversational parties which delved into pastoral and homiletical issues. 'Mr. Simeon watches over us as a shepherd over his sheep', Thomas Thomason, who became Simeon's curate in 1796, wrote of his guide and friend:

He takes delight in instructing us - and has us continually at his rooms. He has nothing to do with us as it respects our situation at college. His Christian love and

¹⁵⁷Wright, Alma Mater, p. 179.

¹⁵⁸Venn, Life, p. 345.

zeal prompt him to notice us.¹⁵⁹

His care for students was exemplary and he was a godsend to Anglican Evangelicals who were anxious about the future supply of 'Gospel ministers'.

Despite their common aims, Charles Simeon and Isaac Milner do not appear as entirely compatible colleagues. Simeon embodied some of the traits that made Milner uneasy^{about} some Evangelicals. He exhibited a few characteristics of the gentleman dandy, and demanded perfection from others to the extent that the unscientific stirring of a fire or the incorrect use of a bridle could send him into a white rage. Even Henry Venn's young children noticed this apparent lack of humility, though later Venn noted with satisfaction that his protege had made progress: 'Our dear friend Simeon came over to see me; very much improved and grown in grace; his very presence a blessing'.¹⁶⁰ Simeon had further committed one of the worst sins in the books of the staunch Anglican Evangelicals: he had itinerated. His early preaching habits precipitated a struggle for his soul between John Berridge who longed for him to join the ranks of itinerant clergy, and Henry Venn who, despite his own early itinerations, preached a strict doctrine of regard for parish boundaries. Though Venn and the Anglicans won out at the conclusion of Simeon's struggle, his flirtation with an itinerant ministry was not forgotten, evoking his defence: 'O spare me! spare me! I was a young man then'.¹⁶¹

Most seriously, Simeon's ministry from the onset was associated with 'methodism' and enthusiasm, anathema associations, as far as Milner was concerned. He began evening lectures and services and, according to Pryme, he preached extemporaneously, all standing as signs pointing to the dreaded 'Gospel ministry'. His congregation reacted predictably, complaining that Simeon's preaching had filled their church with riff-raff who stole their books, and making the continuation of their pastor's ministry as difficult as they could make it. Persistence and sheer determination won out in the end but even after ten years of Simeon's ministry, it was said of an Evangelical darling such as Thomas Sowerby,

such however had been his prejudice against Mr. Simeon and the doctrine he taught, that only a few months before he took his degree, he would have deemed it an offence, amounting 'almost to an insult,' if anyone had ventured to affirm he would at a future period officiate in Trinity Church.¹⁶²

Those who worshipped at Simeon's church were 'supposed to have left common sense, discretion, sobriety, attachment to the establishment, a love for the liturgy, and almost whatever else is true and of good report, in the vestibule'.¹⁶³ The spiritual leader of a ministry with such associations

¹⁵⁹Sargent, Thomason, p. 40.

¹⁶⁰Moule, Simeon, p. 81.

¹⁶¹William Carus, Memoirs of the Rev. Charles Simeon, 2 vols. (London: Hatchard and Son, 1847), vol. I, p. 278.

¹⁶²Ibid., p. 174.

¹⁶³Sargent, Thomason, p. 83.



would have, at least initially, appeared highly suspect in the eyes of the loyal Churchman, Isaac Milner.

It is evident from the Simeon and Milner remains that the two were never close associates, or even entirely at ease with each another during their long lifetimes in Cambridge. 'For some years', Milner said, 'I rigorously scrutinized the character and conduct of Mr. Simeon, and for a time entertained some doubts of his sincerity. But now I am perfectly convinced of his truly Christian spirit and usefulness'.¹⁶⁴ Simeon's biographer Moule understood that Milner viewed Simeon cautiously: 'And Milner...a keen observer, at first stood in doubt of the new Etonian preacher, and cared to watch rather than support...In time however he entirely trusted him, and was his resolute helper'.¹⁶⁵

One must view Moule's assertion of Milner's complete confidence in Simeon critically. No evidence suggests that the relationship between the two was ever a close one. But Milner does seem to have come to a kind of gentleman's agreement concerning their co-existence, and could even admit a note of cooperation in the necessary task of assisting Evangelical students with establishing the right kinds of connexions for the sake of preserving them through the trials of the University: 'However, Mr. S. and myself are so perfectly awake to this circumstance, that we shall not fail to suggest the necessary cautions'.¹⁶⁶ Subsequent references in the Milner *Life* show the pair corresponded about the suitability of particular Evangelical candidates and the business aspect of garnering livings for the Simeon Trust.¹⁶⁷ Further, Queensmen were permitted, if not encouraged, to attend Simeon's classes. This openness contrasted sharply with other colleges which deliberately set up alternative programmes to discourage attendance at Simeon's meetings.¹⁶⁸ Moule recorded the ultimate compliment and encouragement Milner paid to Simeon in 1807: 'I fear I shall never be able to use my voice much. Happy they who, like you, have used their voices to good purpose'.¹⁶⁹ Despite their differences, Milner could perceive and appreciate the fruitfulness of Simeon's ministry, even if from a safe distance.

Milner bridged that distance for a time in the spring of 1811 to act on Simeon's behalf in a matter involving the parishioners of Trinity Church and Dampier, the new bishop of Ely. With a new face in the episcopal see, the less-than-happy component of the congregation had seized the opportunity to renew their grievances against their pastor. Dampier had already flown his colours

¹⁶⁴Quoted in J.C. Pollock, *A Cambridge Movement* (London: John Murray, 1953), p. 4.

¹⁶⁵Moule, *Simeon*, pp. 63-64.

¹⁶⁶Milner, *Life*, p. 340.

¹⁶⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 633-636.

¹⁶⁸Michael Hennell, 'Simeon and Ministry', in *Charles Simeon (1759 to 1836)*, ed. Arthur Pollard and Michael Hennell (London: SPCK, 1959), p. 145.

¹⁶⁹Moule, *Simeon*, p. 200.

in his first charge to his clergy in which he had embedded an attack against Evangelicals, and he was eager to cooperate with the parishioners. Under the pretext of conducting academic business, the heads of houses, including Milner, were presented with a letter from Dampier enquiring 'whether they approved of the young men coming to my [Simeon's] evening lectures (there being no doubt what answer would be given to an enquiry so made), that so he might put down the lectures, and cast the odium on them'.¹⁷⁰ An anonymous letter then appeared on the heads' behalf, requesting that the lectures cease. But just as the thread securing Simeon's future ministry threatened to unravel, Milner stood up in his defence. 'That he really had never heard of any evils arising from my lectures,' Simeon recalled,

nor saw any harm in the young men attending them; that he had always heard of the extreme care which I had invariably taken to prevent evil; and that, though he did not wish to keep others from signing the paper, he could not sign it himself. He thought that the Bishop had written to make enquiries of them, and that it was proper for them to make enquiries, before they returned their answer; at least he felt it incumbent on him to do so.¹⁷¹

The heads tabled the matter for a week, never to take it up again. Simeon's evening lectures continued and thrived.

To Simeon, Milner's action at the meeting of the heads saved his ministry. He marvelled at the way Providence had arranged for Milner, who should have been attending to duties in Carlisle, to be in Cambridge to attend the new Chancellor's installation.¹⁷² The failure of any of the links, including Milner's advocacy, would have, in Simeon's words 'ruined me beyond recovery'.¹⁷³ In contrast, the incident received only a brief nod in the Milner Life in Milner's acknowledgement that had he acted differently on another undescribed occasion, 'it would have been absolutely impossible for me to have helped Mr. S—— last spring against the Bishop of Ely'.¹⁷⁴ Mary Milner rarely failed to give her uncle credit when it was due, and her silence on this matter suggests some reticence in associating Milner too closely with this slightly awkward and embarrassing character.

Another connection was with the small Evangelical presence in Trinity College. Trinity, one of the largest and richest of the Cambridge colleges, rode high on the waves of its reputation during Milner's years in the University. Wright considered it the 'head which, like Jupiter's, gave birth to those Minervas of learning and science, Bacon, Newton, Barrow, Milton, Cowley,

¹⁷⁰Carus, Simeon, vol. I, p. 329.

¹⁷¹Ibid., p. 330.

¹⁷²Milner had supported the Duke of Gloucester in this bid, thus scoring another Evangelical victory in procuring an ally in the Duke who was at least sympathetic to the Evangelicals.

¹⁷³Carus, Simeon, vol. I, p. 331.

¹⁷⁴Milner, Life, p. 469.

Dryden, &c.&c'.¹⁷⁵ Dyer, too, commented about its merits:

What is it which gives Trinity College that superiority, which it challenges over the other Colleges at Cambridge? Is it the elegance and grandeur of its buildings, the great number of its members, the excellence of its fellowships, or the worth of the College-livings? No. - It is the excellent discipline, that has been established.¹⁷⁶

Milner, too, had cast an admiring eye over this foundation, confiding to Wilberforce that 'the management of it is of great academical, and even national importance. The foundation and the prospects are so splendid, that it invites and brings students, in spite of the conviction of danger of corrupt principles'.¹⁷⁷ Not a man to miss an opportunity, Milner submitted his bid for the mastership of Trinity, which lay in the Prime Minister's gift, but despite the arguments made on his behalf by George Pretyman-Tomline and Wilberforce, the appointment passed to another.

But if influence could not be exerted through one avenue, success might be met through another. Joseph Jowett, brother of Henry of Magdalene, and later Professor of Civil Law, served as a Tutor of Trinity. His friendship with Milner was a close one, and they visited frequently between the Combination Room of Trinity College and Queens' Lodge for the enjoyment of musical evenings, theological debates and relaxed conversations. At Jowett's invitation, and with Milner's permission, Francis Wrangham, later archdeacon in Yorkshire and canon of York and Chester Cathedrals, migrated from Queens' to Trinity, presumably to better his chances for a fellowship. When F.J.H. Wollaston resigned his Divinity fellowship at Trinity to take up the Jacksonian chair, John Vickers, another one of Milner's scholars, was chosen instead of Wrangham. A moment of chaos followed when the officials discovered Vickers was ineligible because the living he held was too valuable, but he promptly resigned only to be reelected again.

The wronged Wrangham did not give in to the decision without a fight. He followed his public protest with a petition to the Lord Chancellor, citing Trinity statutes which confined fellowship elections to Trinity men. The fellows remained firm in their choice, and maintained their freedom to elect from the wider Cambridge community by similar practice in the past. But there was more. While Wrangham presented commendable academic qualifications (he had been Third Wrangler and won awards in classics and mathematics), his suitability as a colleague to the other fellows had been questioned. Claimed by Gunning as an intimate,¹⁷⁸ Wrangham had participated in republican activities and was a friend of William Frend. Even more damning, public opinion had ascribed to him authorship of a humorous epigram about Jowett which would have hardly endeared him to the Trinity community.¹⁷⁹ The Divinity Fellow lectured, disciplined

¹⁷⁵Wright, Alma Mater, vol. I, p. 2.

¹⁷⁶Dyer, History, vol. II, p. 22.

¹⁷⁷Milner, Life, p. 161.

¹⁷⁸Gunning, Reminiscences, vol. II, p. 14.

¹⁷⁹Charles Crawley, Trinity Hall: The History of a Cambridge College, 1350-1975 (Cambridge: Printed for the College, 1976), p. 138.

and oversaw the moral conduct of the pupils in his care. Wrangham's connections alone would have raised some anxious eyebrows in the face of an increasingly conservative University.

Gunning saw beyond the political issues which in part accounted for Wrangham's defeat, to the essence of Milner's designs. With the prospect of Jowett's decreasing influence, John Vickers presented a pliable figure who would be cooperative and sympathetic to Milner's machinations. Following Vickers, Thomas Bourdillon, another Queensman, filled the appointment, thus prompting the junior fellows of Trinity 'to speak of their College as a Fief of Queens'.¹⁸⁰ In this way, the Evangelicals could rest assured of their influence within the queen of Cambridge colleges.

V. The Vice-Chancellorship and the Frend Affair

In 1792 and then again in 1810, Evangelical influence within the University reached significant heights with the election of Isaac Milner to the Vice-Chancellorship. This position, governed by the Elizabethan statutes of the University, was rotated amongst the heads of houses. Annually, the heads were directed to present two of their number as candidates, one of whom was to be unanimously elected by the Senate. Traditionally, the successful candidate would be the most senior head by degree who had not yet held this office. The system worked well in spreading the responsibility around, though because heads tended to hold their offices for decades, it became likely that a newly elected Vice-Chancellor would be inexperienced in academic administration. This was the case when Milner first assumed the Vice-Chancellor's responsibilities: he had succeeded to the presidency of Queens' only four years before.

The responsibilities of the Vice-Chancellor were many and varied. Winstanley asserted that after the Chancellorship ceased to be a residential post, the Vice-Chancellor became the most important resident official in the University.¹⁸¹ George Peacock, a student during Milner's long tenure, explained the responsibilities of this official in the following description:

He is the chief and almost the sole administrative officer of the university, all others being placed under his immediate direction and control: he summons and presides at all congregations of the senate, and gives admission to all degrees; he presides at the meetings of every syndicate, however numerous and laborious they may be; he proposes and decides nearly every academical prize, and assists at all examinations for university scholarships and medals; he is the judge, either by himself or with the other heads of houses as his assessors, in all complaints brought before him by the proctors and other officers, whether relating to members of the university or others, in cases which are subject to his jurisdiction; he examines and grants every license, including the lodging-houses of students and the public houses of the town; his sanction is necessary for every exhibition in the town, and for every public proceeding in the university; he is the public host and gives public dinners in succession to all the resident graduates in the university; he manages the public and trust estates and finances of the University, ordering and superintending every

¹⁸⁰Gunning, Reminiscences, vol. II, p. 32.

¹⁸¹Winstanley, Unreformed, p. 8.

repair, making every payment, and keeping, verifying and balancing the entire accounts of receipt and expenditure during his year of office.¹⁸²

The demands of the office were heavy, and it is no wonder that the tradition developed that once elected, the candidate could not refuse office unless he held a bishopric, that the tenure of the post was only one year, and that several successful candidates had either disputed their elections or grossly neglected their duties in retaliation of this dubious honour. Isaac Milner did not relish the prospect of office and actively campaigned against himself though to no use. Twenty years later, and after the completion of a second term of office, he was still complaining. In 1810, he insisted that the University expected too much of the Vice-Chancellor and he urged that some of the responsibilities related to the Press Syndicate and examinations be passed on to someone else.¹⁸³

As Peacock pointed out, the Vice-Chancellor served as a primary judicial authority within the University, and it is in this capacity that Milner distinguished himself during his first term of office. The trial of William Frend, which occupied the attention of University authorities and student body during the spring months of 1793, would undoubtedly have excited little attention in any other time. But fear had swept the British Isles as the inhabitants gazed anxiously at the unfolding of events in France, and some would have maintained that their vision was distorted. The Frend affair was all-consuming.

The events leading up to the trial and its concluding sentence may be summarized briefly. In February of 1793, William Frend, Fellow and former tutor of Jesus College, announced the publication of a pamphlet, Peace and Union recommended to the Associated Bodies of Republicans and anti-Republicans. Only a week later, his colleagues at Jesus passed a resolution which must have shocked even those who had feared the worst:

Resolved, that a pamphlet entitled Peace and Union, lately published by W. Frend, M.A., Fellow of this college, appears to us to have been written with the evil intent of prejudicing the clergy in the eyes of the laity, of degrading in the publick esteem the doctrines and rites of the Established Church, and of disturbing the harmony of Society. And that, as we feel it to be our particular duty to disavow principles calculated to mislead the minds of young men entrusted to our care, a copy of the said pamphlet be sent both to the Vice-Chancellor of the University, and to the Visitor of the College, inclosed in a letter to each, expressing our disapprobation of the opinions therein delivered, and humbly requesting them to take such measures as in their judgment may appear most proper for the effectual suppression of their dangerous tendency.¹⁸⁴

Signed by five fellows, the circulation of the resolution was followed by a meeting on 4 March attended by the signers and twenty-five other members of the University who then decided

¹⁸²George Peacock, Observations on the Statutes of the University of Cambridge (London: John W. Parker, 1841), p. 136.

¹⁸³Milner, Life, pp. 438-439.

¹⁸⁴Quoted in Arthur Gray, A History of Jesus College Cambridge (London: Heinemann, 1960), p. 125.

to institute proceedings against Frend in the Vice-Chancellor's Court. The trial opened on 3 May with Thomas Kipling, acting as deputy for the Bishop of Llandaff, the promoter. It met through a series of adjournments until 30 May when the jury offered Frend the opportunity to confess and to retract his errors. Hearing that the defendant would rather lose an arm than admit to being guilty, Milner drew the trial to a close with the following pronouncement:

I, ISAAC MILNER, D.D., Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, do decree and pronounce, that William Frend, Master of Arts, and Fellow of Jesus College, having offended against the statute 'de Concionibus, &c.,' by writing a pamphlet, entitled Peace and Union, &c., and by publishing the same within the University of Cambridge, and having refused to retract and confess his error and temerity, in the manner prescribed to him by me the Vice-Chancellor, with the assent of the major part of the Heads of Colleges, has incurred the penalty of the statute, and that he is therefore banished from this University.¹⁸⁵

Appeals to a University Court of Delegates and the King's Bench resulted in the verdict being upheld.

From the start of the episode, Frend had little to claim in his favour. Pre-trial procedures and the trial itself were full of irregularities to which those in authority turned a blind eye. From the beginning, Frend insisted that by rights a convocation of heads and not the Vice-Chancellor's Court should have reviewed complaints about his activities. To this objection, he never received a satisfactory reply. The initial meeting at which the Jesus fellows voiced their complaint took place at the Queens' President's Lodge, and though Milner was not present, neither the venue nor the participants set to review the case could have been considered neutral. The deputy promoter, Thomas Kipling, had possessed evidence before the trial, and Frend scored a significant victory when he made the startling discovery that the Grace of 1603 upon which the prosecution rested its case did not exist in the Registrar's copy of the University Grace Book. Though the heights of the sublime were never reached, Frend relished a moment of the ridiculous when, challenging the validity of De Concionibus, (the article he had allegedly violated), he reminded his listeners of another defunct article. 'I shall now read to you', Frend announced,

the seventy-fourth, in which decency of apparel is enjoined to ministers... 'hoping that in time new fanglenesse of apparell in some factious persons will die of itselfe...[that all church dignitaries, including] doctors in divinitie...shall usually weare gownes with standing collers and sleeves streight at the hands, or wide sleeves, as is used in the universities, with hoods or tippets of silk or sarcenet and square caps...all the said ecclesiasticall persons above-mentioned shall usually weare in their journies, cloakes with sleeves...And no ecclesiasticall person shall weare any coife or wrought night-cap, but only plaine night caps of black silke, satten or velvet.¹⁸⁶

Even Milner had to object when Kipling attempted to refer to a pamphlet published by Frend in 1789 for evidence. Still, there is little doubt that the authorities gave Frend anything but a fair hearing.

¹⁸⁵Milner, Life, p. 86.

¹⁸⁶William Frend, An Account of the Proceedings in the University of Cambridge Against William Frend, M.A. (Cambridge: B. Flower, 1793), p. 127.

For fair or not, William Frend was a problematic figure to those conservative members of the University in whose hands his future as an academic lay. Frend had done well as an undergraduate. He had been named Second Wrangler for his year, and, having refused the opportunity to educate the children of Archduke Alexander of Russia, had been ordained and elected to the positions of tutor and Fellow of Jesus College. In his parish at Madingley, he engaged in a ministry of which most Evangelicals would have approved. He founded a Sunday school with the daughter of the local nobleman, taught his pupils to read, and used Watts' hymns.

But in the quiet of the country, his thoughts began to move in other directions. His primary biographer accounts for this period by saying

he began to wonder whether the priesthood, the rites, the compulsory subscription to the Articles, were really necessary to the practice of Christ's teaching, and whether the dogma and rules evoked by the Church were justified in every case by the gospels. Doubts even arose in his mind as to the worship of the Trinity.¹⁸⁷

By 1788, he had made the acquaintance of leading Unitarians such as Robert Tyrwhitt, tendered his resignation from the ordained ministry, began to campaign actively for the cause of religious freedom, and published Thoughts on Subscription to Religious Tests. In this pamphlet, he revealed his new sentiments: 'as I had once given a public sanction to the doctrines of the church, it became me now that I had discovered my errors...to disavow them with equal publicity'.¹⁸⁸ He followed this tract with another entitled An Address to the Inhabitants of Cambridge and its Neighbourhood, exhorting them to turn from the false worship of Three Persons to the worship of the One True God which resulted in his removal from his college tutorship and teaching responsibilities to freshmen commoners. He had also been voted out of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge for which he had defined the Church as 'formerly a Bugbear, a Scarecrow, to frighten the poor people of this country, but Englishmen are too well acquainted with the inestimable blessing of freedom to be frightened in these days by a sound that can alarm only women and children'.¹⁸⁹ Finally, there had been talk in Cambridge of five people who had corresponded with the National Convention, one of whom was reputed to have been Frend.¹⁹⁰ By 1791, Frend was considered a leading radical in Cambridge: a reputation that was not likely to help him in his defence, or his jurymen to keep an open mind.

By most accounts, Frend appears to have been a victim of his times. The pamphlet, Peace and Union, was moderate in tone and throughout its pages, Frend's call for political and ecclesiastical reform did not differ from that promoted by his colleagues committed to reform. He wrote with an eye toward the recent events in France, but urged that they did not form a

¹⁸⁷Frida Knight, University Rebel: The Life of William Frend (1757-1841) (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1971), p. 47.

¹⁸⁸Quoted in Ibid., p. 60.

¹⁸⁹Ibid., p. 73.

¹⁹⁰Gunning, Reminiscences, vol. I, p. 309.

template for English reform:

The assassinations, murders, massacres, burning of houses, plundering of property, open violations of justice, which have marked the progress of the French revolution, must stagger the boldest republican in his wishes to overthrow any constitution.¹⁹¹

'Were it now published for the first time', Friend wrote to Annabelle Byron in 1831, 'it would fall stillborn from the press'.¹⁹²

But these were no ordinary times. In the England of the 1780's where the theft of a small sum of money was punishable by death, Roman Catholics were prevented from holding public office because they were considered possible traitors, and villages might send two representatives to Parliament because they had once been towns but certain towns could not because they had once been villages, at least some citizens recognized the need for reform. News, then, of the overthrow in France of a politically and economically oppressive aristocracy was received with widespread interest and approval. Reform societies sprang into being in Manchester, Sheffield and Norwich, and in November of 1789, the London Society adopted a motion 'congratulating the French National Assembly on the victory of liberty and justice over arbitrary power, and on the encouragement given to other nations to secure their inalienable rights'.¹⁹³

Only a short time would be needed to tell what liberty meant in French terms: the murder of the French Royal Family and the loosing of anarchy upon the land. To a people who had once executed their own king, the French route to reform was anathema, and Britain's steps in this direction must be stopped. Dissenters, whose hope for political freedom had pushed them to the forefront of the reform movement of the early 1790's, were natural targets for the punitive reaction led by Edmund Burke, who saw in revolutionary France 'every venerable institution quaking, the Crown losing its authority, and the aristocracy its privileges, the Church in danger'.¹⁹⁴ In Birmingham, three days of rioting in July of 1791 left a path of destruction through dissenters' houses, including the total loss of Joseph Priestley's laboratory and library, and effectively silenced the voice of dissent in this city, amongst others, for years to come. One observer left an account of the hysteria:

At Showell Green on the Saturday the rioters were incited to attack the Russells' house by men on horseback, who read letters purporting to have been found among their papers, and those of Priestley, describing a conspiracy timed for that very day, to burn the churches, blow up Parliament, cut the King's head off, and abolish the taxes'.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹¹William Friend, Peace and Union Recommended to the Associated Bodies of Republicans and Anti-Republicans (St. Ives: Printed for the Author, 1793), p. 1.

¹⁹²Knight, University Rebel, p. 164.

¹⁹³Philip Anthony Brown, The French Revolution in English History (London: Crosby Lockwood and Son, 1918), p. 30.

¹⁹⁴Ibid., p. 76.

¹⁹⁵Quoted in Ibid., p. 80.

In November of 1792, John Reeves, a lawyer from Canada, founded the 'Crown and Anchor Association' and spearheaded a campaign in which the government suppressed allegedly seditious publications and meetings, and brought the reform movement's leaders to the public eye. A catalogue of victims and incidents would extend several pages; suffice it to say, the campaign was effective and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, himself sympathetic to the reformers, could write,

There was not a city, no, not a town in which a man suspected of holding democratic principles could move abroad without receiving some unpleasant proof of the hatred in which his supposed opinions were held by the great majority of the people.¹⁹⁶

The citizens of Cambridge participated in the witch hunt, and, as a symbol of their effort, at the end of 1792, burnt an effigy of Thomas Paine in their market square.

Not even in this volatile setting would Frend's pamphlet have likely excited much attention, even given the provocative language and proclaimed intent of the author. But his last minute inclusion of an appendix on the heels of the execution of Louis XVI made a quiet entrance and exit impossible. He wrote the piece in direct reference to the murder of the French king, considering the event to be 'an excellent topick for parliamentary declaration'.¹⁹⁷ Nations had rights to settle their internal affairs, even if they resulted in the decapitation of the sovereign. The final three pages concentrated on the unfair burden rumours of the war placed upon the poor and in the conclusion, he tossed a gauntlet:

And should any grave courtier pitying the distresses of the poor be anxious to relieve them, say to him; there is an easy method: let the first magistrate, the peers, the representatives of the people, the rich men of the nation, all who are for war, be sconced one fourth part of their annual income to defray the expence of it. Let them be the first sufferers, let the burden fall on them, not on the poor. Alas! my poor countrymen, how many years calamity awaits you before a single dish or a glass of wine will be withdrawn from the tables of opulence.¹⁹⁸

Even Frend's most loyal supporters questioned the timing of his declaration and challenge. Gunning felt that Frend spoke of 'the solemn rites and ceremonies of our Church with a flippancy and irreverence very offensive to serious persons, and which his best friends would find it difficult to defend', especially when 'Whigism would be an unprofitable profession'.¹⁹⁹ Several friends urged him to forego publication of the concluding piece entirely, including one who advised him that while 'It is certainly unfit & unbecoming an honest man to prevaricate, to deny or disavow his true sentiments; but Silence is a shield & guard which nature gives & allows us for nice or difficult cases'.²⁰⁰ Still, passion exceeded caution and Frend offered his pamphlet to the public.

¹⁹⁶Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Essay IV, The Friend, quoted in Brown, The French Revolution, pp. 107-108.

¹⁹⁷Frend, Peace and Union, p. 45.

¹⁹⁸Ibid., pp. 48-49.

¹⁹⁹Gunning, Reminiscences, vol. I, pp. 301, 302.

²⁰⁰Quoted in Knight, University Rebel, p. 129.

Given the tenor of the times, the reputation of the author within the Cambridge community, and the provocative sections of the pamphlet, it was not surprising that the case of William Frend concluded as it did. In his evaluation of the proceedings, Henry Gunning had observed that Milner's treatment of Martin Naylor within his own college did not suggest that revolutionary hysteria had overwhelmed the Queens' president. 'I remember', Gunning wrote,

his saying to me when appointing Naylor Inspector of the Woodwardian Collection, 'I think his Jacobinical propensities can do no harm there'.²⁰¹

Still, he noted that Milner had been anxious for Pitt to take note of his leadership in the affair, and cited a letter written to Wilberforce in which Milner had communicated his understanding of the meaning of the events: 'I don't believe Pitt was ever aware of how much consequence the expulsion of Frend was: it was the ruin of the Jacobinical party as a University thing, so that the party is almost entirely confined to Trinity College'.²⁰²

It would be difficult to absolve Milner completely from the self-serving motivations that Gunning suggested he harboured. As the Member of Parliament for the University, and Prime Minister, Pitt exerted an influence over University appointments and it is obvious that it was to Milner's advantage to make his political leanings clear. But he also spoke as a member of a party whose connections, both religious and political, had provided a basis for doubt about its loyalty to the Anglican Establishment. The terms 'Evangelical' and 'methodist' were often used interchangeably to describe dissenters, Methodists and establishment Evangelicals,²⁰³ and the public activities of those Evangelicals who had left the Church could be attributed to the others. Actual instances of pooling resources such as in marshalling support for the abolition of the slave trade further contributed to the confusion; Milner himself complained to Wilberforce that William Clarkson's support was a liability because of his republican leanings. Wilberforce's acceptance of French citizenship in the presence of Thomas Paine and Jeremy Bentham in 1792 did not help matters.

Through his leadership during the trial of William Frend, then, Milner seized the opportunity to demonstrate his loyalty as a Tory Evangelical to the Church and Crown. Gunning pointed out the novelty of wedding Evangelical churchmanship to Tory rather than republican politics: 'it being', he wrote 'a modern discovery that the principles held by the Low-Church [meaning the Anglican Evangelicals] party do not clash with "the right divine of Kings to govern wrong"'.²⁰⁴ During his long tenure at the University, Milner would continue to assert the loyalty

²⁰¹Gunning, Reminiscences, vol. I, p. 311.

²⁰²Ibid., p. 309; Milner, Life, p. 162.

²⁰³Sydney Smith had declared, 'We shall use the general term of Methodism, to designate these three classes of fanatics, not troubling ourselves to point out the finer shades, and nicer discrimination of lunacy, but treating them all as in one general conspiracy against common sense, and rational orthodox christianity'. Edinburgh Review, vol. 11 (1808), pp. 341-42.

²⁰⁴Gunning, Reminiscences, vol. I, p. 185.

of his fellow Evangelicals to the establishment. To an extent, Anglican Churchmen could engage in ventures with Roman Catholics and dissenters such as the cause for Abolition, education and later, distribution of Bibles, but only if there existed no risk of compromising establishment principles. Milner admitted dissenting students into Queens' but remained opposed to measures that would grant dissenters complete political freedom. In his public portrayal of the Tory Evangelical as seen in the case of William Frend, Milner helped instil the principles of an Evangelical loyal to the establishment, thus bringing the possibility of a viable Evangelical influence in English political and social life closer to realization.

VI. The Cambridge Bible Society

For the twenty years following Milner's appointment to the presidency of Queens', Evangelical growth in the University was dependent upon the strength and commitment of individuals who found themselves largely confined to their own collegiate or parochial patches. This state of affairs was to change, however, when a significant, though controversial, meeting of the Evangelicals in Cambridge took place in 1811. The purpose of this meeting was to establish an auxiliary of the British and Foreign Bible Society.

Founded on 7 March 1804 at the London Tavern, the founding members of the parent Society adopted the aim 'to promote the circulation of the Scriptures in some of the principal living languages',²⁰⁵ and proceeded to accomplish this goal by raising subscriptions to support translations of the Bible into the tongues of targeted areas, and the production of Bibles for distribution. The Society attracted a steady flow of members and subscriptions from the beginning, though in 1809, something only a little short of an explosion occurred with the sudden founding of auxiliaries and branches. By 1814, every county in England had at least one association. The founding of the Cambridge Auxiliary took place within this period of expansion and enthusiasm.

Despite its success, the founders of the Society knew they had launched their enterprise in times that were not the most promising. 'If the present period is not the most auspicious to such undertakings', one observer wrote,

neither is there any danger of its being fatal to them. 'The wall of Jerusalem,' it is written, 'shall be built in troublous times.' In fact, how many successful efforts for the promotion of human happiness have been made amidst the clouds and tempests of national calamity. It also should be remembered that the present is the only period of which we are sure. Our days of service are both few and uncertain: whatsoever, therefore, our hands find to do, let us do it with our might.²⁰⁶

England was nervous as she anxiously watched Napoleon amass his troops at her doorstep. Internal affairs were not entirely peaceful, as the price of bread rose, and the government squeezed

²⁰⁵John Owen, The History of the Origin and First Ten Years of the British and Foreign Bible Society, 3 vols. (London: Tilling and Hughes, 1816-1820), vol. I (1816), p. 34.

²⁰⁶William Canton, History of the British and Foreign Bible Society, 5 vols. (London: John Murray, 1904), vol. I, p. 11.

an already heavily taxed population a little more. Groups espousing new plans for social betterment were considered breeding grounds for subversion and anarchy, and even something as seemingly straightforward as distributing Bibles could be seen as possibly sowing seeds of discontent or rebellion. What good would it accomplish for the lower classes to know that in Christ there was neither slave nor freedman?

The biggest problem to Anglican churchmen was the involvement of Dissenters. Although the British and Foreign Bible Society had been acclaimed by the Clapham Evangelicals, and John Shore served as its first president, the idea had been clearly conceived and launched from the ranks of Nonconformity. It had been a Baptist, the Rev. Joseph Hughes, who, at a meeting of the Religious Tract Society in 1802, had posed the challenge of distributing Bibles: 'Surely a society might be formed for the purpose; and if for Wales, why not for the Kingdom; why not for the whole world?'²⁰⁷ He followed this proposal with a tract entitled The Excellency of the Holy Scriptures: an Argument for their more general Dispersion. Regulations concerning the government of the Society were carefully constructed to maintain a balance between members of the Establishment and Nonconformists in positions of authority; room was even left for foreign influence in the election of a German Lutheran, the Rev. Carl Steinkopf, to the office of Secretary. Incorrectly identified by Ford K. Brown as a Dissenter, Steinkopf represented the tiny Lutheran community in London as well as a sister ecclesial community. Someone with the breadth of vision of Joseph John Gurney exalted in this nascent attempt at inter-denominational cooperation:

We had a vast party at Earlham, and a remarkable day, a perfectly harmonious mixture of High Church, Low Church, Lutheran, Baptist, Quaker! It was a time which seemed to pull down all barriers of distinction, and to melt us all into one common Christianity. Such a beginning warrants us to expect much.²⁰⁸

It was precisely this spectre of a melting pot of Christianity that caused High Churchmen genuinely concerned for the Establishment and the purity of Anglican doctrine to shudder.

Upon the occasion of the National Jubilee, the Master²⁰⁹ and Seniors of Trinity made a public donation to the Bible Society. This contribution represented both a demonstration of personal commitment and the entertainment of a hope 'that the University might be induced to follow the example of one of its principal colleges; and, by a grant from its chest, confer on the Society the important sanction of a complete academical recognition'.²¹⁰ Edward Pearson of Sidney Sussex also attempted to generate some interest within the University in the Society but lacked 'such an engine of sufficient potency to draw it forth'.²¹¹

²⁰⁷Canton, History, vol. I, p. 10.

²⁰⁸Augustus Julius Charles Hare, The Gurneys of Earlham, 2 vols. (London: George Allen, 1895), vol. I, p. 230.

²⁰⁹This is Bishop Mansell, president of the Bristol Bible Society Auxiliary.

²¹⁰Owen, History, vol. II (1816), p. 136.

²¹¹Ibid., p. 137.

Like its parent, the Auxiliary Cambridge Bible Society suffered pangs during its birth. Anglican Evangelicalism in Cambridge had grown in numbers, influence and respectability between 1788 and 1810, but rough times were still ahead. Isaac Milner perceived that 'Ecclesiastical questions and politico-ecclesiastical questions, of great magnitude, are ripening fast for public discussion', and counselled caution and discretion as the rule of the day.²¹² In 1805 and 1809, Charles Simeon had entered a homiletical battle with Herbert Marsh and Edward Pearson which concluded in an accusation of libel. By 1811, he had again engaged in conflict, this time with his diocesan bishop, which led to Milner's previously mentioned intervention on Simeon's behalf. In 1811, Henry Sidmouth, Home Secretary from 1812 to 1821, moved for a bill that called for the licensing of dissenting ministers and teachers. Henry Ryder, Dean of Wells, was to be the first Evangelical bishop in 1815, but Spencer Perceval had made no promises about future appointments. George Pretyman-Tomline continued to frustrate Evangelical efforts through his episcopal authority, and Herbert Marsh's 'Twenty-five Questions to Trap Calvinists' (1819) Milner judged to be a provocation designed to 'puff the proposer, rather than to lead to the instruction of young candidates'.²¹³

When plans to launch a Cambridge Auxiliary, quietly conceived and nurtured, came to term, it was the students who arose to attend the birth. In her account of the event, Mary Milner stated that the two hundred undergraduates, having resolved to take upon themselves the establishment of a Cambridge Auxiliary, 'very properly, applied to their seniors and superiors for advice and direction'.²¹⁴ As Brown suggested, the students were well aware of the volatile nature of the proposal they had concocted. They knew they had to woo and win senior members of the University as their allies but they had to be the right men:

an application to the Regius Professor of Divinity [Richard Watson], for instance, if he could be found, or to Lady Margaret's Professor of Divinity, Dr. Herbert Marsh, would at once have put a sharp end to the establishment of any such thing as a Bible Society auxiliary.²¹⁵

In selecting their hoped-for allies, the students aimed as close to the top of Cambridge academic and ecclesiastical hierarchy as they dared. The Vice-Chancellor, Thomas Brown of Christ's, Bishop William Mansell of Trinity and Milner received the delegation.

The suit on behalf of the student body placed Isaac Milner in a dilemma. He genuinely liked students and appreciated initiative. Further, he had enrolled himself as an early member of the Bible Society and served as a vice-president when this was viewed as a risky association by a University Head of House and Cathedral dean. It would have caused him no small amount of soul-searching to oppose his students in the very task for which he had committed himself to

²¹²Milner, *Life*, p. 467.

²¹³*Ibid.*, p. 694.

²¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 464.

²¹⁵Brown, *Fathers*, p. 296.

prepare them. But he recognized the unique place he occupied from which he could help Evangelicalism. To form an allegiance with students at their instigation for what he saw as such a fragile cause could seriously compromise his position, especially if he stood alone amongst the University's seniors. In his address to the assembly of those who gathered to mark the successful establishment of the Cambridge Auxiliary, Milner defended his actions in the days leading up to the meeting:

Your Lordship has heard, that this measure originated in the zeal and activity of a number of ingenuous undergraduates, who discovered a great desire to see instituted, in this place, an Auxiliary Bible Society. The very moment I heard of their design, I saw the danger that must arise, if such a plan, and its execution, should remain in their hands. If undergraduates - persons in statu pupillari - should proceed to hold meetings and choose delegates, such proceedings, I thought, would be a just subject of alarm and of animadversion, however pure and laudable their intentions might be...For, though my heart was with them, as to the grand object of establishing an Auxiliary Society; and though it was well known that I was to be depended upon for a steady adherence to the principle of the Parent Society; yet there were many circumstances which called loudly on me to be most particularly careful, to give no ground whatever for its being said, (what, after all, probably will be said,) that one Head of a College, secretly or openly, directly or indirectly, had been active in encouraging seditious or turbulent spirits.²¹⁶

Mary Milner claimed that the President of Queens' counselled the students to leave the matter in his hands.²¹⁷ He was probably right in his surmising that the students thought 'I returned them but a cold answer at Queen's Lodge',²¹⁸ and their subsequent action suggests they saw they had been passed the proverbial bureaucratic buck. Having received no satisfaction with their first petition, they applied to possibly more sympathetic though less powerful allies, Farish, Jowett and Simeon. Even there, they met initial hesitation as Farish "sat with his head on his hand and said very little;" and Jowett "looked kind, but was suspected by us of lukewarmness".²¹⁹ Simeon, not surprisingly, rose to the occasion, pledging his assistance while extracting a promise that the undergraduates would play by his rules. 'A great alarm was excited through the University', Simeon wrote to Thomason, 'and every person without exception threw cold water upon it, from this principle, that if they suffered to proceed in this way about the Bible, they would soon do the same about politics'.²²⁰

True to their promises, Milner and Simeon attended to the business of founding the Auxiliary though they did so in divergent ways. Simeon, having held the students at bay, marshalled the support of Jowett, Farish and John Brown of Trinity, and made a bid for the Vice-

²¹⁶Milner, Life, pp. 473, 474.

²¹⁷Ibid., p. 464.

²¹⁸Ibid., p. 474,

²¹⁹Pollock, Cambridge, p. 8.

²²⁰Moule, Simeon, pp. 125-126.

Chancellor's allegiance.²²¹ Meanwhile, Milner had effectively thrown cold water on the project, or so he thought. He had held conferences with the primary actors of the drama, Simeon, Farish and Jowett, on the night before his departure for a meeting of the Board of Longitude in London, and left having determined 'not to drop the business, but to suspend it for the present, and to take it up next term, if circumstances should be found sufficiently favourable'.²²² Thus his surprise was great when he learned whilst in London that the Simeon group had succeeded in obtaining the Vice-Chancellor's consent to hold a public meeting to establish the Auxiliary and that he had been summoned. 'The cause is excellent', Milner reproachfully penned to Jowett four days before the date of the meeting,

and I see abundant zeal and activity and purity of motive, in the conduct of my friends; but it may be a question whether, in this warm fervor of their's for action, and, in their eagerness to make an impression at the first onset of the combat, they have not totally disregarded the making of a useless waste of some of their troops; or, to speak without a metaphor, whether the zeal of several of my kindest friends, who earnestly press my attendance at the expected meeting, have not made them completely overlook the circumstances which distinguish my particular case.

It is very plain to me, that I should be calumniated as being the only Head of a College who had stepped forward to countenance a multitude of undergraduates who had been holding meetings, forming committees, &c., &c., and however easy you and I may perceive the answer to be, I believe, that the effects of the slander would be mischievous and permanent. It would spread in the world through both the means of unprincipled writers in newspapers, &c., &c., and my usefulness in giving a little help, sometimes, to the oppressed evangelical clergy, would be very much cramped, and lessened. Impressions of the kind to which I allude, are scarcely ever removed.²²³

Milner's dilemma had deepened. Not only had his friends challenged his authority in the matter but a new enemy had arisen. Herbert Marsh, the Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity, had on 25 November circulated an address throughout the University which launched the University High Church offensive against the establishment of the Auxiliary. Marsh's argument rested on three primary points: the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, closely aligned with the established Church, adequately addressed itself to the identified need; the SPCK promoted unity of doctrine in its distribution of the Prayer Book with the Bible; cooperation with Dissenters made the Established Church vulnerable and more seriously, increased 'both the political and the religious importance of the latter [Dissent]...this increase of influence may hereafter be applied in a manner not contemplated by those, who now inadvertently promote it, is likewise a position which cannot be controverted'.²²⁴

²²¹Moule, *Simeon*, p. 126.

²²²Milner, *Life*, p. 465.

²²³*Ibid.*, p. 467.

²²⁴Herbert Marsh, *An Address to the Members of the Senate of the University of Cambridge; occasioned by the Proposal to introduce in that place an Auxiliary Bible Society* (Bridport: T. Margrie, 1813).

Marsh knew how to sway his audience, and Milner recognized that as a result, 'the enemy is strengthened, and the real, actually subscribing friends are frightened'.²²⁵ Further, no other senior member of the University of church hierarchy had come forward. The Master of Trinity, himself the Bishop of Bristol and president of the Bristol Auxiliary, would not appear out of deference to the Bishop of Ely. While Henry Bathurst, Bishop of Norwich, might attend, his sympathy with Protestant Nonconformity and Catholic Emancipation made his support a mixed blessing.²²⁶ Milner played his cards close to his chest, announcing in a letter to Jowett on 10 December, 'if I see a fair opening consistent with my views, I may yet be with you'.²²⁷ By the eve of the meeting even Simeon had cold feet, declaring he 'would at that time have given a large sum that we had not stirred at all; and so would my colleagues; and if it had been possible to have recalled the letters and notices, we should have done it'.²²⁸

For once, not even the alluring persuasions of Wilberforce could sway Milner's determination to make up his own mind. Having recognized the reason behind his friend's indecision, Wilberforce wrote frantically to Simeon, 'Still however I believe the Dean would attend, if you name to him almost any respectable people who would be present. Cannot you do this?'.²²⁹

Fortunately, a name did come up, though only as a result of passionate persuasion. The Duke of Gloucester, whose successful bid for the Chancellorship of the University Milner had supported earlier that year, had been approached but to no avail: 'Mr. Wilberforce has been with the Chancellor this morning', Milner wrote to Jowett, 'and has used all his influence to induce him either to go to Cambridge, or, in some way, to make his approbation of the thing known - and all without effect'.²³⁰ Happily for the cause, Wilberforce won Gloucester over just two days short of the scheduled meeting. Though he would not agree to attend, his support was theirs. Wilberforce was jubilant and wrote to Simeon:

Who should be announced to me this morning, but the Duke of Gloucester, who with a cheerful countenance accosted me by saying, that he had come himself to let me know that though on the whole he still thought it would not be proper for him to attend in person, he had written to desire that it might be stated to the meeting that he highly approved of it, and took a lively interest in the Society's success; that he desired to be put down as a subscriber of 50 guineas; and that if there should be a request made to him to become President or Patron of the Society, he should not

²²⁵Milner, *Life*, p. 466.

²²⁶Moule, *Simeon*, p. 126.

²²⁷Milner, *Life*, p. 471.

²²⁸Moule, *Simeon*, p. 127.

²²⁹Wilberforce, *Life*, vol. III, p. 560.

²³⁰Milner, *Life*, p. 469.

decline the situation.²³¹

The winning of the Duke of Gloucester provided the breakthrough for which the founders of the Auxiliary had hoped. Given royal sanction, formerly reluctant actors poured onto the stage. Lord Philip Yorke, third earl of Hardwicke, agreed to take the chair and Lord Francis Osbourne agreed to attend in support of his fellow noblemen. The Earl of Bristol submitted his name, and his bishop followed suit. In all, over one thousand people amassed at the Town Hall; not insignificantly, Milner remembered, a group 'supported by such a mass of property, and such a number of respectable characters'.²³² Edward Clarke of Jesus College was present at the meeting, and his account of the meeting captures the spirit of the day to one who had not been so integrally involved in its engineering:

I trust I have seen the greatest and brightest day of all my life. The opposition to the Bible Society was so great, that they not only could not get a single Clergyman of known adherence to the Church of England, to support them; but even such men as — and — took the general panic. That great cry, 'the Church is in danger,' pervaded every heart... This memorable morning came - never shall I forget it - nor, I trust, will our adversaries.... All the avenues to the Town Hall were then crowded - no sooner did the doors open, than it was quite full. A deputation of four of us went to the Rose, for Lord Hardwicke, and we regained our seats with him, upon the rostrum, about 12 o'clock.

Could I now but describe the grandeur and solemnity of this meeting. The most surprizing and overwhelming sight to me was that the faces of all that vast assembly, even of the young gownsmen, were seen streaming with tears of rapture. Of course, this was not neglected by one of our speakers, whom you may guess, and who with almost inspired energy called it, 'a contribution, every drop whereof was treasured in the phials of Heaven!'

Well! Lord Francis Osbourne moved the resolutions, and I rose (God help me! thinks I) to second them. It is impossible to describe the animating shouts, with which I was encouraged - every sentence was cheered. M[ilner] said the effect was such, he expected they should have all their windows broken. Letters with congratulations have poured in upon me from every quarter.²³³

To this chorus, Milner added his voice. Simeon breathed a sigh of relief to have at last won the support of an academic, and the Bishop of Bristol wrote to Wilberforce, 'But our great and admirable friend, the Dean of Carlisle, who is himself instar omnium, did; and there exercised his extraordinary powers to the credit of himself and the furtherance of this most important cause, which I have the happiness to say was well planted, and is likely to be most thriving'.²³⁴ The Appendix of the 1811 volume of the Christian Observer indicated that he joined others on the speakers' rostrum. He devoted the greater part of his speech, described by Owen as 'ponderous,

²³¹Wilberforce, Life, vol. III, pp. 561-562.

²³²Quoted in Brown, Fathers, p. 308.

²³³William Otter, The Life and Remains of Edward Daniel Clarke (London: George Cowle and Co., 1825), p. 262.

²³⁴Wilberforce, Life, vol. III, p. 563.

sense, searching argumentation, and colloquial majesty'²³⁵ to an extended apology for his actions. He did, however, cast an eye on the malignant publication of Marsh and presented a succinct defence of the members of the Establishment who would join forces with Dissenters in the distribution of Bibles. Instead of hastening the Establishment into the arms of apostasy, the effect of the project was precisely the opposite; though in the following section, he addressed himself to relations with Roman Catholics, the same words he would have applied to Dissent:

Your Lordship knows very well, that I am one of those who think, that the Roman Catholic question of Emancipation leads to considerations and inquiries of immense magnitude; yet whatever circumspection I may think requisite on that head, I should never have any scruple to give a Bible to a Roman Catholic: I should never scruple to join with a Roman Catholic in promoting the distribution of Bibles to others. In fact, I should look upon the dispersion of the Bible, and the free use of it, to be the likeliest way in the world to bring about a more complete reformation from popery. History teaches us, that it was by garbling the Bible, by keeping the Bible out of the hands of the people, by forbidding translations of the Bible into modern languages, that popery was enabled to keep its ground so long among the nations...That Holy Book, my Lord, the dissemination of which is the glorious object of this meeting, is itself the real cure of all dissent, and of all hurtful contentions; and it is my firm belief, that if all persons who receive the word of God in sincerity, excluding neither Roman Catholics nor the members of our own communion, did but read and study their Bibles more constantly, and with more devout care and application, and more of a direct view to improve the heart and correct the practice, Christians of every denomination would approach much nearer to one another than they do now; would actually coincide, or nearly so, in most essential points; and, in regard to subordinate matters, they would exercise so much mutual kindness and forbearance, as would almost annihilate the evil of any remaining difference of sentiment.²³⁶

VII. Conclusion

In 1794, Joseph Milner noted to James Stillingfleet an improvement in the spiritual life in Cambridge. 'This place has obtained more evangelical means since I was here last', he wrote, 'There is now Simeon; and it is to be regretted that his congregation is not so large as were to be wished. Of those, however, who do attend, there are a number of solid Christians; and whether God may please again to make this place a nursery for the Gospel, as doubtless it was in a very high degree at the time of the Reformation, we know not'.²³⁷ By the end of the first decade of the nineteenth century, the Evangelical nursery at Queens' had been established and recognized. The descendants of John Venn, who had been refused at Trinity College in 1782 because of his Evangelical connections, were to find a safe haven at Queens' and other enclaves such as the one that met in Simeon's rooms, but the arms of the conflict between Evangelicals and their High Church opponents had not been thrown down. Evangelical candidates continued to face difficulties in securing ordinations and placements as the machinations of Dampier and Marsh show. Sermons

²³⁵Owen, History, vol. II, p. 143.

²³⁶Milner, Life, pp. 478-79, 481.

²³⁷Ibid., p. 100.

and pamphlets appeared challenging Evangelical projects and spirituality. Yet to Milner, the founding of the Cambridge Auxiliary of the Bible Society marked both the culmination of his labours and the beginning of a new era which others must recognise notwithstanding the difficult days. 'My Lord', he addressed the first anniversary meeting of the Auxiliary,

after more than forty years' residence in this University, and, of course, after having attended a variety of public meetings, I CAN HONESTLY DECLARE, THAT THERE IS NO ONE ON WHICH I REFLECT WITH SO MUCH SINCERE AND SOLID SATISFACTION, AS ON THAT MEETING WHICH TOOK PLACE IN THIS ROOM LAST DECEMBER, AND WHICH IS THE OBJECT OF OUR COMMEMORATION THIS DAY...when I reflect how the holy flame for spreading the Scriptures of truth and life, was kindled in the hearts of the zealous youths of this place; how astonishing it has increased and burst forth, in the space of this one year; and how it has carried along with it so many hands and hearts of the rising generation, though at considerable distances from each other, I am inclined to exclaim, 'Who shall forbid me to rejoice with exceeding joy?' These events bring to my mind the trying alternative proposed to the Israelites, by good Joshua of old: 'Choose ye, this day, whom ye will serve;' nor can I entertain a doubt respecting the answer which would be given, to such a question, by those younger friends of this cause, who, with such an unparalleled mixture of zeal and prudence, have stood forward as its supporters. I hesitate not to believe, that they would, as with one voice, declare, 'Whatever others do, we will henceforth serve the Lord.'²³⁸

In a private comment to the author, Michael Hennell summarized the formula which resulted in the successful penetration and establishment of a viable Evangelical presence within Cambridge University: 'Elland provided the students, Milner welcomed them into his college, and Simeon trained them for the ministry'.²³⁹ By their clear commitments to learning, Milner, Simeon, and their colleagues stood solidly for an Evangelical tradition that valued the intellect, and through their efforts, the University was blessed by Evangelical parents as a safe shelter for the education of their sons. Having been educated within its halls, these men succeeded to positions of responsibility and leadership in lay and ordained vocations from which they shaped the future of England in the ensuing decades of the nineteenth century.

²³⁸Milner, *Life*, pp. 519, 521-22.

²³⁹Handwritten Notes, Michael Hennell to Barbara J. Melaas, 1990.

Chapter Three: The Dean of Carlisle

The medieval churchman of the South must have looked upon the offer of the see of Carlisle much as a modern one would look upon the offer of a bishopric in some remote and disagreeable colony, - perpetual banishment, if he did his duty, scant remuneration, the risk of having his residence burnt, or even of being killed; little wonder that no Italian prelate ever thought worth to come so far North for preferment.¹

I. Introduction

With its proximity to an unstable border and its utter remoteness, the prospect of preferment to the diocese of Carlisle undoubtedly presented itself as a mixed blessing to one hoping to climb the medieval ecclesiastical ladder. It was not uncommon for the Deans of Carlisle Cathedral to become bishops of the diocese, and the location and natural borders of the Pennines, Lake District fells and the sea lessened the chances of probing eyes enquiring into day to day matters. But the problems were many. The diocese was one of the poorest in the country, and non-resident pluralists held half of the benefices.² Bishop Nicholson's Miscellany of 1703 indicates that many churches suffered from serious disrepair³ and the people, based solidly in an agrarian economy, often appeared to outsiders as proud and as inhospitable as their surroundings.⁴ The following description of Carlisle Cathedral life as written in 1639 would hardly have been encouraging to the prospective candidate, for the great church of the diocese was

like a great wild country church, outwardly, so was it inwardly, neither beautiful nor adorned one whit. The organ and voices did well agree, the one being like a shrill bagpipe, the other like the Scottish tune, the sermon in the like accent. The communion was received in a wild and irreverent manner.⁵

As Dean of Carlisle Cathedral, Isaac Milner did not face the hazards of political intrigue as

¹Richard S. Ferguson, Diocesan Histories: Carlisle (London: SPCK, 1889), p. 205.

²Henry L. Widdup, Christianity in Cumbria (Kendal: Titus Wilson and Son, Ltd., 1981), p. 88. C.M.L. Bouch and G.P. Jones reported that in 1760, 60% of the clergy of the diocese had income no higher than the chief hind, ploughman and shepherd. A Short Economic and Social History of the Lake Counties 1500-1830 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1961), p. 187.

³William Nicolson, Miscellany Account of the Diocese of Carlisle, with the Terriers, ed. R.S. Ferguson (London: George Bell and Sons, 1877), pp. 101, 144.

⁴Reflecting upon a visit to Wigton, Wesley wrote, 'I was a good deal moved at the exquisite self-sufficiency which was visible in the countenance, air, and whole deportment of a considerable part of them'. John Wesley, The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M., ed. Nehemiah Curnock, 8 vols. (London: Charles H. Kelly, 1909-1916), vol. IV (1913), p. 449.

⁵F. Arnold, Our Bishops and Deans, 2 vols. (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1875), vol. I, p. 300.

his predecessors might have. The last time the citizens of Carlisle had witnessed military action of significance was during the rebellion of 1745, though the fact that the Bishop resided in a fortified castle and not a palace served as a reminder of past dangers.

Still, Carlisle must have appeared only somewhat less remote and backward to Milner than it had to Deans of days gone by. Not until 1773 did a regular stage coach link Carlisle with London, thus enabling the traveller to make the journey in three days, and only five years before his appointment did a regular mail coach speed communication between the northwest and south.⁶ Agricultural developments were slow in making headway in the county. Philip Howard of Corby had introduced clover into Cumberland in 1752, and turnips in 1755; both crops had arrived in the country in 1645. Further, farmers had difficulty in keeping up with new methods in agriculture brought in with the enclosure movement as well as the expenses involved in installing new drains, hedging and ditching.⁷

Though the Industrial Revolution was predictably late in reaching Carlisle, its arrival meant an improved town economy and increased land values, bringing prosperity and greater stability. In 1747, the Deulicher brothers from Hamburg brought the woollen industry to the area. Calico printing joined this production in the 1760's, an advance which 'revolutionised trade of the city'.⁸ The demands of the new industry in turn called forth the need for the local manufacturing of cotton cloth. To meet this requirement, many homes became centres for the spinning of cotton and the weaving of the cloth necessary to the printing industry.

It was a city caught in the birth pangs of a new era that Milner inherited upon his succession of Geoffrey Ekins to the Deanery of Carlisle. Caught between the old agrarian lifestyle and the new challenges brought on by industrialization, the city put on different faces to even the casual visitor. Pausing briefly in Carlisle on a tour through northwest England, one traveller in 1801 could judge the city ranked 'now with our middling country towns, and is more remarkable for pleasantness of situation, overlooking a luxuriant plain watered by the river Eden, than for any splendour of structure'.⁹ Southey, also on a visit only six years later in 1807, remarked about 'the swarms of the manufacturing poor in their usual state of depravity'.¹⁰ The later years of Milner's reign were to bring some of the harsher realities of industrialization plaguing other urban centres

⁶Kenneth Smith, Carlisle (Lancaster: Dalesman, 1984), p. 46.

⁷C.M.L. Bouch, Prelates and People of the Lake Counties: A History of the Diocese of Carlisle, 1133-1933 (Kendal: Titus Wilson and Son, Ltd., 1948), p. 342.

⁸James Walter Brown, Round Carlisle Cross, 4th Series, 9 vols. (Carlisle: Charles Thurnam and Sons, 1921-1929), vol. IV (1924), p. 16.

⁹Richard Warner, A Tour through the Northern Counties of England and the Borders of Scotland, 2 vols. (Bath: R. Cruttwell, 1802), vol. II, pp. 61-62.

¹⁰Smith, Carlisle, p. 49.

in England to Carlisle with periodic hunger riots, and the burning of doors and fences in the streets for warmth. Conditions were so poor that in 1819, Carlisle weavers voted to petition their superiors to send them to America in hopes of a better life.

The Carlisle that Milner agreed to serve in 1791 can be seen as emerging from its isolation to join a national community undergoing rapid modernization, and in these circumstances, the city presented an equally daunting though different set of pastoral challenges as confronted previous Deans and their cathedral clergy. By the 1790's, Evangelicals, whether they stood in the ranks of dissent, within the Church of England, or in the grey area occupied by the Methodists, had become a recognizable force in Britain. They had successfully infiltrated the halls of the Universities and the benches of Parliament. Congregations had grown and had been able to attract both working class labourers and the more fashionable, leisured ranks of society. Still, these were the days when little effort was made to distinguish the nuances between those groups claiming to be 'Evangelical'. The dissenters who had welcomed the ideals of the French Revolution had stamped all Evangelicals, at least in a significant number of the minds of their beholders, with the brand of republicanism. The doors to preferment within the Established Church remained firmly closed to the theologically and politically suspect Anglican Evangelical.

II. Dean of a Cathedral

These doors would remain firmly closed until 1812 with the election of Henry Ryder to the deanery of Wells,¹¹ save for the knocking of one man who had for himself the political connections that would enable the doors to open, if only for an instant. The first hint that Isaac Milner's friends were working on his behalf rises from a brief entry in the Wilberforce diary in 1790: 'Travelled on all day - calling at Bishop of Lincoln's - talked about Milner'.¹² Though the information is not explicit, George Pretyman-Tomline's former relationship to William Pitt as tutor, and later as ecclesiastical advisor, makes plausible the supposition that Wilberforce had his friend's future prospects in mind. The appointment to the Deanery of Carlisle lay in the gift of the Crown, and the King would certainly seek the counsel of his Prime Minister for advice in the matter.

Milner had hinted to Pitt in 1791 his hope for preferment. The letter is lengthy and details the ever-present physical ailments that prohibited the exercise of University responsibilities. A twinge of guilt seems to lie behind the acknowledgement of University regulations requiring the reading of lectures in the midst of his confessing the impossibility of fulfilling this commitment, though it is with an official medical certificate he omitted 'the Lectures in consideration of ill

¹¹Dean Ryder became the first Evangelical bishop upon his election to the throne of Gloucester in 1815.

¹²Wilberforce, Life, vol. I, p. 271.

health + former diligence + c'.¹³ But the arrangement, however, was temporary and Milner expressed his understanding that the Lectures must be continued by someone abler than himself. His physicians, he reported, had deemed that his physical condition would continue to deteriorate, thus making the probability of his resuming normal responsibilities for public lecturing unlikely. Further, the financial demands made upon the president of a Cambridge college caused the prospect of loss of income (as would happen if he were to vacate the Jacksonian chair) to weigh heavily:

but of late the Prospect of embarrassed circumstances which I have been describing, often lead me to consider not so much how I am to employ my time, as how I am to live at all; + the anxiety produced by such reflections is favourable neither to health or to Study.¹⁴

Curiously, the letter contains no reference to Milner's commitment to the ministry or aspirations to hold a significant office within the Anglican hierarchy. Doubtless, he had borne in mind that despite Wilberforce's diligent efforts, Pitt remained without the Evangelical pale; this state of affairs dictated that he should downplay his theological concerns and aims. Further, Pretyman-Tomline whose anti-Evangelical sentiments showed clearly in his scheme to make life as uncomfortable as possible for those whom he considered Calvinists, would have assuredly counselled Pitt not to appoint those espousing such questionable views. Milner, in a surprising move, in fact appealed to Pitt's 'strong taste for Algebra + some other abstruse parts of science'¹⁵ in assigning to the leisure time afforded by certain offices (such as a Deanery) the pursuit of a

considerable Philosophical work, which might be of general use to mankind + do some credit to myself + the University. This work would have comprised a History of the Arts + an Explanation of every thing that is known in Chemistry + all the various branches of natural Philosophy. The whole was intended to be managed in such a way that men of sound understandings, tho' not versed in such matters might comprehend what it was that the Mathematicians + Philosophers had discovered.¹⁶

Certainly, for Milner's purpose, the best strategy was to play the part of the typical eighteenth-century pluralist, a character ironically so often pointed to as the perpetrator of one of the abuses the Revival sought to correct.

The petition was successful and Milner wrote to Wilberforce of his correspondence with both the Bishop of Lincoln and Pitt:

The Bishop of Lincoln answered me immediately, and espoused my cause with such a

¹³Cambridge University Library Add. MS 6958,f.1016, Isaac Milner to William Pitt, 7 November 1791.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid.

glow of friendship, as is never to be forgotten. In short, he said 'he should never rest till he saw me settled in a comfortable income.' Mr. P— visited him lately at Buckden, and yesterday I received a most handsome and substantial letter from him, informing me that he had recommended me to His Majesty for the Deanery of Carlisle now vacant.¹⁷

A note in the Carlisle Cathedral Dean and Chapter Minute Book confirms the appointment, and the office and honours duly bestowed:

By Virtue of this Mandate the within named Isaac Milner B.D. was (by his lawful Proctor John Brous clerk) inducted into the real actual and corporal possession of the place and Dignity of Dean of the Cathedral Church of Carlisle within mentioned and to all the rights Members and appurtenances there unto belonging and had also the Stall in the choir and the place and Voice in the Chapter antiently belonging to the said place and Dignity of Dean assigned him this second day of February 1792.¹⁸

Signed by the eminent theologian William Paley, the note acknowledged that the Evangelicals had secured a place in the upper echelons of the Anglican leadership.

Few records of reactions to Milner's succession to the Deanery survive that tell us how his constituency received the appointment. A letter from William Paley, then archdeacon of the diocese of Carlisle, and technically Milner's senior, to a friend acknowledged Milner's election and recognized the new Dean's friendship with several of Carlisle's prominent citizens. Paley's son, in a defence of his father, indicated that Paley might have been jealous of Milner's good fortune, though he hastened to add,

So far was he from suspecting, much less being conscious, that Dr. Milner was preferred before himself, that he came into his house one day much delighted with the news being announced of their new dean, as it opened a prospect of their having so eminent a man amongst them. He said, he could not have been better pleased, except it have been himself.¹⁹

Paley, no mean example of an eighteenth-century pluralist, would surely not have objected to adding the feather of the Deanery to his cap. He was nevertheless swift in conveying to Milner his congratulations, assuring the new Dean of 'the general satisfaction with which your appointment is received here'.²⁰ He also informed Milner that resident Cathedral clergy had duly performed the installation by proxy, closing his letter with the unabashed remark that 'preferment is reckoned a wholesome thing'.²¹

In December 1793, Milner took formal possession of his office, thus beginning a lifelong

¹⁷Wilberforce, Correspondence, vol. I, pp. 86-87.

¹⁸Carlisle Cathedral Archives: Dean and Chapter Minute Book, 2 February 1792.

¹⁹E. Paley, An Account of the Life and Writings of W. Paley, D.D., New Ed., 7 vols. (London: C. and J. Rivington, 1825), vol. I, pp. 245-246.

²⁰Milner, Life, p. 74.

²¹Ibid, p. 75.

series of summertime treks between Cambridge and Carlisle for the June sessions of the Cathedral Chapter. It was clear from the early days of his office that the obligations of a college president would prohibit the Dean from participating in November Chapter meetings. It is not difficult to see how these circumstances could raise Milner as a target of charges of absenteeism and pluralism, particularly to those eager to malign the Evangelicals with whatever convenient weapon fell into their hands. That Milner accepted with no apparent sign of a guilty conscience a post that he could not possibly administer on a day to day to basis is obvious, yet it is equally true that unlike his colleague Paley, he never considered holding the Deanery of Carlisle as a 'mere sinecure'.²² Apart from an illness that prevented him from making the trip and taking immediate possession of his office, and the June Chapter of 1811 for which he obtained royal dispensation to be absent in favour of his attendance at the constituting meeting of the Cambridge Bible Society, he faithfully made the arduous trek every year for a quarter of a century before old age finally ended his lengthy travels.²³ During his absences from Carlisle, he corresponded with cathedral clergy about Chapter business.²⁴ One also must lay a portion of the responsibility for this perpetration of an eighteenth-century ecclesiastical abuse on the doorstep of those who made the appointment of a Cambridge college president to a Deanery some three hundred miles away. In securing a Deanery, the Evangelicals had also promoted a pluralist, though at least in his defence, it could be said that Milner could claim to have both a conscience and a sense of responsibility.

In a speech to the House of Commons during the age of Cathedral Reform, Archbishop Tait stated that he had taken literally years to discover the duties of a Dean. Calls for reform of cathedral organization and staffing support Arnold's assessment that the office had degenerated into an impotent position of 'dignity, ease and affluence'.²⁵ Edward Stuart did not mince words in his work of 1869, Do Away With Deans, and quoted Sydney Smith's statement in his case against Deans that

'to the best of my knowledge the duty of the Dean is to give dinners to the Chapter, and the duty of the Chapter is to dine with the Dean'.²⁶

During his tenure, Milner was aware of the social obligations attending the Dean's position as a kind of diplomat of the cathedral to the surrounding community. He dutifully entertained his Chapter and attended public functions in Carlisle. He also received occasional invitations to the

²²G.W. Meadley, Memoirs of William Paley (Sunderland: For the Author, 1809), p. 69. Paley applied this description to his holding of the office of archdeacon.

²³Dean and Chapter Minute Book, 1792-1820.

²⁴Milner, Life, p. 689.

²⁵Arnold, Bishops and Deans, vol. I, p. 300.

²⁶Edward Stuart, Do Away with Deans (London: G.J. Palmer, 1869), p. 7.

home of the Earl of Lonsdale, a staunch Tory and a key figure in the drama of Carlisle's political life.²⁷ Undoubtedly, Milner found this relationship especially challenging as the Earl was inclined to make no distinction between Evangelicals of the dissenting and Establishment varieties, though vignettes of Milner's visits to Lowther Castle demonstrate the ease with which he mingled in this society. Anglican Evangelicalism met with its greatest success among those who numbered themselves among the more fashionable members of society, and Milner's position as a dignitary within the town afforded him a natural avenue for the promotion of the Evangelical cause.

Besides its social advantages, Milner also clearly recognized the privileges that the occupation of this office conveyed, and he sought to use his time for scholarly pursuits. Trusting such use of time to be acceptable to her audience, Milner's biographer informed her readers that

Dean Milner's season of residence at Carlisle, notwithstanding the preparation necessary for his frequent addresses from the pulpit, and other avocations incident to his station, was comparatively, and upon the whole, a season of leisure; and when at leisure, his mind habitually turned to the consideration of theological subjects. It was his custom to think with a pen in his hand; and many valuable hints may, consequently, be found interspersed among his remaining manuscripts.²⁸

The philosophical work he had proposed to Pitt in his aforementioned petition for preferment never appeared, but the organization and editing of Joseph Milner's manuscripts, besides his own additions to them, led to the publication of the Milner brothers' magnum opus, The History of the Church of Christ. A lengthy contribution to the controversy with Herbert Marsh concerning the distribution of Bibles, the editing of his brother's sermons, newspaper articles and an essay on the subject of human liberty published posthumously complete the works from his pen presented to the public, though his biography and evidence contained in the Lives of his contemporaries show that he was a dedicated letter writer and covered a large range of topics from scientific to theological in his correspondence. Arnold, in his book on deans, maintained that the Dean was to be literary 'in the sense that every judge is learned, every clergyman reverend, and every privy councillor right honourable'.²⁹ In this aspect, Milner answered to the definition of the typical cathedral Dean.

But unlike the typical pluralist of his age, the Cambridge don, when resident, engaged himself wholeheartedly in the business of the day to day running of the cathedral. Of primary importance to this task was seeing to the smooth and harmonious meeting of the cathedral's board of managing directors, the Chapter. There is little evidence to suggest that Milner enjoyed anything but cooperation and support from his colleagues, and his philosophy of leadership would surely have promoted a spirit of good will:

²⁷Milner, Life, p. 327.

²⁸Ibid., p. 275.

²⁹Arnold, Bishops and Deans, vol.II, p. 278.

My idea of a dean and a chapter is, that of a cabinet, the members of the cabinet which act cordially with each other; and support each other against their common adversaries, of which they have but too many.³⁰

Archbishop Tait had complained that it had taken years for him discern the duties of his office; Milner, with his penchant for detail, had acquainted himself with the regulations and privileges governing the positions he had held in Cambridge, and there can be little doubt that he had availed himself of the Statutes of the Cathedral. As detailed in these regulations, he would have found his responsibilities to be many and varied. Besides upkeep of the cathedral fabric and the presidency of the Chapter, the Dean should

take care, that the Divine Offices are celebrated with decency, that sermons are preached upon the prescribed days, that the boys are profitably instructed, that alms are distributed to the poor, that, generally, each one faithfully discharges the duties entrusted to him. Moreover, it is requisite for the Dean, when he is present, to maintain a respectable and suitable household, to break bread for the poor, in which matter we burden his conscience in the Lord, to set an example creditably and frugally in all things. Also, a Dean sordidly parsimonious, the Bishop shall reprove, but the Canons similarly delinquent, the Dean shall reprove; who also shall correct and punish those who are bad and slothful in their office according to the Statutes.³¹

The Dean and Chapter Minute Book, an indispensable record of Milner's activity as Dean of Carlisle, attests to the attending of the business outlined above and more. As a large land-owning institution, property had to be looked after and commodities such as timber managed wisely. In 1808, the sale of timber compensated for a deficit in the account designated for repairs, and proceedings such as those instituted against a vicar accused of unauthorized cutting of Cathedral wood ensured that profits would continue to be realized. Enclosure boundaries required defence, gamekeepers needed appointing and fishing rights clarified. A large Cathedral staff required management; bellows blowers must be hired, singing men must be reprimanded for non-attendance at Cathedral services, and organists showing a penchant for tippling and the cockpit disciplined accordingly. Charities were important, and the Chapter maintained an almshouse for widows and also collected periodic subscriptions for the relief of less fortunate members of the community such as John Scholick of Carleton Mill whose 'kiln and cowhouse had been destroyed by fire'.³² Fellow clerics fleeing from the chaos in France were recipients of the benevolence of the Dean and Chapter as were other community concerns such as the establishment of schools and the relief of those who particularly suffered during the cold winter of 1816, notably one of the few winters during which Milner resided in Carlisle.

The upkeep of the Cathedral also fell under the jurisdiction of the Dean and Chapter. It was

³⁰Milner, *Life*, p. 569.

³¹*The Statutes of the Cathedral Church of Carlisle*, trans. by J.E. Prescott (Carlisle: C. Thurnam and Sons, 1879), pp. 29-30.

³²Dean and Chapter Minute Book, November 1805.

responsible for the oversight of small projects such as the purchase of new prayer books, cushions and pews alongside those of a more practical concern like the problems of carriage traffic through cathedral grounds and loose horses in the Abbey precincts. A note in the Cathedral Guidebook published in 1816 indicated that attendance at services in the Cathedral was sufficient to merit the undertaking of a building project with the erection of a gallery, pews and seats.³³ In 1804, the Chapter contracted the services of John Avery of Winchester, organ builder for the King, to build a new organ for the Cathedral at the price of £582.00. First played in public worship on Easter Day of 1806, it was completed in 1808. The remains of the predecessor instrument were donated to St. Cuthbert's, Carlisle. In celebration of the completion of the organ, the Chapter, in cooperation with civic leaders, planned a grand musical festival with the goal of raising funds for charitable purposes as a secondary object. Milner, supporting the venture wholeheartedly, consented to the use of the Cathedral as a venue for this unprecedented event, thus giving his niece the opportunity to point out that her Evangelical uncle 'did not disapprove of such performances of oratorios, or selections of sacred music'.³⁴ Though the event was deemed a failure in this 'most unmusical city',³⁵ Milner's oversight of the upkeep and provisioning of the Cathedral shows both a practical and aesthetic concern in leading those entrusted to his pastoral care in their worship of God.

Gifted with livings, the Dean and Chapter also saw to the provisioning of ministry in both the city of Carlisle and other parishes of the diocese. Little evidence survives that allows one to paint a vivid picture of Milner's involvement in this area though an interesting entry in the Chapter Minute Book suggests that Milner had taken a dominant role in the making of appointments. Immediately following the decision to appoint the Rev. James Fawcett to St Cuthbert's in Carlisle, the Minute for 23 November 1801 reads that the Chapter agreed

it will be conducive to the peace and Harmony of the Chapter if some Rule should be adopted for the Disposal of the Preferment which may hereafter become vacant.³⁶

The following text outlined a plan that prescribed a strict rota by which members of the Chapter (including the Dean) would be permitted to nominate his favoured candidate. By holding an influential position in the appointment of livings, Milner wielded a useful tool in promoting Evangelical aims in parishes within the gift of the Cathedral, and the appointment of James Fawcett, a key figure in keeping the Evangelical flame burning between Milner and the later

³³Quoted in Bouch, *Prelates*, p. 362.

³⁴Milner, *Life*, p. 351.

³⁵*Ibid.*

³⁶Dean and Chapter Minute Book, 23 November 1801.

Evangelical Dean of Carlisle, Francis Close,³⁷ stands as a prime example of this intent. Still, there is no evidence that Milner had any Evangelical sympathizers alongside him on the Cathedral staff, and the defiance expressed in the new plan for appointments suggests that a strong-minded Chapter was not going to let their superior have his way without an argument.

Although Milner firmly grounded his ministry in the pastoral care exercised by the premier church of the diocese, his leadership extended to involvement with the community and its concerns. He preached regularly during the Assizes in Carlisle, and founded the tradition that those involved in court proceedings would attend a service in the Cathedral laid on for their benefit before their responsibilities began. Upon one occasion, he agreed to provide pastoral care for a defendant in the trials, a man who had committed a forgery crime and had been sentenced to death.³⁸ The man was unexpectedly reprieved, but not before Milner had attempted to set the condemned soul right with God. Milner was engaged with the Carlisle community, and responded to its pastoral needs.

III. Milner and the National Schools

Of particular concern to Milner was the establishment of public education for the children of Carlisle. Wholly engaged in issues concerning education by virtue of his position as president of a Cambridge college, he took great interest, and then part, in the ensuing public debate about public education. At stake in the matter was the system of education considered most suitable for the needs of the children of the city.

In 1787, the Rev. Dr. Andrew Bell went to India to serve as chaplain to the British Army stationed at Madras. Besides his pastoral responsibilities, Bell undertook the office of superintendent at the Military Orphan Asylum at Egmore. He discovered in the early days of his responsibilities that the vast numbers of children sheltered by the Asylum far exceeded the capability of a limited staff and the effectiveness of traditional methods of teaching evolved in a western context. Having observed a group of young Malabar children writing in the sand, Bell conceived the idea of what became known as the 'Mutual', or 'Monitorial', system of education. Instead of being taught directly by the teacher in charge, the oldest, and presumably, the most responsible, children of a group were taught by rote learning by a teacher. These students, in turn, conveyed the appointed information to the younger pupils who had been divided into smaller clusters to facilitate communication. With such a structure in place, Bell believed he had developed a theory of education that would effectively support the teaching of large numbers of children while also improving discipline within the ranks: a boy entrusted with such authority and responsibility would, out of a sense of pride, be motivated to model desirable behaviour in the

³⁷Ferguson, Carlisle, p. 189.

³⁸Milner, Life, p. 332.

classroom. Of his success, Bell wrote to a colleague in India:

The conduct of the school, which is entirely in my own hands, is particular. Every boy is either a master, or scholar, or both. He teaches one boy, while another teaches him. The success has been rapid.³⁹

Upon his return to England in 1797, Bell published his results and by the early part of the new century, his system of education had been instituted in some English schools.

About the same time, another man in England faced similar problems of overwhelming numbers and limited resources in his work to educate poor and disadvantaged children as Bell had in India. Joseph Lancaster, a Quaker, had, in 1798, obtained the use of room lent to him by his father in Borough Road, London, to establish an inexpensive school in the neighbourhood. Limited financial support led Lancaster to develop a plan of education very similar to Bell's in its extensive use of pupil masters in instructing the mass of children. Though Lancaster later admitted that he had developed his plan after Bell's chronologically, there is nothing to suggest the former had intentionally borrowed from the latter. Lancaster did initiate correspondence with Bell after Bell had returned from India, and a cordial discourse developed between the two concerning the children for whom they hoped to make possible a better future through education.

The friendly discourse, however, erupted in controversy in 1805. Sarah Trimmer, a woman committed to education, and the editor of the publication, the Guardian of Education, published a work in 1805 with the provocative title, 'A Comparative View of the New Plan of Education promulgated by Mr. Joseph Lancaster in His Tracts concerning the Instruction of the Children of the Labouring Part of the Community; and of the System of Christian Education founded by our Pious Forefathers for the Initiation of the Young Members of the Established Church in the Principles of the Reformed Religion'. Believing that education 'ought not to be made subservient to the propagation of the peculiar tenets of any sect beyond its own number',⁴⁰ Lancaster the Quaker had set his school system on what he saw as strictly non-denominational lines. Religious education was not to be excluded but was to be taught on lines that did not favour a particular theological or liturgical tradition. Trimmer, a staunch Anglican, objected to this approach toward religious education on the grounds that not only did it fail to cultivate the principles of the Established Church but also put it on a footing with the dissenting churches. Trimmer believed building an educational system on a non-denominational basis was part of a dangerous plot launched by the French encyclopedists to undermine Christianity, and a known dissenter such as Lancaster engaged in such activity could not be above suspicion. Though she would not prohibit a dissenting body from instructing its young, the national system of education was a different matter. The Church of England, Mrs. Trimmer maintained,

³⁹John Henry Overton, The English Church in the Nineteenth Century (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1894), p. 234.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 237.

was the established church, and the acts of Uniformity prescribed the study of the church catechism and the use of the Book of Common Prayer; these, therefore, constituted a national system of education, with the charity schools and grammar schools as its agents, and with the bishops in the exercise of functions that had belonged to them from time immemorial as its chief authorities.⁴¹

By 1810, the conflict had erupted into a raging controversy involving religion, education, politics, and passion. Ironically, those concerned left behind the real issue at stake of whether an educational system ought to be based on children teaching children. In truth, very little distinguished the underlying philosophy of the systems, and both were subject to criticism on similar grounds. Still, each of the systems had enjoyed considerable growth and success, and their respective advocates lined up behind their favoured contestants. Wordsworth and Southey, who had argued for Bell's precedence over Lancaster in an article published in the October 1811 issue of The Quarterly Review, and 'exposed the evils and absurdities which he held to mark Lancaster's mode of school management',⁴² supported the former army chaplain. Lancaster's Borough Road school enjoyed the patronage of King George III and the support of others such as Sydney Smith, William Wilberforce and Samuel Romilly. J.W. Adamson, an historian of education, summarized the importance of the conflict in this way:

Lancaster's 'undenominational' system was regarded by tories and churchmen as a deliberate attack upon the establishment; whigs and dissenters cherished it as a guarantee of religious liberty.⁴³

Matters of political and religious import had been brought to the front of the classroom.

In 1812, plans for establishing a National School based on the Madras System brought Milner into conflict with his diocesan bishop, Samuel Goodenough. As key ecclesiastical figures in the city, the support of the Dean or the Bishop would have been sought by those hoping to establish either plan of education in the city.

Curiously, the debate in Carlisle did not centre upon the virtues of the Lancastrian model as opposed to those of Bell's system; it would appear that the Anglican influence was sufficiently strong to permit the establishment of Bell's model with religious instruction to be conveyed according to the principles of the Establishment. This regulation would not prohibit children of dissenting parents from attending the school, but would require them to learn their catechism according to the Church of England.

Milner had no problem assenting to this stipulation. But the Bishop had insisted upon another stricture: besides requiring that all religious instruction be taught according to the tenets of the

⁴¹A.W. Ward and A.R. Waller, gen. ed., The Cambridge History of English Literature, 15 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1907-1927), vol. XIV (1916), The Nineteenth Century, by J.W. Adamson, p. 402.

⁴²Adamson, Nineteenth, p. 403.

⁴³Ibid.

Church of England, all students, despite their families' denominational allegiance, would be required to attend the services of the local Anglican parish church. Public education, the bishop believed, must be rooted firmly in the principles of the Established Church and state for which such schools would be preparing future leaders. In particular, Carlisle, a place in which the Bishop saw 'Dissenters and Methodists do so abound'⁴⁴ was in special need. An adequate number of educational opportunities were available to dissenting families, and the time had come to do something positive for the church: 'I educate professedly for the Church, not for the conventicle'⁴⁵ Goodenough declared to Milner in March of 1812, and he maintained this assertion through the duration of the conflict.

The disagreement hinged upon an ambiguous statement within the regulations governing the establishment of National Schools which stipulated that children must attend the parish church on Sunday 'unless such reason be given for their non-attendance' of Anglican Sunday services.⁴⁶ The Bishop, unmoving in his stance that all children in the school must be educated in Anglican ways, maintained that this clause permitted only extraordinary reasons such as illness as excuses for non-attendance. Milner, however, interpreted the words as granting to non-Anglicans

an opening to the children of dissenters, whose parents or guardians may have no objection to their learning the Catechism, Liturgy, & c., but who are still desirous that they themselves should have the superintendence of their children at their own respective places of worship.⁴⁷

To Milner, the incorporation of children of dissenters in a non-threatening way provided a prime opportunity to induct them into the faith of the Established Church. They would be instructed in Anglican theology, and the Liturgy would be used as an important tool of instruction. He would, however, insist upon respecting the family's right to worship together; the regulation for church attendance would remain intact for the dissenters, only they would be relieved of the possible disunity resulting from half the family making their way to the chapel, the other, to the parish church by allowing them to attend the worship place of their choice. Rather than weakening the emphasis placed on religious nurturing, Milner believed his concession would strengthen it, agreeing with the Archbishop of York that 'In my opinion, were we to proceed on any other ground, we should justly subject ourselves to the charge of intolerance, promote the views of our adversaries, and fail in the accomplishment of our own'.⁴⁸

The Bishop had his way and the National School in Carlisle was established according to

⁴⁴Milner, *Life*, p. 489.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, p. 488.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, p. 487.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, p. 494.

Bell's plan, keeping intact the regulation concerning church attendance. A letter to Milner from Goodenough indicates that the Bishop had taken some notice of the Dean's suggestion that he omit strong wording concerning the denominational background of the children in favour of neutral terminology in his charge. Disagreements did not stand in Milner's way of supporting an undertaking in which he believed, and in 1813, he agreed to the Chapter's subscription of fifty pounds for the new school. Still, his convictions remained firm, and he instructed his proxy attending a meeting of the November 1813 Chapter in Carlisle

to mention to such members as are present, that the Dean reserves to himself the full right of acting according to his own conviction, if ever the question should be moved, whether, on the application of a dissenting parent or guardian, the child of such parent or guardian should be allowed to go to his own place of worship on the Sabbath day; it being the Dean's decided opinion, that the child of such dissenting parent or guardian should be permitted to do so, precisely according to the practice of the Great Central School in London.⁴⁹

IV. The Carlisle Bible and Mission Societies

The Carlisle Auxiliary to the Bible Society was born in 1813. Doubtless, its distance from the nation's heartbeat and relatively late arrival to the Bible Society family made its early days appear of less interest to publications like the Christian Observer or even to Mary Milner whose detailed description of the birth of the Cambridge Auxiliary compared to the few paragraphs she devoted to the Carlisle organization demonstrates the relative unimportance assigned to the new society. One should, however, note that Milner did undertake a position of leadership in the formation of the Auxiliary though he exhibited a similar degree of caution as displayed in the formation of the Cambridge Society. He carefully cultivated the sympathy of 'various persons of consideration living in the neighbourhood of Carlisle, or otherwise connected with the county of Cumberland'⁵⁰ and won the support of the Duke of Norfolk, Lord Morpeth and Sir W. Brisco, the High Sheriff of Carlisle who was called to the Chair.⁵¹ Besides his role in preparations, Milner addressed the gathering with 'a luminous and argumentative speech'⁵² in which he offered his listeners a word of encouragement in the face of resistance: 'I am deeply convinced', Milner said,

that in promoting this work of distributing the Book of the Revelation of God among the poor and needy, we are acting according to the will of our beneficent Creator. Here, therefore, I repeat, is a case wherein our zeal cannot be slandered as being

⁴⁹Milner, Life, p. 590. The Central School in London operated on a system where each child presented a card which verified attendance at a place of worship.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 577.

⁵¹Christian Observer, vol. XII ('Appendix', 1813), p. 859.

⁵²Owen, History, vol. II, p. 501.

without knowledge; and I do not doubt but that, with one voice, we shall resolve, not only, that, with Joshua, 'we,' and those who belong to us, 'will serve the Lord,' but also, that, to the utmost of our power, we will make his commandments, as delivered in the Holy Scriptures, known among all nations.⁵³

Following her summary of the activities in Carlisle, Mary Milner noted that there were those observing Milner's involvement in the Bible Society who disapproved, most notably, the Bishop of Carlisle. An excerpt of the letter from Viscount Morpeth, Patron of the Carlisle Society, read to the constituting meeting of the Auxiliary sheds light on the problem. 'It gives me pleasure to observe', Morpeth wrote,

among those who are embodied in this great cause, many of the first dignitaries, many of the distinguished supporters of the Established Church, united with many of those who, though they dissent from its discipline, and some parts of its doctrine, agree in strengthening the foundation of all true religion, in extending the sphere of its action, and widening the circle of its benefits.⁵⁴

In another section in his work on the Bible Society, Owen referred to Samuel Goodenough's opposition to the Society, joining with other bishops in the north who objected because the organization's aims were not calculated to promote 'our Ecclesiastical Establishment, or the quiet of it, both which we all profess to maintain.'⁵⁵

Again driven to distinguish carefully his decidedly Tory Anglican Evangelicalism from dissent, Milner assured his diocesan superior 'I ought not to be represented as unfriendly either to the discipline or the doctrine of the establishment'.⁵⁶ His polemical tracts written against the work of the 'irregular' ^{clergyman} Thomas Haweis and the work by his brother which he edited and reassuringly entitled Reflections Upon Ecclesiastical Establishment, were possibly enclosed with the letter from which the above quotation was taken as further evidence of the Evangelical Dean's political and ecclesiastical loyalty. Still, it is reasonable to suggest that a man who would take a stand as he did on his diocesan school would look askance at his Dean's further involvement with those whose political aims were suspect. As late as 1818, Mary Milner noted that her uncle again stood apart from his Bishop and cathedral clergy in his support of the nascent Church Missionary Association in Carlisle⁵⁷ and his subsequent acceptance of the Presidency. Though it must be stated that they had begun to be tolerated, twenty years after the arrival of Milner in Carlisle, the Anglican Evangelicals were still breaking ground.

⁵³Milner, Life, p. 578.

⁵⁴Owen, History, vol. II, p. 502.

⁵⁵Ibid., vol. III (1820), p. 146.

⁵⁶Milner, Life, p. 579.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 673.

V. Milner and *The Carlisle Patriot*

For a man whose theological convictions rendered him suspect politically, Milner's involvement in the political life of Carlisle offered him a practical way in which he could prove his loyalties. As mentioned before, he fraternized with the Lowther family, as well as his Bishops, among the leading Tory figures in the area; with both the Earl of Lonsdale and Bishop Goodenough, he often had to defend his stance as a Tory Evangelical.⁵⁸ In 1815, he joined the Carlisle Pitt Club, an organization founded to meet annually to honour Pitt's memory, and to

stem the torrent of Revolutionary Principles which threatened to overwhelm the venerable fabric of our Constitution, and to shake the very foundation of the Social Edifice: who braved the sneers of the envious: the calumnies of the disaffected: and the threats of the common enemy.⁵⁹

Edmund Paley had asserted that the higher members of Cumberland's clergy 'were thought to be materially and improperly concerned'⁶⁰ in the political struggles of the county in the 1780's. Though the peak of the turmoil predated Milner's leadership, his strong and determined character coupled with the relationship he was known to have maintained with the Lowther family suggest more than just a casual interest in the city's political life.

Probably Milner's most significant contribution to Carlisle politics was his major role in founding in 1815 a weekly newspaper entitled The Patriot or the Carlisle and Cumberland Advertiser. As noted in an earlier section, the city of Carlisle found itself in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in a significant stage of transition. The early stages of the Industrial Revolution had caught up with this northern city, and with the coming of factories came a wave of working class Irish and Scottish people. The diocese of Carlisle was amongst the poorest in the country, and though new industries and improved production brought increased prosperity to the area, the pressures resulting from the war and unstable economy stretched the community's resources and the people became more inclined to demonstrate their discontent. M. Creighton noted that a number of Carlisle elections were tainted with civil disturbances,⁶¹ and major rioting broke out in 1795, 1812, and 1817 over food shortages.

Several references in the Milner Life make note of an increase in what the author considered

⁵⁸Of Milner's tension with his peers, John Telford wrote 'Isaac Milner, then Dean of Carlisle, wrote in August 1813 that Dr. Randolph, the late Bishop of London, was "most abominably tyrannical and prejudiced up to his ears. His enmity to the Bible Society has been excessive and unreasonable in the highest degree." He adds that the Bishop of Carlisle had been prejudiced beyond example by Lord Lonsdale, and "had got it into his head that we are all Dissenters, or little better, at bottom"'. John Telford, A Sect that Moved the World (London: Charles H. Kelly, 1907), p. 90.

⁵⁹The Carlisle Patriot, 3 June 1815.

⁶⁰Paley, Account, vol. I, p. 189.

⁶¹M. Creighton, Carlisle (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1889), p. 198.

a 'democratic spirit'⁶² in the northern counties, and by 1815, Milner determined to take measures that he hoped would counteract what he viewed a dangerous influence. A 'Caution' that Milner reputedly wrote, published and circulated addressing the causes of political unrest and proposing the establishment of a weekly newspaper has not survived in either the collection of Patriot newspapers housed in the Carlisle Public Library, or in Milner's personal library donated to Queens' College upon his death. A 'Prospectus', however, published in the first number of the papers stated the purposes of The Patriot's establishment.

In the opening lines of the article, Milner summarized the powerful role the Press had played in British political life, extolling those 'who often at the hazard of their lives, have laboured to preserve inviolate those laws and usages, which have, from time to time, so successfully protected this scourge of despots and despotism - this bulwark against injustice and oppression'⁶³ and condemning those who have used this valuable organ to serve 'the detestable purposes of sedition, of tumult, and of anarchy'.⁶⁴ Carlisle's Whig mouthpiece, The Carlisle Journal, founded in 1792, fell into the latter category to the point that it called forth a competitor. Further, it was evident to the writer that 'levellers and zealots' were more inclined to raise their voices over the peaceable inhabitants of the community who could daily observe attempts to 'sow dissensions among our good Citizens, to blow the trumpet of dissatisfaction, and in this manner to weaken the hands of Government at this very difficult and most extraordinary conjuncture'.⁶⁵ Therefore, the time had been deemed expedient by a 'respectable number of the inhabitants of this city and neighbourhood' to circulate a publication that

may serve to repress and counteract the effect of those mischievous principles and sentiments, which with unblushing effrontery have but too long been disseminated in these parts with a steady perseverance, well worthy of a better cause.⁶⁶

In stating the newspaper's commitment to upholding the principles of the British Constitution, Milner had a prime opportunity to display his allegiance to both established Church and State. 'By the British Constitution', he wrote,

is always to be understood the Executive and Legislative authorities of these dominions, as consisting of King, Lords, and Commons, together with the Protestant Ecclesiastical Establishment, and the well-known code of laws now in existence. And, therefore, as the religion of the State, it must be expected that the members of this Communion should, on all proper occasions, display their peculiar attachment to that part of pure

⁶²Milner, Life, p. 612.

⁶³The Carlisle Patriot, 3 June 1815.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Ibid.

and reformed religion, which is in point of fact so established in these realms.⁶⁷

A statement in the 'Prospectus' recognizing the Toleration Act throws a line out to dissenters while making clear the Patriot's commitment to the law and religion of the land.

Though its circulation never reached the numbers attained by The Carlisle Journal, the paper's life of ninety-five years indicates that its foundations were secure and constituency significant. A variety of topics was presented to the readers and ranged from notices concerning matters of local interest to weighty editorials on politics, Christian missions and education. Unfortunately, contributors neither signed or initialled articles, and it is difficult to pinpoint Milner's specific offerings. Mary Milner, however, reprinted several of his pieces and these specimens show his interest in writing about the need for clear and balanced reporting in periodicals and the importance of supporting the government. 'Even if the government be a bad one', he wrote,

they should never forget, while meditating a change, to take the balance, and cautiously estimate, whether, even in the most judicious and best-intentioned attempts at alteration, they be not likely, in the conflict, to lose more than they can probably gain; in so very great a degree is almost any government better than anarchy.⁶⁸

What is clear in a perusal of the issues of The Patriot published during Milner's lifetime, is ^{that} it never appears to be tempted to become an instrument for the conversion of souls; what converts it hoped to win would cultivate the allegiance to Church and State extolled by its founder and committed supporter, the Evangelical Dean of Carlisle.

VI. Milner as Preacher

A variety of civic, scientific and leisurely interests and commitments maintained by the Dean of Carlisle demonstrate that Isaac Milner did not believe that church walls confined the boundaries of his ministry. And yet, as his biographer stated, as various as his avocations were, his object and centre of ministry 'was, always, to exert himself to the utmost in the pulpit'.⁶⁹ The third canon of Henry the Eighth at least attempted to ensure that the premier pastor of the Cathedral, ordained to the ministry of Word and Sacrament, fulfilled his obligation to preach:

The Dean, Master, Warden, or Chief Governor, Prebendaries, and Canons in every Cathedral and Collegiate Church, shall not only preach there in their own persons so often as they are bound by law, statute, ordinance, or custom, but shall likewise preach in other churches of the same diocese where they are resident, especially in those places whence they or their church receive any yearly rents or profits.⁷⁰

⁶⁷The Carlisle Patriot, 3 June 1815.

⁶⁸Milner, Life, p. 618.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 351.

⁷⁰Quoted in Francis Close, Cathedral Reform (London: Hatchard and Co., 1864), p. 13.

As a consenting participant in the eighteenth-century abuses of pluralism and non-residence, Isaac Milner may not be entirely above reproach, but surviving records of his preaching engagements, his published sermons and notes revealing the impact of his preaching upon his hearers show that the preaching task was one he undertook seriously. His commitment to speaking God's word to His chosen people was strong and lifelong.

Milner, his niece contended, was a willing and able preacher. 'It is not generally known', she wrote,

how ready and willing he was, upon all suitable occasions, to occupy the pulpit wherever he might happen to be. Many of the present inhabitants of Carlisle well remember his frequent sermons on the Wednesday evenings, at St. Cuthbert's Church; and many persons still living at Hull can bear witness to his frequent and impressive addresses from the pulpit of St. John's, during the visits which he paid to the town of Hull, after the decease of his brother. Nay even if detained during Sunday on a journey - for it is needless to say, that he did not travel on the Sabbath - he was always ready to preach if requested to do so, or if he had reason to think, that his doing so would be acceptable to the clergyman of the place. Thus, on more than one occasion, being compelled, by circumstances, to pass the Sunday at Ferrybridge, during his journey from Cambridge to Carlisle, he preached at the neighbouring church of Brotherton; and other instances, of a similar nature, might easily be adduced.⁷¹

The reference contains an interesting and scarcely veiled suggestion that Milner might have set himself up for the accusation of itinerating although no substantiated record of such a complaint exists, and his careful efforts to distinguish his churchmanship from that of the dissenters would have caused him to tread carefully in another man's parochial patch.

During his residence in Carlisle, he preached often in the Cathedral though as was true in the making appointments to livings, a rota system had developed to ensure that more than just one man's witness to the Gospel was heard by the assembled congregation.⁷² In addition to regular preaching assignments in the Cathedral, James Fawcett, whose ministry in Carlisle Milner helped to establish, invited his Evangelical colleague to share his pulpit at St Cuthbert's. Being Dean of Carlisle also entailed responsibilities for the spiritual care of the Royal Family and at various times he was summoned both to Whitehall and St. James Palace where he asserted to Wilberforce 'they often don't hear the truth, I fear'.⁷³ One also must note here that he occupied both college and university pulpits in Cambridge. Preaching was central to Milner's ministry.

Milner preached and the pews of the Cathedral were not empty. William Paley had asserted

⁷¹Milner, *Life*, p. 112.

⁷²*Ibid.*, p. 130. In a letter to James Stillingfleet of 14 July 1797, Joseph Milner wrote: 'The dignitaries have their turns in the Cathedral, so that I have not the opportunity of preaching Sunday after Sunday. I have, indeed, been twice in the pulpit, once at the Cathedral, the other time, at St. Cuthbert's. But I don't expect to preach any more here. I hope my brother (who remembers you with affection,) will preach, Sunday after next, himself; the next Sunday, the Bishop preaches'.

⁷³*Ibid.*, p. 206.

to William Richardson that 'when the Dean of Carlisle preaches, you may walk upon the heads of the people. All the meetings attend to hear him. He is indeed a powerful preacher'.⁷⁴ Other samples of testimony collected by Mary Milner reveal her uncle as a popular and sought-after preacher. One contact identified as a 'professional gentleman in Carlisle' recalled that when it was known that Milner was to preach, he had seen 'the aisles and every part of it so thronged, that a person might have walked upon the heads of the crowd'.⁷⁵ Milner himself reported regretfully that he had heard that 'great crowds' had awaited him at an engagement which he unexpectedly could not fulfil.⁷⁶ Even after twenty years in the Cathedral pulpit, the throngs were still assembling to hear him, as glimpsed through the memoirs of one of Milner's Cambridge success stories, Claudius Buchanan. 'We stopped on Sunday at Stamford, on Wednesday at York, and on Sunday at Carlisle', Buchanan wrote,

The Dean of Carlisle, with whom we dined, lifted up his voice against the races for the first time. He had long been oppressed in spirit on the subject; and he devoted his last day of preaching this season to the consideration of it. The cathedral was crowded, and he preached the word with great energy and eloquence.⁷⁷

What went into the composition of these sermons that drew the sizeable and presumably enthusiastic crowds? Aware of the fashion 'to decry all feeling in religion as enthusiasm, and all seriousness as melancholy',⁷⁸ Milner took care in his preparations and preached from notes, though his editor would later lament that the incompleteness of manuscripts would yield an edition of sermons which had been undoubtedly more appealing to the ear than to the eye. Preaching extempore was a sign of Methodism⁷⁹ and Milner would have avoided practices which would have possibly branded him an enthusiast.⁸⁰ His preaching was primarily topical and he chose his

⁷⁴Paley, Account, vol. I, p. 246.

⁷⁵Milner, Life, p. 116.

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 272.

⁷⁷Pearson, Buchanan, vol. II, p. 190.

⁷⁸Milner, Life, p. 109.

⁷⁹Horton Davies, Worship and Theology in England from Watts and Wesley to Maurice, 1690-1850 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), p. 231.

⁸⁰The extent to which at least Anglican Evangelicals in Milner's circle rejected extemporaneous preaching is aptly illustrated in a letter written by Zachary Macaulay to Hannah More on 31 May 1817 concerning an interim preacher in the Clapham parish church: 'In one respect, however, Wilks has sadly disappointed me. I mean as a preacher. He has chosen to extemporise, and that at Clapham; and nothing can be less interesting, and more crude and vapid than some of his exhibitions. This is quite inexcusable. I have freely and unreservedly told him my mind upon this point, and I have no doubt that if Dealtry were absent for three months instead of one, we should lose a third of the congregation, provided Wilks did not mend. He seems, however, conscious of the error into which he has fallen, and I look confidently for better things. He behaved very amiably when I explained to him my feelings, and expressed an intention of writing his sermons

subjects with care. Still, the pulpit promised a prime opportunity for winning people to the faith, and leading nominal Christians to a deeper commitment to the Christian life, and a remark of Paley indicates that Milner did not compromise his interpretation of the faith from the pulpit: 'Why yes', he told the Bishop of Carlisle, 'that about the evangelical doctrines themselves, I must leave him to judge, but that if he chose to hear them urged with great ability, and placed in the most striking point of view, he must go and hear our dean.'⁸¹

Milner believed that preaching was effective. It was nothing less than 'the great means used by God in bringing about conversions'.⁸² Though his role as God's instrument in the salvation of souls placed a great responsibility upon the shoulders of the human pastor, it is primarily an activity of God, and as such, the frail pastor could expect his preaching to bear fruit. 'I thank God', Milner declared from the pulpit,

the preaching of the Gospel is not in vain: the promise is, that it shall be powerful and efficacious in the pulling down of the strong-holds of vice of every kind, and, indeed, of every thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God: and He is faithful who has made the promise.⁸³

Further, as an effective means of turning people to God, it is a necessary task in that it is one of the few ways through which God has chosen to reveal Himself. Milner warned his hearers that 'the saving knowledge of Christ crucified is not a natural knowledge - that is, we are not disposed to it in our present fallen and corrupted state; - neither is it a plain or easy acquisition'.⁸⁴ Religion is never simply a private matter between a man and God, and the winning of souls would happen within the community that God had gifted with His saving grace and revelation.

Unlike his Evangelical colleague Charles Simeon, Milner never produced a systematic approach to homiletics that would have been of use to students of preaching. Still, enough of what he thought about this primary activity of the clergy survives to allow one to construct a picture of what Milner thought constituted good preaching. As works that should have an aesthetic appeal (how else would one attract and hold the attention of a congregation?), sermons should never be dry. People would be better able to follow an argument if the preacher concentrated on one point. Sermons ought never to be academic expositions and must always be pitched to the level of the

in future, and also of bestowing more mind upon them. He has acquired, besides, a bad manner in preaching, although he reads the service pretty well. This evidently is the effect of extemporising. He has more the air of a man making a speech at a public meeting than of a minister preaching to dying men and perishing souls'. Holland, *Macaulay*, p. 333.

⁸¹Milner, *Life*, p. 116.

⁸²*Ibid.*, p. 576.

⁸³Isaac Milner, *Sermons by the Late Very Reverend Isaac Milner, D.D.*, 2 vols. (London: T. Cadell, 1820), vol. I, p. 368.

⁸⁴I. Milner, *Sermons*, vol. II, pp. 207-208.

sinner.⁸⁸

But Milner knew that the minister's efforts to identify with his flock could be taken too far. The nature of the task called the shepherd to be with the flock, but also, to stand over and against the sheep. 'The doctrines of salvation by Christ', he believed, 'though they be true and the only medicines of our fallen nature, yet often prove very ungrateful to the taste; and the person who administers them is sometimes repelled with considerable dislike and censure'.⁸⁹ The examples of St. Paul, Hosea and Elisha illustrated the fact that the problem was not a new one. A great temptation of the preacher was to make the Gospel more palatable though such an effort would result in nothing less than unfaithful proclamation:

Such plans never answer: they do no good at the time, and afterwards, the remembrance of them is sure to prove either a burden, or a snare, or both, to the conscience. To live the life of the disciple of Christ, in all our varied intercourse with men, and to act the faithful part, I find a much harder task.⁹⁰

The preacher had his resources from which to draw in the face of this anticipated discord and opposition.⁹¹ The holding up of the community's position before God was never a cause for the faithful pastor to give his people up for lost. He continued to assure them throughout his ministry of the continuation of his love, his heartfelt prayers and that 'what you hear from the pulpit is said for the single purpose of promoting your eternal salvation'.⁹²

At the heart of Milner's preaching lay the understanding that clear comprehension of the tenets of the faith was essential to those who had responded to the gospel and were attempting to live out a Christian life. 'All this error', he declared, 'arises from mistaken notions of God'.⁹³ The doctrines of grace are nothing less than

the immediate and pressing concern of every individual, because his eternal happiness depends upon them; and therefore, if these are not both distinctly stated and sedulously enforced by the Clergy, it is in vain to expect any effective or abiding improvement

⁸⁸'If God was really present to our minds; if we had a deep and abiding conviction that He knew all our thoughts, and saw them before they were conceived, and traced their progress from iniquity to iniquity; and, once more, if we were under a serious apprehension that he would certainly do with us in the next world as he has positively declared in his word, -the whole world would presently assume a different appearance'. I. Milner, Sermons, vol. I, p. 251.

⁸⁹Ibid., vol. II, p. 2.

⁹⁰Milner, Life, p. 575.

⁹¹'And two circumstances which enable the Christian instructor to obtain victory in this contest, are, the awful reverence in his own mind for the Divine Character, and a deep sense of the importance of the duties he has to discharge'. I. Milner, Sermons, vol. II, p. 4.

⁹²Ibid., vol. I, p. 142.

⁹³Ibid., p. 252.

among the people, either in Christian faith or Christian morals.⁹⁴

He believed that catechetical instruction had been neglected in the Church, and preaching provided a vital avenue through which he could participate in the education of the people of God. A preacher, Milner informed his congregation,

is always in his right province when he employs his powers in protecting his congregation from errors in essential doctrines; and I observe, that by avoiding any unnecessary disputes he will have more leisure for this most important part of his duty. I endeavour, therefore, at all times, to regulate my own practice by the great distinction of essentials and non-essentials'.⁹⁵

Therefore, his preaching did not tend to focus on particular issues of the day (though he did take advantage of the pulpit to air his opinions about Roman Catholic emancipation and the races). Preaching to people on their particular sins did little more than 'to act as injudiciously as a physician would do, who should attack the symptom instead of the disease'.⁹⁶

Thus Milner's preaching tended to be both doctrinal and expository. Scriptural passages were chosen (and he did not appear to favour particular passages of Scripture over others) and explicated in a way that taught the nature and importance of the doctrines that were held in the Church's treasury of faith.

As a committed Evangelical, Milner gave plenty of space to expositions on the sinlessness and the merits of the crucified Christ. An understanding of the dialectic of Law and Gospel, perhaps borrowed from his intense study of Martin Luther, became a useful instrument for illustrating the need of human beings to be redeemed from the utter corruption into which they had fallen, and he proclaimed God's great glory and mercy in permitting this redemption to be accomplished: 'But reflect once more', he urged his listeners,

How is it possible to have a just ideal of the value of Christ's Redemption, unless you form distinct ideas of the nature of that loss from which you are redeemed? And, what is of still greater consequence, how is it possible that your love to the Redeemer should rise to its just height, if you are not truly sensible both of the blessings which he has purchased for you, and the dreadful sentence from which he has delivered you by his death, his atonement and intercession?⁹⁷

But other doctrines were also important. Richard Warner had lambasted the Evangelicals for

⁹⁴I. Milner, Sermons, vol. I, p. 28.

⁹⁵Ibid., vol. II, p. 69. Further, it must be said that parents had a special responsibility to educate their children in the faith: 'Divine Providence has committed the temporal interests of your children to your care, but much more their spiritual; if, therefore, you know any thing of the unspeakable value of God's grace, and have any feelings of the miseries of a sinful state, you must compassionate your own offspring; you must be concerned, above all things, that they be made acquainted with the God who made them, and be taught effectually to serve and please him'. Ibid., p. 199.

⁹⁶Milner, Life, p. 361.

⁹⁷I. Milner, Sermons, vol. I, pp. 320-321.

tampering with the doctrine of the Trinity that led to the adoration of the second person, or sometimes the third person at the expense of the Godhead.⁹⁸ For Milner, the Trinity remained a fundamental way through which to understand God's way of interacting with his creation:

Certainly, however, I shall not succeed by representing the connection between a reconciled God and a penitent sinner as consistent with a cold, dead, barren belief and apprehension of the Gospel, where there is no filial affection to the Father, and no brotherly affection to the Son, and no sense of your need of the presence of the Spirit of Christ as your Comforter, to abide with you, dwell in you, instruct your understandings, and incline your hearts. For be assured, brethren, that nothing short of this blessed communion with the adorable persons of the Eternal Trinity can prove an effective medicine for all the troubles and diseases of a true servant of God, in his passage through this dreary scene.⁹⁹

In another section, he maintained that knowledge of the Holy Spirit not properly balanced with knowledge of the Father and of the Son would be 'in the great concern of repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, like the blind man talking of the beauty and properties of colours, or the deaf man of sounds'.¹⁰⁰ He acknowledged the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion as an integral part of the Church's life, and a means by which the believer could be united to Christ. His descriptions of the distinguishing marks of the true Christian, the continuation of struggles in the Christian life, and the hope of the world to come were among the other topics that received the attention of Milner the preacher. In making the following statement, Milner referred to the benefits of a clear comprehension of the Church's understanding of the death of Christ, but it could be applied to the correct holding of any of the basic teachings of the Church. 'I am the most anxious', he said,

to be thoroughly understood on this point, because, as the very pith and marrow of the Gospel is concerned in the right representation of it, so an erroneous conception of this matter mars the pure Gospel, that most precious gift which ever descended from our gracious Heavenly Father.¹⁰¹

The preaching of doctrines, then, provided the listener with a picture of how man stood before God. Of course Milner recognized the role of preaching as an evangelistic tool for bringing the unconverted to Christ. But he also recognized that great numbers of his listeners would already count themselves among the ranks of Christians.¹⁰² And for them he had another

⁹⁸Richard Warner, Considerations on the Doctrine of the Evangelical Clergy; and on the Probable Effects of Evangelical Preaching: A Sermon, (Bath: Richard Cruttwell, 1817), pp. 31-32.

⁹⁹I. Milner, Sermons, vol. I, p. 209.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., vol. II, p. 351.

¹⁰¹Ibid., p. 222.

¹⁰²Of what he saw as a dangerous delusion, Milner preached to his hearers, 'To be in Christ, then, implies something more than the mere name of a Christian and a compliance with certain forms and ceremonies. Even a strict observance of many moral and indispensable duties does not

message. As important as an induction into the teachings of the faith was, mere assent to a manifesto of beliefs was not enough to obtain the blessings of heaven. In this vein, he cautioned his congregation:

We must bid you place no reliance whatever on a few ceremonious observances of religion, however right they may be in themselves: nay, you must cease to lay any great stress on your mere orthodoxy of sentiment, or your mere external morality, so long as these things produce no change of heart, no genuine love to the Saviour, no thorough abandonment of vicious and unholy passions and sensual indulgences.¹⁰³

Assent to beliefs amounted to nothing more than a dead, speculative faith; doctrines presented with boldness and truth changed hearts and lives. Of human depravity and the atonement of Christ Milner taught,

The practical use of these views is, that by the blessing of God they may lead every reasonable being to conclude that the carnal mirth and pleasures of sin cannot fail to be highly displeasing to God, and that their tendency must be to draw the mind to think lightly of the miseries of a suffering Saviour, and in fact to insult him and crucify him afresh.¹⁰⁴

Warner had complained that Evangelical preaching encouraged the abandonment of morality; for Milner's hearers, rather than freeing them from responsibility to those around them, the grateful heart could do nothing but respond in acts of loving service to the neighbour. The soul, freed from the condemnation must claim a new master in the Gospel, and this allegiance would lead the awakened Christian to a new plane of morality. Works become a sign of the redeemed, and though they could not save, are borne as good fruit of the redeemed life. To be effective, the preacher's doctrines, through the Holy Spirit, must touch the heart. They are tools, but concerning their use a question remains:

The tools may be excellent; but what avails it, if a man work not with ~~them~~? The proper use of Christian doctrine lies in the application of it to the heart and to the practice.¹⁰⁵

As a minister of the Church of England, Milner took his responsibilities as a preacher seriously. His positions as Dean of an English cathedral and ordained president of a Cambridge College demanded that he spend time in a pulpit, and he thought carefully about the elements that went into good preaching.

Records indicating the numbers of people gathered to hear him speak attest to the popularity

constitute a man to be in Christ. And it is the more necessary to make this matter clear, because there is but too much reason to fear that many continue to suppose themselves to be in Christ, merely on account of these things, and for having been baptized in his name, and having always belonged to a sound and orthodox church'. I. Milner, Sermons, vol. II, p. 9.

¹⁰³Ibid., vol. I, pp. 106-107.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., vol. II, pp. 338-339.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., p. 266.

of his address. Various remarks left by those who heard him preach suggest that the aims he had set for himself had not been considered in vain. Reflections on Milner's sermons show that he conveyed the Gospel with a warmth and esteem for his congregation that were valued and appreciated. The writer of his obituary in the Carlisle Patriot commended Milner's ability to speak across social classes by asking:

Or can the public forget those animated and affecting discourses from the pulpit, in which a simplicity which condescended to the understandings of the most illiterate, was blended with a vigour, eloquence, and variety of matter which commanded the admiration of the most learned?¹⁰⁶

The author of the 'Review' of the twenty-six published sermons which appeared in the February 1821 issue of the Christian Observer pointed out Milner's ability to identify with his congregation. He commended the study of the sermons to members of the clergy as models from the pen of an exemplary preacher who presented the Christian faith as a

practicable as well as a most momentous concern, about which we are not left to fluctuate in hesitation and uncertainty, but are aroused to an immediate and determined effort to comply with its demands.¹⁰⁷

Milner's posture in the pulpit to his hearers was more of the fellow-traveller than the weighty judge. At least in some quarters in the city of Carlisle, this gift was taken to heart.

When Joseph Milner visited his brother in Carlisle in 1797, he believed that the city was in desperate need of a strong, pastoral leader. 'The people here', he wrote,

are a well-behaved, simple people; the refinement, shall I say, or the lewdness and impudence, of the southern part of our island, they know not. They have the sample, I take it, of the manners of the whole country, in the time of James I. But they are withal, very ignorant in religion; they wander as sheep without a shepherd. They seem, however, open to conviction, they have conscience. There are, here, some Methodist and Dissenting interests, but feeble and of little weight, nor is there a dissenter here of any popularity, or, as it should seem, of any religious zeal. What a fine field for a pastor, steady, fervent, intelligent, and charitable!¹⁰⁸

Isaac Milner, the Dean of Carlisle whose Deanery lay some three days' journey from his permanent home, undoubtedly could not fulfil all the requirements his brother had envisioned for the ideal pastor of that place. But his ministry as Dean (which spanned nearly three decades) left not only an impression on the city of Carlisle but also advanced the Evangelical cause within the Church it sought to revive and enliven. Though the income and privileges were undoubtedly appreciated, Milner showed that an Evangelical pluralist would not shirk his responsibilities. He attended to the business of the Cathedral and ensured that an Evangelical voice was heard not only from the pulpit but also in civic matters such as education and politics. He showed in his office

¹⁰⁶The Carlisle Patriot, 5 April 1820.

¹⁰⁷Christian Observer, vol. XX (1821), pp. 97-98.

¹⁰⁸Milner, Life, p. 130

that the appointment of an Evangelical to a position in the gift of the Crown did not herald the collapse of either the Established Church or State. In the example of Milner, it could be seen that it was possible to be both a loyal Tory and an Evangelical.

VII. Milner and Carlisle Dissent

As a staunch Churchman, Milner appealed to those concerned for the Establishment. But there is also a suggestion that his ministry and influence provided a meeting point for both Establishment Evangelicals and Evangelical dissenters, including the Methodists.¹⁰⁹

Unfortunately, the history of Methodism in Carlisle remains a largely untold story. There has not been a denominational history written of the city,¹¹⁰ and neither the standard histories of Methodism or the issues of Wesley's Arminian Magazine offer many glimpses save for a brief history of the Wesleyan Society in Carlisle published in the January 1826 number of The Wesleyan Methodist Magazine. From information that is available, it is known that the Society had been in existence in 1769 and became part of the Whitehaven Circuit. Wesley visited the members in Carlisle in 1770 and noted the occasion in his journal as 'here the day of small things, the society consisting but of fifteen members'.¹¹¹ Twenty years later he could write, 'The work a little increases here. A small handful of people stand firm; and those that opposed are broken to pieces'.¹¹² The building of a chapel in Fisher Street in 1785, its expansion ten years later, and the building of a new house of worship in 1817 are signs that the Methodist Society in Carlisle grew. But in 1826, the Society in a city with a population nearing twenty thousand inhabitants¹¹³ could claim only 580 members. In general, John Wesley found the soil in Cumberland more resistant to the planting of Methodism than in other places, and most of his visits were part of his plans to get somewhere else. 'The preaching of John Wesley in Cumberland', an historian of the County wrote,

was not attended with the enthusiasm and wholesale conversions which marked the progress of George Fox a century before. The mass of the population, though they listened with respect, remained unmoved; the gentry as a rule stood aloof. When the great preacher visited the county, he was not recognised by the bishop of the diocese,

¹⁰⁹For a study of Evangelicalism in Carlisle, see Alan Munden, 'The Anglican Evangelical Party in the diocese of Carlisle in the nineteenth century with particular reference to the ministries of Bishop Samuel Waldegrave and Dean Francis Close', Durham University, Ph.D., 1987.

¹¹⁰John Burgess, Christians in Cumbria (Kendal: Titus Wilson and Son Ltd., 1982), p. 60.

¹¹¹Wesley, Journal, vol. V (1914), p. 362.

¹¹²Ibid., vol. VIII (1916), p. 68.

¹¹³Creighton, Carlisle, p. 193.

and had neither sympathy nor support from the clergy.¹¹⁴

Though Milner could not claim particularly enthusiastic support from the local clergy, he had secured the friendship of one bishop and the toleration of his successor. Methodism in its relation to the Church of England was still in a fluid state. Wesley had been forced to register his societies as dissenting chapels in 1786, but the lines of demarcation between the Establishment and Methodism remained unclear.

Several factors would have promoted the continued intermingling of the communities in Cumbria. Thomas Herring, Archbishop of York, had hated dissent and published scathing attacks that encouraged his clergy to extinguish the fire of dissent when it appeared. During the Restoration, Cumbria and Westmorland had been Anglican and Royalist strongholds, and the results of Bishop Nicolson's visitation in 1703 indicated that excepting a couple of places where Quakers had been successful, and Scottish immigrants had brought their Presbyterianism, dissent had made little impression on the County. During Nicolson's life, his biographer asserted that

Despite such cases the church in Carlisle was little affected by these dissident minorities. Carlisle offers a good example of a diocese that was overwhelmingly Anglican, one where the established church was neither hindered by effective opposition, nor - it should be added - stimulated by criticism and competition.¹¹⁵

Further, the official posture of the Methodist connexion toward the Church of England would have discouraged a breach between Church and Chapel. Wesley's advice to his followers had been 'let all that were of the Church keep to the Church'¹¹⁶ and it is well-known that to his dying day, Wesley, in spite of acknowledged inconsistencies, considered himself a devoted member of the Church of England. The Methodist Conference meeting on 25 July 1786 had issued strict regulation concerning church-chapel relations:

- Q. In what cases do we allow of services in Church hours?
- A. 1. When the Minister is a notoriously wicked man.
2. When he preaches Arian, or any equally pernicious doctrine.
3. When there are no Churches in the town sufficient to contain half the people. And,
4. When there is no Church at all within two or three miles.¹¹⁷

That it was an excise officer 'who had been brought to a saving knowledge of the truth under the ministry of the Rev. Mr. Grimshaw, a pious and well-known Clergyman of the Church of

¹¹⁴James Wilson, 'Ecclesiastical History', in The Victoria History of the Counties of England: Cumberland, 2 vols. (London: Archibald Constable and Co., Ltd., 1901, 1905), vol. II (1905), p. 106.

¹¹⁵Francis Godwin James, North Country Bishop (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956), p. 106.

¹¹⁶Wesley, Letters, vol. V, p. 260.

¹¹⁷William Myles, A Chronological History of the People Called Methodists, 3rd ed. (London: Jacques and Co., 1803), p. 171.

England'¹¹⁸, and not a Wesleyan convert, who first brought the Evangelical gospel to Carlisle undoubtedly helped to give early Evangelicalism in the city an Anglican colouring.

Unfortunately, there are no readily available vignettes of the Methodist society in Carlisle trooping down to the parish church and cathedral to take the sacrament from the hand of the Establishment as is available from documentation of the growth of Methodism in other areas.¹¹⁹ That Milner offered a ministry that was acceptable to Evangelicals of various colourings is evident in the attendance of 'all the meetings'¹²⁰ and 'persons of different denominations'¹²¹ upon occasions at which he preached. Wilson, in the section of his Cumbrian history on Carlisle, stated that there was no rapid cleavage between Methodists and Evangelical Anglicans¹²² in the city and that the two groups continued to co-exist on peaceable terms.

As a loyal Churchman, Milner was no enthusiastic supporter of a Methodism that strained to move beyond the boundaries of the Church which Evangelicals longed to revive. He advocated the continuation of the University regulation that required prospective graduates to sign an oath of loyalty to the Church of England but would grant Methodists at Queens' the right to attend the place of worship of their choice. He believed that what was perceived as the Methodist drift toward dissent was a dangerous tendency that would have serious implications for the Revival to which they claimed equal commitment. But still, the drift appeared an aberration to him; it was a misguided inclination, he believed, that might be corrected through conscientious preaching and gentle persuasion. 'This would be the cure', he preached in a sermon against Roman Catholic emancipation,

of every departure from the Protestant faith - this would be the revival of Christian principles - this would put an end to unlearned and injudicious declamation against Methodism, for Methodism would scarcely exist. It would soon be found, that neither illiterate enthusiasts who, by coarse allusions and intemperate language, often, with the very best meanings, burlesque the most momentous doctrines: nor conceited philosophers of modern times, who, like their ancient brethren, can never relieve the

¹¹⁸Thomas Bridgman, 'Methodism in Carlisle', The Wesleyan Methodist Magazine, vol. V (January 1826), p. 96.

¹¹⁹'In Bradford the Methodists would issue in a body from their Octagon Chapel after their own meeting, and march down to the parish church, their preachers at their head, for morning prayer. Until 1810 they invariably took the monthly sacrament from the hands of their blind and saintly vicar, John Crosse. So, too, at Macclesfield, until the death of the Evangelical David Simpson, Methodists would visit the church in the morning while Simpson attended their chapel in the afternoon'. John Walsh, 'Methodism at the End of the Nineteenth Century', in A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain, ed. by Rupert Davies and Gordon Rupp (London: Epworth Press, 1965-1988), vol. I (1965), p. 288.

¹²⁰Paley, Account, vol. I, p. 246.

¹²¹Milner, Life, p. 116.

¹²²Wilson, 'Ecclesiastical History', p. 107.

horrors of a guilty conscience, nor make the wicked man to turn away from his wickedness, by their insipid harangues on candour and humanity - it would soon be found, that neither open enemies, nor false friends, nor deluded brethren, could make much stand against the glorious and salutary truths of the Gospel, delivered, by those properly commissioned to deliver them, with wisdom, animation, and affection.¹²³

Milner recognized a kindred spirit in the Methodist movement but hoped that it would serve as a catalyst for renewal within a united Church.

Thus, it is not surprising to find Milner engaged with the Methodists in the promotion of concerns that breathed a spirit of cooperation. He joined with them in the distribution of Bibles through his involvement with the Cambridge and Carlisle Auxiliary Bible Societies. He supported joint mission ventures through the interdenominational Church Missionary Society and contributed financially to Methodist missions. His concerns during the establishment of the National School in Carlisle demonstrate his hope that those of the Connexion could be won over by toleration and respect.

His preaching also breathed a spirit of conciliation and would have been found palatable to most of his Methodist listeners. He eschewed the harsher tenets of Calvinism, claiming that

giving of much time and thought to such subjects not only does no good, but is even injurious to congregations in general. They not only perplex and harass the minds of persons in many instances, but tend also to draw the attention, in almost all instances, from considerations that are absolutely essential to a rise and progress of true religion in the soul.¹²⁴

Stepping away from Calvinism may also have soothed anxious Anglicans. Further, his espousal of a doctrine of universal redemption¹²⁵ and warning that God's patience could be tried and His Holy Spirit withdrawn would have been met with Methodist approval though like Simeon, he would have undoubtedly objected to Methodist provocation with Fawcett's congregation over the matter of sinless perfection.¹²⁶ Milner summarized his approach to what he hoped would be seen as non-partisan preaching in a letter he wrote to Robert Goodenough criticizing one of Goodenough's sermons:

I seriously think, that it can be very rarely wise, in any sermon, to omit Gospel topics entirely; though how far, and how strongly the peculiar doctrines of Christianity should be introduced in a single, occasional, and short discourse, it is not easy to pronounce. Admit not one particle of controversial divinity; and if, through God's blessing, the Gospel lay hold of the hearts of your hearers, it will effect all that you can wish, and that most satisfactorily. The reason is, there will be a conviction of a sinful nature,

¹²³Milner, *Life*, p. 348.

¹²⁴I. Milner, *Sermons*, vol. I, pp. 143-144.

¹²⁵Of this matter, Milner offered the following comment in a sermon, 'It is very true, and be it ever remembered with unfeigned and universal gratitude, that Christ is the propitiation "for the sins of the whole world"'. I. Milner, *Sermons*, vol. I, p. 198.

¹²⁶Carus, *Simeon*, vol. I, p. 160.

which will humble a man. Instead of dreaming of radicalism, he will fall upon his knees and call for mercy through the Redeemer. If such, by the blessing of Almighty God, be the effects of your addresses from the pulpit, let them say you are turned methodist; you will not mind that.¹²⁷

As Dean of Carlisle Cathedral, Isaac Milner defended and promoted Evangelical Anglicanism. During his ministry, he demonstrated that it was possible for an *Evangelical* to be both loyal to Church and State, and concerned for the life of the Church. And in this concern, he showed that the Church could risk venturing beyond the bastion of orthodoxy to touch the lives of those who had wandered from her sacred walls. 'It is far from true', he once preached,

that the genuine followers of Christ Jesus differ materially in any one of the essential doctrines: in outward forms and ceremonies they may differ, and so in many other lesser matters; but in the general principles of redemption by the blood of Christ, of regeneration of our corrupt nature and sanctification by the blessed Spirit of God, they had agreed in all ages since the first promulgation of the Gospel.¹²⁸

Through his ministry as Dean, Milner sought to unite an Evangelical voice that would not be dismissed but would be heard by those entrusted with the spiritual care of the nation.

¹²⁷Milner, *Life*, p. 706.

¹²⁸I. Milner, *Sermons*, vol. I, p. 388.

Chapter Four: Milner and the History of the Church of Christ

Hence it comes about that to all who look to history for more than factual instruction, who believe that a historical fact is not fully appreciated until it is placed in its philosophical as well as its purely causal relationships, the historians of the Age of Reason will never quite lose their charm; on the contrary, they will remain as perhaps the most brilliant examples of how human culture may be brought into fruitful contact with what would otherwise be a dead and, for the vast majority, a valueless past.¹

* * * * *

I. Introduction

In The Righteousness of God, Gordon Rupp began his discussion of the history of Lutheranism in England thus:

The story of Luther in English dress is of a few intermittent bursts of translation. The rest is silence. Those periods of lively concern are 1520-40; 1560-80 in the sixteenth century, 1630-50 in the seventeenth, the last part of the eighteenth and first part of the nineteenth centuries.²

Of particular importance to the latest period, Rupp noted, was the Evangelical Revival which 'brought an awakened interest in the theology of the Reformers, not least in the controversy between the Arminian and Calvinist wings of the movement'.³ Although escaping the scrutiny of Rupp in his further discussion of Luther and Reformation studies in late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century England, the magnum opus of the Milner brothers, The History of the Church of Christ, stands as a significant contribution to the revival of interest in Martin Luther and the German Reformation on both a scholarly and popular level in the Great Britain of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

A. The History of the Church of Christ: Origins

The composition of The History of the Church of Christ was clearly the result of the collaborative efforts of Isaac Milner and his brother, Joseph, though credit for the conception of the project must go to Joseph Milner. The work was begun in the 1770's, though the first volume did not reach publication stage until 1794. In the interim, however, Joseph Milner published several essays as well as a longer reply to Edward Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire which demonstrate a mind occupied with historical subjects. Volume II appeared in 1795 followed by the third in 1797. Joseph Milner died in 1797, and Isaac Milner took over the remainder of the project as his own, undoubtedly making liberal use of the notes prepared by

¹J.B. Black, The Art of History (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1926), p. 7.

²Gordon Rupp, The Righteousness of God (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1953), p. 37.

³Ibid., p. 46.

Joseph, but also contributing additions of his own. The final, and fifth volume appeared in 1809.

Though the primary subject of this thesis is the work of Isaac Milner, the collaborative efforts involved in producing the History demand attention to the work as a whole. Which Milner was responsible for what ideas? Generally, the first three volumes are attributed to the pen of Joseph Milner, while the last two, centring upon the life of Luther and the German Reformation, are ascribed to Isaac. Still, one must credit Isaac with editing his brother's work, and acknowledge that he also used Joseph's research as the basis of his own. Mary Milner was aware of the close cooperation of her uncles in the composition of the History, and described the relationship in this way,

In the preparation of the subsequent volumes of this history for publication, Joseph Milner was assisted by his brother the Dean; who, however, suggested few alterations except such as related merely to style. It cannot be doubted, that, by the reading of the manuscript sheets of this work with their author, he imbibed much of that taste for ecclesiastical history which, joined to his own learning and ability, eminently qualified him to carry forward the design of the deceased historian.⁴

For the sake of simplicity, I have regarded the History as a product of two minds which reaped the benefits of mutual counsel, and were in agreement about their respective philosophies of history, presentation of Christian history, and the goals such a presentation of history should achieve. The name 'Milner' will serve to identify both Joseph and Isaac Milner in their joint capacities as author/editor of the work unless a distinction is advantageous to the argument. I am not alone in this approach: in his response to John King's defence of Milner's scholarship, fellow Milner critic Samuel Roffey Maitland asked 'Now, Sir, is this anything but mere trifling, and is your attempt to distinguish between what Joseph, and Isaac, Milner wrote, anything but a quibble?'⁵

Given the extent, then, of Joseph Milner's contribution to this work, and the lack of attention paid to him as yet in this thesis, it is appropriate to familiarize the reader with a few details of his background.

B. Joseph Milner

Joseph Milner was born on 2 January 1744 in Leeds, the second of the Milner children. As his primary biographer, Isaac Milner informs us that Joseph was a bright child with a remarkable memory, and that he displayed his intellectual abilities at a young age as a scholar in the Leeds Grammar School. When the sudden death of the Milners' father placed the course of the eldest son's education in jeopardy, it was under the auspices of his grammar school tutor that the youth secured a place at St. Catherine Hall, Cambridge. Here, he excelled in classics and acquired

⁴Milner, Life, p. 105.

⁵Samuel Roffey Maitland, A Letter to the Rev. John King, M.A. (London: J.G. and F. Rivington, 1835), p. 21.

several medals of distinction in honour of his academic achievement.

Upon the death of his former school-master, Joseph's precarious financial situation compelled him to return to Yorkshire to take on the position of assistant at a school, and later in a church near Tadcaster. During this time, he cultivated the friendship of Myles Atkinson, an individual whose friendship as an Evangelical colleague in Yorkshire remained significant to Milner throughout his life. Milner eventually became Lecturer and Master of the Free Grammar School in Hull, and later he served the parishes of North Ferriby and Holy Trinity, Hull as vicar and lecturer/vicar. In addition to his wide-ranging pastoral and teaching responsibilities, Joseph Milner was the author of numerous sermons, tracts and essays, as well as the co-author of the History which, regardless of the individual's estimation of the work, must be acknowledged to have held a prominent position on Victorian library shelves until the middle of the nineteenth century. He died on 15 November 1797.

It was during his time at Cambridge that Joseph Milner experienced the collapse of his childhood faith and submerged himself in the thought of the enlightenment by reading the works of John Locke, William King and Samuel Clarke. As he took on his responsibilities as the enlightened clergyman, his congregation esteemed him as a popular preacher, and an exemplary model of morality. Milner, however, judged the period of his ministry until 1770 to have been lacking in 'vital, practical, experimental'⁶ religion. But after a rather typical (for an Evangelical) struggle with doubt and despair, Milner declared himself converted, an event which would set the scene for the remainder of his public ministry. Milner's eulogy, published in the April 1798 number of the Evangelical Magazine, recorded the significance of this experience:

About this time Luther's comment upon the Epistle to the Galatians fell in his way; a work which was not only then rendered peculiarly useful to him, but for which he retained the greatest respect to the day of his death. He now saw himself to be in that very state, in which the word of God represents to all the unregenerate; and with him it was not a speculative nicety, but a subject of infinite importance, how a guilty sinner could be justified before a holy God.⁷

From the time of his conversion in 1770, Joseph Milner distinguished himself

as a figure so crucial to the success of the

Evangelical Revival in Hull that Isaac could comment:

The populous Town of Hull might have continued in the dark, irreligious state in which he found it: Thousands might have died without ever hearing the glad tidings of the Gospel properly stated; and the succession of truly worthy and evangelical preachers, who have been his pupils or contemporaries, might never have taken place.⁸

Though Milner was not exempt from the ostracism and ridicule typically the lot of those who

⁶Milner, 'An Account of the Life', p. xxi.

⁷'Memories of the Life of the Rev. Joseph Milner, A.M.', Evangelical Magazine, vol. VI (1798), pp. 134-135.

⁸Milner, 'An Account of the Life', p. xvii.

preached the 'new' Gospel, his admirers claimed that he was eventually able to win many of his parishioners over, and to establish a reputation as a key contributor to the Revival in the northeast of England.

II. Composition of *The History of the Church of Christ*

A. Literary Context

In his fine analysis of the Milner History⁹, John Walsh reminded his readers that the assertion that early Evangelicals took no interest in ecclesiastical history was a statement which required qualification. They took a cue from the Puritans, and used biographies and autobiographies as an important means of commemorating the lives of contemporary saints. Examples of this type of literature abound in such historical works as A Short Account of God's Dealings with the Rev. Mr. George Whitefield, Erasmus Middleton's Biographica Evangelica, the biographies in Wesley's Christian Library, and the ever-popular eulogies found in the pages of the Evangelical periodicals. It was his reading of the early church father Tertullian that inspired Wesley to formulate the discipline of the Holy Club in Oxford which included forms of canonical prayer, stationary fasts on Wednesdays and Fridays and observance of the Sabbath: this example stands as but one of a number that illustrate the interest eighteenth-century Evangelicals took in history. Joseph Milner's interest in history before the publication of the History has already been noted, and we may observe Hannah More's engagement with Gibbon in her correspondence.¹⁰ Generally speaking, these Evangelicals lived in an environment in which history as a subject was in fashion; as J.B. Black, the historiographer said,

In all probability there has never been a period when history was so much in demand among the reading public in all European countries as the latter part of the eighteenth century. It would be no exaggeration to say that the vogue of historical books between 1750 and the outbreak of the French Revolution was as great as the vogue of poetical literature in the age of Shakespeare or of the novel in the age of Scott. Every one read it and talked about it.¹¹

The large numbers of histories published in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries also attest to the popularity of history as a subject, not least of all in Evangelical circles: one needs only to note Wesley's abridgement of Johannes Mosheim's A Concise Ecclesiastical History, John

⁹John Walsh, 'Joseph Milner's Evangelical Church History', Journal of Ecclesiastical History, vol. 10 (1959), pp. 174-187.

¹⁰Hannah More had seen Bath at the end of a road paved not with good but with dubious intentions: she also saw Edward Gibbon as a seasoned and cynical traveller on that same road. To Samuel Pepys, she expressed her opinion of Gibbon: 'I have almost waded through that mass of impiety and bad taste. I protest - I think that if this work were to become the standard of style and religion, Christianity and the English language would decay pretty nearly together; and the same period would witness the downfall of sound principles and of true taste'. Roberts, More, vol. II, pp. 131-32.

¹¹Black, History, p. 14.

Newton's Review of Ecclesiastical History, Thomas Taylor's History of the Waldenses and Albigenses, Thomas Haweis' Impartial and Succinct History of the Church of Christ and the Milners' History of the Church of Christ.

Eighteenth-century historians sought to catch their readers' discerning attention by promoting their 'unique' interpretations of history as being on a new plan. A title such as Robert Henry's History of Great Britain on a New Plan (1771-1793) displayed this trend in an obvious way. History, Henry maintained, had been concerned too deeply with details of 'civil, military and ecclesiastical affairs'.¹² Though a few historians could be commended for comments about national politics, not one 'hath given, or so much as pretended or designed to give, any thing like a history of learning, arts, commerce, and manners'.¹³ William Robertson, too, had judged the contemporary state of historical writing to be deplorable. 'It is a cruel mortification', he wrote,

searching for what is instructive in the history of past times, to find that the exploits of conquerors who had desolated the earth, and the freaks of tyrants who have rendered nations unhappy are recorded with minute and often disgusting accuracy, while the discovery of useful arts, and the progress of the most beneficial branches of commerce, are passed over in silence, and suffered to sink into oblivion.¹⁴

The teaching of private virtue and correct public policy were cherished priorities of eighteenth century society,¹⁵ and historical study was considered a suitable means by which to instil these values. Historical writing of the time was expected to reflect these priorities. In his important study of historiography, Thomas Preston Peardon summarized the aim of the rationalist historians in this way:

For this purpose modern history, as being most nearly analogous to present conditions and most easily studied, was apt to be regarded as far more important than the history of earlier periods. Indeed, while classical history always enjoyed some of the respect it had won from the humanists, primitive ages, as ages of barbarism, and medieval civilization, as the product of ignorance and superstition, were held unworthy of the investigation of enlightened men or at best worth examining solely as the introduction to modern civilization. The historian was to write in a 'philosophical' spirit, by which was generally meant that he should attempt to penetrate beneath the surface of events to underlying causes and motives - to explain rather than merely to narrate.¹⁶

B. The Milner Apology

That Joseph Milner perceived that he, too, had broken new ground upon the frontiers of

¹²Robert Henry, History of Britain on a New Plan, 4th ed., 12 vols. (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1805, 1799), vol. I (1805), p. xiv.

¹³Ibid., p. xiv.

¹⁴William Robertson, The Works of William Robertson, ed. by Dugald Stewart, New ed., 8 vols. (London: T. Cadell, 1840), vol. VIII, p. 177.

¹⁵Thomas Preston Peardon, The Transition in English Historical Writing 1760-1830 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1933), p. 10.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 10-11.

historiography is evident from the first page of The History. 'In my Proposals for printing this History of the Church of Christ', he wrote, 'I promised an Ecclesiastical History on a New Plan'.¹⁷ The need and justification for this innovation is clear when Milner located his contribution within the context of ecclesiastical historiography. Sounding rather like Robertson, Milner believed that previous historians, undoubtedly writing as those who were unsympathetic, or even hostile to the Church, had delighted in exposing wickedness and immorality within the community of faith. This practice could serve only to fan the flames of hatred and cynicism toward the Gospel. The wildest heretics, whose unorthodox ideas and activities had succeeded in destroying the precious peace and unity of the Church, had attained celebrated status. Incidents particularly illustrative of the disunity of the Church had been recovered meticulously. The bureaucratic machinations of the Papacy and the intricate relations of Church and State had filled the pages of church history to the point that one, Milner believed, could reasonably conclude 'learning and philosophy have been much more respected than godliness and virtue'.¹⁸ Historians such as the German Johannes Mosheim who, on the account of their faithful transmission of useful information might be freed from blame 'if one might look on them as CIVIL historians altogether'¹⁹ must be rejected as ecclesiastical historians. In their recounting of this history, Joseph Milner asserted they

evidently give a much larger proportion to the history of wickedness, than to that of piety in general. Hence the evils which have been practised in Christian countries, seem even greater than they really were; and, the disagreeable inference, which the reading of Mosheim produced in my own mind, is probably no singular case, viz. - that real religion appears scarcely to have had any existence.²⁰

Such a rendering of church history, in Milner's estimation, could have only a negative impact upon the perceptions of those outside the Church, and thus, upon the Church's mission in the world. Infidel malice had taken great delight in displays of wickedness throughout church history, and deists and sophists had seized the opportunity to 'represent [BOTH] Mohometans and Pagans as more virtuous than Christians'.²¹ Such a relentless exposure of family skeletons made a mockery of the Church to outsiders, and did much harm to the Gospel. Moreover, this portrayal of church history was simply unfaithful and inaccurate. With certainty, Milner asserted that genuine piety and faithfulness constantly sought a veil of humility; therefore, it was the task of the church historian to coax gently, though persistently, the saints he could find into the light. To the contrary, 'a history of the perversions and abuses of religion is not properly a history of the

¹⁷Milner, Works, vols. I-V (1819), History of the Church of Christ, vol. I, p. iii.

¹⁸Ibid., vol. I, p. iv.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid., pp. iv-v.

²¹Ibid., p. v.

Church; as absurd were it to suppose a history of the highwaymen that have infested this country to be a history of England'.²² To Milner, the responsibility of recording church history was not the same as the secular historian's, and on account of the previous deficient attempts to render accurate and faithful accounts of the history of the Church, Milner proposed to undertake this task himself.

Integral to the execution of this new plan, Milner posited the existence of virtuous men and women whose lives lived in accordance with the Gospel formed the essence of a faithful account of church history. Of these people, Milner wrote,

It is certain, that from our Saviour's time to the present, there have ever been persons whose dispositions and lives have been formed by the rules of the New Testament; men, who have been REAL, not merely NOMINAL Christians; who believed the doctrines of the Gospel, loved them because of their divine excellency, and suffered gladly the LOSS OF ALL THINGS, THAT THEY MIGHT WIN CHRIST, AND BE FOUND IN HIM.²³

Church history, properly speaking, stood as a record of those good people whom God's Holy Spirit had raised to live as true followers of the Gospel of Christ. This undertaking of the church historian must be met with absolute integrity and faithful recording of the facts as the story of the effusions of the Spirit is told. As a sign of his dedication, Milner pledged to his readers that he would adhere to original sources, and would refrain from passing judgements upon the events and the people involved for

the historian has no room to exercise his own sagacity...He is only faithfully to report the facts, and show the agreement of them with Scripture, that the reader may judge for himself, whether the hand of the Lord hath done this, and whether the Holy One of Israel hath created it.²⁴

Though he occasionally claimed editorial privileges when original sources and factual accounts which were not entirely accurate threatened to encumber a smooth and plain telling of the story, Milner maintained that it was only through such a faithful transmission of the facts of ecclesiastical history that the historian could successfully carry on with the task of '[seeing] and [tracing] the goodness of God taking care of His church in every age by His Providence and Grace'.²⁵

The gains, Milner maintained, of such a presentation of church history were as numerous as they were obvious. The honour of Christianity was defended, the usefulness of doctrine determined and the Evangelical commitment to proclaim the Gospel was adhered to with fidelity. Further, the contrived success of the sceptic would appear 'unfounded in truth' and Christianity would be shown to have 'ever existed, and brought forth its proper fruits, to which no other

²²Milner, History, vol. I, p. vii.

²³Ibid., p. iii.

²⁴Milner, 'Remarks on the History of Religion', Selection, p. 298.

²⁵Milner, History, vol. I, p. viii.

system can make any just pretension'.²⁶ Finally, such a history would show clearly that the perceived wickedness and disunity celebrated by those in opposition to Christianity

arose not from the Gospel itself, but from the hypocrisy of those who assumed that worthy Name, to which neither their faith nor their practice gave them any right.²⁷

The commitment, then, to proclaim God's good will for His creation as exemplified by his faithful relationship to the lives of those who had responded to Christ's call to follow Him provided Milner's proposed innovation with a rationale and justification.

III. The Milner Luther

A. Introduction

Among the array of Spirit-filled men and women through whom Milner proposed to trace church history, Martin Luther arose as an individual of extraordinary significance. Having devoted over one-fifth of the History to the life and work of Luther, and the movement which laid claim to his name, Milner asserted that in addition to the proposal for a new method of ecclesiastical historiography, he placed a novel emphasis on this reformer. In his opinion, past historians had been grossly ignorant of the life and work of the Saxon reformer, and what they did know of Luther, they had deliberately misrepresented in order not only to further their own purposes, but also, more seriously, to obscure the fruits of the Holy Spirit at work. Though Milner acknowledged that there were people around him who professed themselves to be sincere friends of the Reformation, he asserted that 'they appear to understand very little of the real dispositions of Luther'.²⁸ Reformation histories had typically consisted of polemic against the papacy, the enumeration of its political and subordinate causes, and evidence which furthered contemporary ideals of liberty and natural rights. Furthermore, these individuals had sought to wound the 'gospel of Jesus' by deprecating his servants; thus,

pride, opposition, singularity, self-interest, ambition, enthusiasm, have been insinuated to the unsuspecting minds of many readers, as the ruling motives of the Saxon Reformer.²⁹

Finally, Luther had been accused by his Roman Catholic adversaries of having commenced the sordid business of the Reformation for a variety of reasons which were hardly commendable. Of what he attributed to his brother's treatment of Luther, Isaac Milner wrote,

The Writer, in the management of this part of his History of the Church, has endeavoured to rescue the memory of Luther from UNJUST aspersions of every kind; and he does this, not by INDECISIVE effusions of praise and censure, or of affected candour and concession, but by a scriptural display of the nature of the new creature

²⁶Milner, History, vol. I, p. vi.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid., vol. IV, p. iv.

²⁹Ibid., p. ix.

in Christ Jesus, as exemplified in the conduct of this eminent Theologian.³⁰

One may discern, at this juncture, two primary reasons for Milner's concern that Luther's reputation be rescued and restored. Firstly, Milner sought to inform his readership about the German Reformation, because he understood it as having provided the impetus for subsequent movements to correct abuses within the Church. In this regard, Milner wrote,

Even the Reformations, which took place in several other parts of Europe, besides Germany, the scene of Luther's transactions, were in a great measure derived from the light, which he was able to diffuse among mankind. And as the peculiar excellency of the revival of godliness now before us lay in this, that it was conversant in fundamentals of doctrine, rather than in correction of mere abuses of practice, hence the history of Lutheranism recommends itself in an especial manner to the study of every theologian.³¹

The recovery of the theological accomplishments and concerns of Luther, and the explication of the significance of these rediscoveries to the Church of his day, provided Milner with a rationale to reexamine and reclaim Reformation heritage.

While he paid brief attention to the progress of Lutheranism in countries most directly influenced by the German Reformation such as Sweden and Denmark, Milner described the work of the Swiss reformers primarily in terms of its relationship to the Saxons. The English Reformation received only a cursory treatment due at least in part to King Henry VIII's ill and mistaken treatment of Luther which Milner considered an embarrassment. Understanding the intricate nature of the German ecclesiastical situation would naturally lead Milner's readers to a deeper understanding of their own particular Church as a product of history, and deep digressions into the histories of other European reform movements were unnecessary. Furthermore, an examination of authentic documentation of Luther and his surroundings could possibly provide

an antidote to the pert and positive assertions of profane and infidel authors, who know no bounds to their misrepresentations of religious characters and religious transactions.³²

Isaac Milner summarized the great regard with which he and his brother held Luther and the study of his work in the preface to Volume IV of the History:

No person could have a greater esteem for Luther than the Author of this History. The present volume will show how well versed he was in his writings, and with how much care he had studied his character. He loved him as a man of plain dealing and unfeigned piety: he admired him as a champion of truth: he revered him as an instrument of God, highly honoured and expressly chosen for the purpose of defending and propagating the Christian faith; and he contemplated his success with delight and astonishment.³³

³⁰Milner, History, vol. IV, p. ix.

³¹Ibid., pp. 304-305.

³²Ibid., p. 468.

³³Ibid., p. viii.

B. Evangelicals and Luther

Apart from the eulogy recorded in the Evangelical Magazine noted above, which described how Joseph Milner recovered his faith through reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Galatians, little can be discerned of the Milners' introduction to the German Reformer, or of their study of Luther and the influences which led them to draw their subsequent conclusions about Luther's significance to church history. A remark in a letter to James Stillingfleet dated August 1796 indicates that Joseph Milner contemplated recording the history of the Reformation with anticipation.³⁴ Further, William Richardson's affectionate urgings to Isaac to complete the project suggest a long-standing commitment and familiarity with the work of the Saxon Reformer.³⁵ Isaac Milner's friendship with the Moravian Christian LaTrobe provides an interesting possible link between the Milners and one likely to be well-acquainted with Lutheran theology, though nothing substantial has arisen from available source material to illustrate what may have been gleaned from this relationship. Several remarks from essays published before the completion of the History suggest that the Milners' interest in Luther extended well beyond the pragmatics of writing the History of the Church of Christ.

Still, though it is not possible to describe in detail the brothers' introduction to Luther, it is feasible to establish the existence of a general early English Evangelical interest in the German Reformer. Joseph Milner certainly was not the only Evangelical to be converted under the influence of Luther's writing; John Wesley's conversion is another obvious example. William Richardson displayed his familiarity with Luther by comparing the struggles the German Reformer faced to contemporary Evangelical challenges and concluded, 'There is nothing new under the Sun'.³⁶ John Newton, who had also put pen to paper as an historian, recognized that through God's providence, Martin Luther had been raised to 'revive the knowledge of the Gospel'.³⁷ William Cowper confided to his journal that 'Martin Luther said that what the devil hates next to prayer is mirth'³⁸, and in 1773, Henry Venn reminded James Stillingfleet about the positive nature of suffering with the words,

³⁴Milner, Life, p. 114. 'My health is pretty good at present, and I am going on with the History; but as I come nearer the Reformation, major mihi nascitur ordo. Indeed the work is very laborious; I did not think it to be so great as it is before I undertook it'.

³⁵Richardson wrote to Isaac Milner: 'Were I the Dean's parrot, I would perch upon his chair every morning at breakfast and cry, "Remember Luther." Were I a mechanic sufficiently skilful, I would construct a clock to stand in the Dean's room, and solemnly to repeat "Remember Luther," at each concluding hour'. Ibid., p. 682.

³⁶Richardson, Memoir, p. xxviii.

³⁷John Newton, A Review of Ecclesiastical History (London: Edward and Charles Dilly, 1770), p. 325.

³⁸George W.E. Russell, A Short History of the Evangelical Movement (London: A.R. Mowbray and Co. Ltd., 1915) p. 134.

Remember that noble saying of Luther, 'Prayer, afflictions, and temptations, make a minister of the Gospel'.³⁹

Further, it is easy to establish that knowledge of Luther played a distinctive role (both positive and negative) in the formation of John Wesley's theology. During his sojourn in North America, Wesley had had intimate contact with the German Moravian Brethren, many of whom were of a Lutheran background. He was deeply impressed by the inward peacefulness of the Brethren, and the assurance they demonstrated in living out their Christian faith. Wesley's reading of the 'Preface' of Luther's Epistle to the Romans, as well as his conversations with Peter Böhler (who had been influenced by Luther's teachings) served as catalysts for his conversion; further, it was through the German Reformer that Wesley came to hold the doctrine of justification by faith alone in such high regard. Of this doctrine,^{Gordon} ^{Rupp} wrote,

The doctrine of Justification by Faith is indeed a Protestant doctrine of prime importance: it asserts that the divine mercy underlies all our salvation, from beginning to the end. Its conception of faith as 'ever-fruitful, ever doing' - as Tyndale renders Luther - guards against antinomianism on the one hand and moralist legalism on the other. The Doctrines of the New Birth, of Assurance, guard the doctrine of justification from becoming a rationalist scheme - as it had done in the fourteenth century and in some forms of Protestant and Puritan orthodoxy.⁴⁰

Though he was later to repudiate what he understood to be the Lutheran doctrine of justification of the early days of his conversion, Wesley, as well as other Evangelicals, continued to regard Luther as a commendable instrument of God, and to exhibit a degree of familiarity with his writings and thought. It is not difficult to imagine that the Milners had also imbibed this enthusiasm for Luther as a part of the Evangelical milieu.

C. The Milners' Luther Sources

The Milner sources, as indicated in the marginalia of Volumes Four and Five of the History, give the reader the most complete picture of the historians' acquaintance of Luther and his work. Isaac Milner did not possess a working knowledge of German⁴¹ though his firm grounding in a classical education prepared him well for reading primary historians and collections of Luther's works in Latin. Thus, Veit Ludwig von Seckendorf's reply to the Jesuit Louis Maimbourg's history of the Reformation, History of Lutheranism, became an essential guide from which Milner secured both a narrative of events and many examples of Luther's writings which he then presented in English for the benefit of readers. Other secondary sources cited included Father Paul, Du Pin, Sleidan, Bayle, Mosheim and Robertson. Primary source material was difficult to procure, and Isaac Milner was often required to obtain books from foreign libraries. For Luther's works, he

³⁹Venn, Life, p. 197.

⁴⁰Davies, Methodist Church, vol. I, p. xxxvii.

⁴¹Milner, Life, p. 338.

had access to both the Jena and Wittenberg editions of the collected works, and he exhibited enough familiarity with these sources to know that some editions of the Wittenberg Luther Works in Latin did not include Melancthon's biography of Luther. The Archbishop of Canterbury supported the venture by sending to Cambridge collections of Luther's letters, and offered further assistance when required.⁴² Milner's search for sources was extensive, and he put to use what materials he could obtain, though it must be acknowledged that he was separated from a rich supply of source material by a lack of reading proficiency in German.

D. The Context of Luther's Evangelical Reform

What sort of picture, then, does Milner's audience glimpse of the Reformer? The first three and a half volumes of the History can be seen as the means by which the authors set the stage in order to introduce the context in which Luther lived and worked. Milner had sought to trace the history of the Church, but in fact, the reader of these volumes is more specifically invited to view the history of the decline of the Church which led inevitably and necessarily (after all, the Spirit had not entirely abandoned the Church) to the reforming work of Luther.

The causes of the decline of the Church, according to Milner, need only to be summarized here. From its earliest stage, as exemplified during the proceedings of the Council of Jerusalem, a spirit of self-righteousness, or simply, 'pride', had tempted men and women to question the sufficiency of faith in Christ alone. In the example of the Council, circumcision and obedience to the Mosaic law were presented as the essential means by which people gained favour with God. Milner could identify the occasion of the Council as 'the first time that the natural pride and ignorance of the human heart, disguised under the pretence of religious zeal, attempted to undermine the simplicity of the faith'.⁴³

Other factors also emerged in the early days of Christianity that challenged the Church to fight for its soul. The blending of Christianity and philosophy as accomplished by a church father such as Origen threatened to lead the Christian away from the plain, literal sense of Scripture while tempting him to place faith in the power of reason rather than to submit to divine instruction.⁴⁴ Pastoral leadership was weakened by clergy who were more concerned with preferments and carnal pleasures than with the spiritual nurturing of their flocks. That a decline in doctrine necessarily produced a decline in morality was a certainty for Milner that to his mind left open a door through which corrupting and immoral influences could enter the Church. Belief in baptismal regeneration (or 'external' baptism) replaced the doctrine of real conversion, thus leading to the flowering of external religion: a form of Christianity which though impressive in

⁴²Milner, Life, p. 308.

⁴³Milner, History, vol. I, pp. 26-27.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 460.

its outward show of piety, 'could not make men saints in heart and life'.⁴⁵ The introduction of the classic heresies threatened the doctrinal foundations of the community of faith, but as in the case of the Novatianists, the hasty and sometimes unjust condemnations of would-be heretics led to the unnecessary and regrettable rending of the body of Christ.

That the Church should find itself in a constant cycle of decline and renewal was basic to Milner's philosophy of church history. Natural depravity never failed to choke the tender shoots of infant religion,⁴⁶ and the greatest extent of degeneracy could always be found in the oldest Churches.⁴⁷ It was only by the sheer goodness and grace of God that God himself chose to counter this perpetual tendency to decline by carrying the candlestick He removed from one place to another, 'so that the light of his Gospel was never removed from the earth'.⁴⁸

Heresy and corruption Milner understood to be inevitable accompaniments of the Church's life. But a new depth was plumbed, and a far greater threat than had been known before arose in the midst of the eighth century. Given Milner's theory of perpetual declension, it is hardly surprising to see the trouble emanating from one of the oldest seats of Christianity, the Roman See.

It would be tempting to dismiss Milner's attitude toward Rome as a product of his own time. The issue of Roman Catholic emancipation was a significant one, and a writer such as Milner could have chosen to use the *History* as a political instrument. But it must be said in Milner's defence, that he displayed a notably atypical attitude to the Middle Ages and western Christianity which he saw as developing under the umbrella of a Roman hierarchy. He held a decidedly respectful posture toward the medieval Church, refusing to dismiss this era as his contemporaries had tended to do; indeed, within the so-called 'dark ages' he could detect 'a spirit of adventurous charity'⁴⁹ unknown to his reputedly more philosophic and enlightened contemporaries. He accepted that a reduced form of episcopacy as he understood to be modelled in the primitive Church (in which a resident president would exert spiritual guidance over ten or twelve priests) might well provide a structure best suited to '[promoting] order, peace and harmony'.⁵⁰ He believed indiscriminate contempt toward monasticism should be resisted as a commendable figure such as Bernard exemplified, though Milner also acknowledged an inherent temptation in this institution to lure one to place confidence in monastic austerities rather than in Christ alone.⁵¹ His generally positive treatment of the early Fathers of the Church leads to the conclusion that

⁴⁵Milner, *History*, vol. II, p. 46.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, vol. III, p. 230.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, p. 168.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, p. 145.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, p. 271.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 162.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, p. 411.

these leaders were nothing less than good Evangelicals whose lives were exemplary. Milner believed that the study of early Christianity had much to commend itself to the student of divinity, and the Church of the earliest period must never be dismissed simply 'because she then wore a Roman garb'.⁵²

Still, the Church faced a major crisis in the emergence of 'Popedom'. Milner associated this stage of church history with the establishment of the foundations of temporal power of the pope in the controversy that erupted between eastern and western Christianity in AD 727 over the worship of images. In challenging the emperor, Milner believed that Gregory III had significantly given sanction to idolatry while 'despising both civil magistrates and ecclesiastical councils'.⁵³

From that point, the history of the church became a tracing of the decline of the papacy (or the rise of 'Popedom')⁵⁴ as the Church was increasingly involved with temporal concerns and temptations. The practice of burying the dead in churchyards arose as clerics realized the profits that could be gained in frequent offerings of prayers for the dead. Superstitious princes gifted large tracts of land as a means of gaining pardon for their sins, thus adding to the papal coffers. Bereft of proper spiritual leadership, the Church began to neglect the Scriptures, preferring to accept the writings of the Fathers not as witnesses but as 'judges of divine truth'.⁵⁵ Ceremony and ritual usurped dependence upon Christ as the means of salvation. Preaching declined, so depriving the people of access to the fundamentals of the faith; this loss was particularly regrettable as men of the Church had not grown so blind that abuses could not be named, but no effectual remedy could be applied.⁵⁶ In summary, Milner could describe the state of the Church on the eve of the Reformation in the following way:

The sixteenth century opened with a prospect of all others the most gloomy, in the eyes of every true Christian. Corruption both in doctrine and practice had exceeded all bounds; and the general face of Europe, though the name of Christ was every where professed, presented nothing that was properly Evangelical. Great efforts indeed had been made to emancipate the Church from the 'powers of darkness;' and in consequence many individual souls had been conducted into the path of salvation. Still nothing like a general reformation had taken place in any part of Europe.⁵⁷

The whole system, in Milner's estimation, was ruinous, and in desperate need of rescue.

⁵²Milner, *History*, vol. III, p. iv.

⁵³*Ibid.*, p. 159.

⁵⁴Note, however, that Milner vowed not to attend to these steps so minutely but to seek the children of God 'wherever they are to be found'. *Ibid.*, p. 163.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, p. 197.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, vol. IV, p. 74.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, p. 303.

E. Luther's Evangelical Remedy

The reason, however, behind this ecclesiastical ruin was frighteningly simple to ascertain: the doctrine of justification by faith alone, in an explicit form, had been lost to Christianity for centuries. Looking upon the eve of the Reformation, Milner could pose the question:

If men had really believed, that by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ salvation was obtained, and that God 'justifies the ungodly' through faith alone, how could they have been imposed on by the traffic of indulgences?⁵⁸

With a system of rules and incentives, the Church had developed its own stairway to God's Kingdom. And the end result?: 'The satisfaction of Christ was not sufficiently meritorious for this end; in other words, that the gift of God is not eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord'.⁵⁹

Then Martin Luther called the Church to reform. Though Milner was not oblivious to Luther's faults of a passionate temper and sharp tongue on which his enemies chose to dwell, his learning, genius and capacity far outweighed them. As a man, Luther was blameless to a degree that Milner could only explain as a result of divine favour. Of Luther, he wrote,

In contemplating the other qualities and endowments of our reformer, we have no hesitation in affirming, that it is not easy to find a more blameless, or even a more excellent character. No man since the Apostles' days had penetrated into the sacred oracles with such singular felicity...It was through divine grace, that he was enabled to display and persevere in a conduct the most consistent, uncorrupt, and disinterested.⁶⁰

While honouring the memory of a hero from the past is understandable, one may legitimately ask why a good, moderate English Calvinist such as Milner would want to draw so much attention to the work of a German whose Lutheran movement had attracted few followers in the Church in England. Indeed, Milner commended Luther for his exemplary character and goodness, but more importantly, Luther held the enviable status of God's helpmeet. To Milner,

the German theologian, in the Author's views, was a distinguished subject of Almighty grace, which, by enlightening his understanding, changing his affections, and animating his hopes, prepared him in a most wonderful manner, for the extraordinary part he was appointed to sustain.⁶¹

That Milner maintained that the primary source of energy and vision for the rest of the European reformation serves to account for the central role the historian credited to Luther and his work in the reform of the Church. The doctrines of Luther he asserted, are

well known to be, in the main, the doctrines of every branch of the Protestant Reformation. These, with the rapidity of lightning, penetrated almost every part of Europe; became the fruitful source of various Christian institutions and establishments; and, as hitherto they were supported rather by the blood of martyrs, than the power of princes and prelates, they beautifully exhibit the native vigour of the reviving Church

⁵⁸Milner, History, vol. IV, p. 309.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 336.

⁶¹Ibid., p. ix.

of Christ.⁶²

Luther, then, arose as a kind man for all people: a man whose legacy the whole Church could lay claim, and not just that community which bore the Reformer's name.

And so it is Luther - this man for all people - whose part it was to assume the role of defender of the Gospel. Through dedicated study of the Scriptures, which had been so long denied to the average member of medieval society, Luther had come to understand the heart of the Gospel to lie in the doctrine of justification by faith alone. Further to this discovery, Luther espoused the view that the 'depraved nature of man' existed

as the root of evil; contrition and humility, with a lively faith in the Redeemer, as the only cure of the reigning evil, and the only source of FUTURE GOOD.⁶³

Refusing to compromise any doctrine integral to upholding the Gospel, Luther challenged the ecclesiastical system of his day to reclaim its roots in the pure Gospel as he understood it to be revealed in the Scriptures.

But throughout his challenge to established authority, Luther fought hard to remain a loyal son of the Church. Disruption of the unity of Christ's body was not taken lightly by Milner, and throughout the narrative, he emphasized Luther's efforts to stay within the Roman fold, even though Milner felt he had to apologize further for what his readers might interpret as a radical devotion to Roman Catholicism. Luther had tried to act through the proper channels. He had voiced his concerns to the Pope and other superiors such as Staupitz and Albert of Mentz. Desirous only of exercising his ministry as a faithful pastor, Luther was portrayed by Milner as the conscientious priest who followed the established means for addressing grievances within the Christian community. But the enormities of the papal system were too great, and Luther gradually realized the presence of the hand of Providence 'in conducting [him] into the depths of a controversy to which he seems to have had no inclination'.⁶⁴ The institutional Church was corrupt, as was the Church's proclamation of the Gospel. Milner summarized the problem facing Luther in this way:

The system was wholly impious, and the right knowledge of justification was the only remedy adequate to the evil. This, therefore, the reader is to look for, as the most capital object of the Reformation: and thus, in the demolition of one of the vilest perversions of superstition, there suddenly arose and revived, in all its infant simplicity, the Apostolical doctrine, in which is contained the great mystery of the Scriptures.⁶⁵

Milner, then, saw the recovery of Evangelical doctrine under the leadership of Martin Luther as the key to understanding the necessity of the Reformation and the primary source of vitality which ensured the continued life of the Church. To narrate the story of this recovery, Milner

⁶²Milner, *History*, vol. V, pp. vii-viii.

⁶³*Ibid.*, vol. IV, p. xii.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, p. 328.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, p. 310.

recorded what he perceived as the significant events of the German Reformation such as Luther's nailing of the ninety-five theses on the church door in Wittenberg, the Diet of Nuremberg, the disputation of Leipzig and the Diet of Augsburg. Luther's interactions with political authorities like Frederick the Wise, George of Saxony, and Henry VIII received attention, as did his relationships with other reformers like Erasmus, Zwingli, Bucer and Müntzer. Excerpts from Luther's correspondence were quoted at length as were pieces from unidentified writings, sermons and letters. Milner also included comments on, and samples of Luther's most significant writings such as On Christian Liberty, The Babylonian Captivity of the Church, On the Bondage of the Will, and the Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians. Thus, through narrative, interpretation and examination of translated documents, Milner's audience could form a picture of the Lutheran reform movement within the Church Catholic.

IV. Positive Reception of Milner's Work

It is appropriate at this point to pause for an evaluation of the Milners' claims and work. Clearly, the authors perceived themselves as having presented to their readers both a new plan for the recounting of Christian history as distinct from secular accounts, and in painting a new picture of Martin Luther, an individual whose work they esteemed as the crown of Church history. Presented as such, it is apparent that The History of the Church of Christ was accepted with much acclaim in many corners of the Church. Between the appearance of the first volume in 1794, and 1847, eleven editions were published, including two abridgements. In addition to the original work, three authors, or their literary executors, published continuations: John Scott in 1826 and 1832, Henry Stebbing in 1842 and Thomas Haweis^(post-humously) in 1847.⁶⁶ The patronage of the University of Cambridge Press in its publication, and the association of Jowett and Simeon in the reprinting of the second volume linked the work with an institution and individuals that stood for respected scholarship and sound theology. In a letter written to Isaac Milner in 1806, the Moravian Peter Mortimer offered the following snapshot of the History's travels:

You may be assured that the translation is extensively read, not only in Germany, (even

⁶⁶Haweis also published a history in 1800 (An Impartial and Succinct History of the Church of Christ), which, though it may not be considered a continuation, can be seen as a companion to the Milner work. Isaac Milner was not pleased with the close connection Haweis forged between his work and the Milners'. Milner published a pamphlet in which he sought to distance the History from the Haweis' work which he considered to be defensive of democrats and schismatics. Isaac Milner, Animadversions of Dr. Haweis' Impartial and Succinct History of the Church of Christ (Cambridge: John Burgess 1801), p. 9. The Animadversions was followed by Further Animadversions on Dr. Haweis' Misquotations and Misrepresentations of the Rev. Mr. Milner's History (Cambridge: J. Burges, 1801). Concern for the attention drawn by Haweis to the association of Anglican Evangelicals with irregular clergy elicited an additional chapter to the History from the pen of Isaac entitled 'Ecclesiastical Establishments' (History, vol. II, pp. 209-228) in which the author defended an established state religion. This work was reissued under Joseph Milner's name in 1835.

in some popish parts,) but also in Switzerland, Prussia, Livonia, Holland, Denmark, and Sweden; and very likely, the German translation will be followed by a Swedish one. I have had to answer several queries from Stockholm, respecting the work and its author...I have spoken with two persons who had read the first volume in Greenland, and with another who had perused it on the banks of the Wolga. I wish you may find, in this information, an additional spur to go on with diligence.⁶⁷

Daniel Wilson and Henry Martyn carefully packed their Milner copies to accompany them to India; German Lutheran seminarians in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania (U.S.A.) learned their church history from the pages of Milner; a British statesman W.E. Gladstone meticulously took notes from the History many years after Isaac Milner's death.⁶⁸ All these attest to the popularity of the work and its wide and powerful influence.

Even those who vehemently criticized both Milner's theology and scholarship had to admit that the need for their criticism lay in what they perceived as a necessity to curb its immense popularity. Samuel Roffey Maitland shuddered to think of the harm that had been done to the reputation of the English clergyman by the impression formed by the Milner History being 'let loose' on a foreign market, but also had to admit that at least in England, 'many readers may possibly have no other book of reference on the subject, than Milner's History of the Church of Christ'.⁶⁹ Writing in 1847, Julius Charles Hare observed that the Milner History exerted considerable influence and could still be named as 'the main, if not the sole, source from which a large portion of our Church derive their notions of ecclesiastical history'.⁷⁰ Convinced of the work's timelessness as a tool for teaching and evangelism, James Stephen paid tribute to the Milners' legacy:

The Church History of Joseph Milner is one of those books which may perish with some revolution of the moral and religious character of the English race, but hardly otherwise.⁷¹

Milner's admirers were faithful in extolling the value of the History. It was included as essential reading in Bickersteth's Curate's Library, and was named as one of the weapons of defence for The Scholar Armed. Its pages opened up to clergy and laymen alike the world of the early and medieval church. Through Milner's narrative, the drama of the early Christians was unfolded in detail, and with passion. The reader was invited to witness the martyrdom of

⁶⁷Milner, Life, p. 335.

⁶⁸Gladstone's handwritten notes of Milner's History are preserved in the British Museum and offer a vivid example of the seriousness with which a layman undertook the study of church history under the tutelage of the Milners. British Library Add. MSS 44,723,f.380, 44,726,ff.116-127.

⁶⁹Samuel Roffey Maitland, A Letter to the Rev. Hugh James Rose, with Strictures on Milner's Church History (London: J.G. and F. Rivington, 1834), p. 1.

⁷⁰Julius Charles Hare, The Means of Unity: A Charge to the Clergy of the Archdeaconry of Lewes (London: John William Parker, 1847), p. 47.

⁷¹Stephen, Essays, vol. II, p. 158.

Perpetua, to travel with Athanasius to the Council of Nicea, to stand alongside Martin Luther as he nailed his manifesto to the doors of a Wittenberg church. They were no longer shadowy figures of the past. John Henry Newman acknowledged his debt to Milner for introducing him to the early church fathers, and several scholars have noted the influence of Milner upon the development of Newman's theory of church history. 'It is Milner's doctrine', Newman recorded in his Apologia,

that upon the visible Church come down from above, at certain intervals, large and temporary Effusions of divine grace. This is the leading idea of his work. He begins by speaking of the Day of Pentecost, as marking 'the first Effusions of the Spirit of God, which from age to age have visited the earth since the coming of Christ'. Vol. i.p.3. In a note he adds that 'in the term "Effusion" there is not here included, the idea of the miraculous or extraordinary operations of the Spirit of God; but still it was natural for me, admitting Milner's general theory, and applying it to the principle of analogy, not to stop short of his abrupt ipse dixit, but boldly to pass forward to the conclusion, on other grounds plausible, that as miracles accompanied the first effusion of grace, so they might accompany the later.'⁷²

The study of antiquity was to become the basis of much theological discussion of the nineteenth century, and the Milner History can be regarded as a significant means by which churchmen came to know the Church of their forefathers. Of this accomplishment, J.H. Overton declared,

If Milner had no other merit, this alone would have entitled him to gratitude: that he called the attention of a generation, which had not much knowledge or appreciation of the early fathers, to their writings.⁷³

But it was not only for its contribution to the study of history that the Milner work was to be esteemed in its half century of active usefulness: it was also its effect. Bishop Daniel Wilson of Calcutta commended it as 'one of the first works in English Theology', and in his vindication of the History, John Scott noted that the bishop had used Milner's work as a tool for evangelism.⁷⁴ In a pamphlet in reply to Samuel Roffey Maitland's criticism of Milner's scholarship (to be discussed below), John King found contemporary charges brought against Milner's work to be unfounded, exaggerated and severely delivered. Milner's end, King declared, was to place within the grasp of his readers the pious deeds and sentiments of the faithful

⁷²John Henry Newman, Apologia Pro Vita Sua, ed. by Martin J. Svaglic (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), pp.32-33. I am also grateful for this idea to Stephen Thomas who in his Durham University Ph.D. thesis of 1987 suggests the influence of Milner upon Newman in his composition of The Arians of the Fourth Century. See Thomas' book, Newman and Heresy: The Anglican Years (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 45-49.

⁷³Overton, Evangelical Revival, p. 118.

⁷⁴John Scott, A Vindication of the Rev. Joseph Milner (London: Seeley and Sons, 1834), p. 27. Scott would further illustrate the power of the work 'in bringing to a serious sense of religion those who were heretofore lost in the vain pursuits of the world, and in instructing, establishing and edifying sincere Christians' by pointing to the examples of six members of Parliament who had been awakened to vital Christianity through reading Milner'. Ibid., pp. 44-45.

departed.⁷⁵ John Cockin acknowledged Milner's historical record was defective in part, but excused him on the grounds that

To exhibit the nature of real Christianity historically, is the plan of his work; and in the execution of the plan, he makes history subservient to instruction, and takes every opportunity to show the connexion between principle and practice, between the doctrines of grace and the fruits of righteousness.⁷⁶

In his vindication of the History, John Scott expressed dismay at the denunciation of Milner's work by Hugh James Rose to theological students at Durham University.⁷⁷ Apart from the fact that Milner's diligent labour and devotion deserved at least some respect, the denunciation failed to do any good in the face of what Scott perceived as the state of crisis within the Church. Scott's comments burst with indignation:

But what will be the effects of this denunciation of Milner and his work, proceeding from such a quarter? It will be heard as little less than a declaration of war against that numerous and increasing body of Churchmen, who hold his principles, revere his character, and set a high value on his writings - especially his Church History. It will tend to bring into distrust all that has of late been done, implying a more favourable sentiment and better feeling towards this formerly proscribed part of the Church. It will excite the suspicion that, whatever may be pretended, the old leaven of aversion yet remains, and that what has appeared, presenting a different aspect, has arisen from a sense of the need there may be of the aid of these person, in conciliating or preserving the attachment of the people to our ecclesiastical establishment.⁷⁸

With the exception of cursory acknowledgements that Milner's scholarship might not be factually correct in every instance - an acknowledgement Milner's defenders dismissed by claiming Milner's evangelistic purpose in writing the History did not bind him to historical accuracy - the History's loyal supporters appeared incapable of either viewing the work critically or of countering the criticism of others in an effective way. His personable character, his example of devout piety and the evangelical usefulness of his work were invoked to turn back the tide of criticism. Thomas Ludlam, in reply to Isaac Milner's attack on the work that he and his brother produced, commented on this lack of objectivity, here in the case of Isaac:

But perhaps the Dr. thinks that error should not be detected; at least the errors of truly religious, and therefore very excellent men. This indeed is a very general opinion among such as modestly stile themselves evangelical persons; and it means that the

⁷⁵John King, Maitland Not Authorised to Censure Milner (London: L. and J. Seeley, 1835), p. 1.

⁷⁶John Cockin, Reflections After Reading (London: T. Ward and Co., 1843), p. 133.

⁷⁷In a lecture to undergraduate divinity students in the newly-founded Durham University in 1834, Rose had declared that Joseph Milner's work had no intrinsic value, and was bound to sink into 'merited neglect'. Hugh James Rose, The Study of Church History Recommended (London: J.G. and F. Rivington, 1834), p. 42. The statements by Rose set off a small pamphlet war contributed to by S.R. Maitland, John Scott and John King.

⁷⁸Scott, Vindication, pp. 10-11.

blunders of their own party are not to be meddled with.⁷⁹

The defence that claimed merit for a work on the basis of the niceness and piety of the author, or for the sake of the politics of the Church, was bound to be an inadequate one.

V. Negative Reception of Milner's Work

A. Scholarship

The critical attacks came with vengeance, fuelled by a sense of outrage in the face of what was perceived by the Milners' opponents as the shortsightedness of their loyal supporters, though it must be noted that they were not launched until more than a decade after Isaac Milner's death. As a piece of scholarship, several critics of the History frankly dismiss it as worthless. Lord Macaulay, though a son of the Milners' friend Zachary Macaulay, referred to the History as the work of that 'stupid beast Joseph Milner's'⁸⁰ and in a marginal note in his personal copy of the History, he remarked

My quarrel with you is that you are ridiculously credulous; that you wrest everything to your own purpose in defiance of all the rules of sound construction; that you are profoundly ignorant of your subject; that your information is second-hand; and that your style is nauseous.⁸¹

The reaction of Henry Milman, the liberal Anglican historian also noted in the biography of Lord Macaulay, indicates that whilst Milner's offering might be acceptable to those persons of Evangelical piety, it was pitifully lacking in

the profound, original research, the various erudition, and dispassionate judgment which more rational Christians consider indispensable to an historian.⁸²

J.C. Hare acknowledged, as already noted, the status of Milner's work as a primary source for the study of church history but lamented

⁷⁹T. Ludlam, 'Remarks on the scurrilous Reflections cast upon the Rev. W. and T. Ludlam by Dr. Milner, Master of Queens' College and Dean of Carlisle'. Essays, Scriptural, Moral and Logical by W. and T. Ludlam, 2 vols. (London: J.G. Barnard, 1807), p. 437.

⁸⁰Trevelyan, Macaulay, vol. II, p. 285.

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²Ibid., p. 286. In addition to his scholarship, Milman, one of the liberal Anglican historians who succeeded the Milners, would have taken issue with the Milners' philosophy of history. Though the liberals would have been in agreement with the idea of history as a cycle, it is a cycle that led to progress and not decline: 'If, therefore, history is fundamentally rhythmical, and the fact of progress plain to Christian eyes, the pattern of universal history must be a series of forward steps, each cycle of national history representing, so far as true progress is concerned, an advance on its predecessor, and this must be God's plan in the unfolding of his purpose. True progress, then, is a gradual advance, through the childhood-manhood rhythm of nations, towards the final goal of God's purpose which is not given us to see. Progress is a perfection of the things of the spirit, and "progress" can only be cyclical on the lower plane, where, maturity passes over into a new barbarism. In so far as a period is in advance of its predecessor, it is so where the things of the spirit are concerned, for here alone is true progress'. Duncan Forbes, The Liberal Anglican Idea of History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952), pp. 65-66.

How deplorably deficient Milner was in the learning requisite for his undertaking, and how he disguised this want by taking his quotations from other writers, such as Fleury and Dupin...Nor is the limited range of Milner's imagination, his inability to understand or sympathize with any other than one special modification of the Christian character, expressing itself under a particular form of words, less injurious to his history.⁸³

But it was left to the searing pen of Samuel Roffey Maitland to launch the most devastating attack on the scholarship undergirding the History in the 1830's. In two letters to H.J. Rose, Maitland presented evidence of glaring errors present in the History. In his first letter to Hugh James Rose, Maitland distanced himself from the accusation that he had carried out a personal vendetta against Milner or any other person or cause that could be potentially harmed by the severity of the criticism that he intended to deliver. Maitland wrote,

I purpose, if it please God, to shew by a further examination of the book, and by reference to other parts of it, that it is extremely incorrect and defective; and that we may, without being openly and avowedly, or secretly and basely, enemies of the Gospel, or of Milner, or of Calvinism, or of the Evangelical, or of any other party, form a very low estimate of its value.⁸⁴

Maitland then proceeded not only to disprove Milner's claim to have made use of original authors in order to establish his dependence upon modern historians for his material, but also to expose his ignorance of primary source material and the subsequent conclusions he reached about past periods of history, as in the case of the tenth century.⁸⁵ As well as the incorrectness of his information (due either to scribal error, or faulty scholarship), Maitland believed Milner had deliberately altered source material in order to make it conform to his own doctrinal viewpoint. For example, in the story of Theodoret which recounted the actions of some Christian soldiers, Maitland argued that Milner altered Fleury's account in which

'one of them, having taking a cup, before he drank, made the sign of the cross' to read '...going afterwards to their meals, called on the name of Jesus Christ, according to their custom'.

Maitland's comment followed:

I hope I am not uncharitable, but I dare not suppress the suspicion, that Milner thought there was something popish in their making the sign of the cross; and that therefore it was better to sink that part of the story; or rather, to give the whole narrative in such a way as might allow his readers to suppose that these Christians of the fourth century 'called on the name of Christ' on their going to meals, in the same way as his readers might have done. To say nothing worse of it, this petty blinking of truth makes papists

⁸³Hare, Charge, p. 47.

⁸⁴Maitland, Letter to Rose, pp. iii-iv.

⁸⁵In contrast to the few sources Milner referred to for the tenth century, Maitland noted that Du Pin had supplied a number of writers whose work could shed light on this century. Thus, Maitland asked, 'Du Pin would furnish a list of eighty-six writers of this century - some of them, to be sure, little more than names, some hard to get at, and some, perhaps, quite out of reach - but does it appear that Milner ever saw one? that he ever looked into a single writer of the tenth century, to see whether there might not be something to his purpose, which the defective historians had passed over?' Maitland, Letter to Rose, pp. 8-9.

despise us, and leads protestants into errors which disgrace them, and injure their cause.⁸⁶

Such a poor presentation in the name of scholarship could only lead Christians to a false understanding of the history of their faith, and add to the scorn poured by those who despised the Church upon individuals such as Martin Luther who had devoted their lives to the furthering of the Gospel.

B. Theology

Scholarship remained not the only area of weakness with which critics took issue. A dissenting Evangelical like John Cockin failed to appreciate Milner's irenic spirit which made him superficial and indistinct in marking the rise and progress of ecclesiastical domination; and tender and indulgent towards some of the innovations and corruptions of the bishops of Rome.⁸⁷

Furthermore, his anxiety to show Luther's desire to remain a loyal son of the establishment (perhaps as much a reflection of Milner's concern that he, too, be considered a loyal member of the ecclesiastical establishment) conflicted with the candid information about Luther's relentless censures of Duke George of Saxony and King Henry the Eighth. In conclusion, Cockin remarked,

After all the pains which churchmen have taken to assimilate this eminent reformer to themselves, it is palpably evident that he was distinguished by all the characteristics of a dissenter of the old school.⁸⁸

In other words, certain Evangelicals and Dissenters did not take kindly to what they understood as Milner's conservative ecclesiology and took exception to his defence of Luther as a loyal son of the Church.

In his first letter to Rose, Maitland remarked that if the primary purpose of Milner's work was to inculcate doctrine then it mattered not if the historian made use of original sources or modern writers, whether he understood his authorities, or whether his facts concerning events and persons were factually correct. Thus, Maitland could say of Milner's work,

If, I say, the admirers of Milner are prepared to maintain this, I shall not wonder to find that his History has great value in their eyes; though even then - looking upon it merely as a work which may be used to inculcate doctrine - I shall venture to say that it is most feeble, superficial, and defective.⁸⁹

VI. The Criticism in Context

Such were the criticisms of the Milners' nineteenth-century opponents. It would be fair to

⁸⁶Maitland, A Second Letter to the Rev. Hugh James Rose, B.D. Containing Notes on Milner's History of the Church in the Fourth Century (London: J.G. and F. Rivington, 1835), p. 28.

⁸⁷Cockin, Reflections, p. 135.

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 137.

⁸⁹Maitland, Letter to Rose, p. v.

say that the charges of poor scholarship were levelled primarily at the first volumes of the work; the sections on Luther and the Reformation, primarily the work of Isaac, escaped relatively unscathed. Hugh James Rose warned his divinity scholars of the defective scholarship of the History but at the same time commended the latter volumes to his students for their presentation of Luther.⁹⁰ Still, a liberal borrowing from secondary source material and inattention to detail must be acknowledged in criticism of the History's value as an historical sourcebook.

In presenting this History, the Milners had warned their readers not to use the standards of their age to judge those of another. Perhaps Maitland and his contemporaries were too close to the revolution in historical scholarship erupting around them to allow their predecessors much latitude. Even a brief acquaintance with historiographers of late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Britain reveals the constraints under which historians worked. The historiographer J.W. Thompson judged that the state of historical writing in England in 1800 was probably worse in England than anywhere else in Europe, excepting Spain.⁹¹ Source material for the writing of national history in England was largely inaccessible, and little or no effort had been made to organize and systematize records. As late as 1835, the German Frederick von Raumer was dismayed to find during a visit to archives housed in the Chapter House, Westminster,

an immense number of old chronicles and rotuli, or rolls of paper in the shape of large Swiss cheeses. Much as Sir F. Palgrave has done, the greater part of these are still unexamined and unknown.⁹²

Further, von Raumer's authority, Lord Brougham, had urged for improvements in the teaching of history, for nowhere in Britain was the subject properly taught.⁹³ Sharon Turner had attempted in 1800 to found a Record Commission, though his dream was not realized until 1836 with the appointment of the second Record Commission which represented 'the first substantial efforts to rescue valuable manuscripts'.⁹⁴

In assessing the Milner History on the basis of its scholarship, one must acknowledge that its authors were not born into an age that regarded intense original historical research to be the essence of good and faithful historical writing. David Hume had relied heavily on chronicles and

⁹⁰'But when a book of purer and wider Christian views than Milner's is written, his, which has no intrinsic value, and could never be appealed to by any person capable of judging for himself as an authority, will sink totally into merited neglect, with the exception of the admirable life of Luther, written not by him, but by his vigorous and powerful-minded brother'. Rose, Church History, p. 42.

⁹¹J.W. Thompson, A History of Historical Writing, 2 vols. (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1942), vol. II, p. 280.

⁹²Frederick von Raumer, England in 1835, trans. Sarah Austin, 3 vols. (London: John Murray, 1836), vol. I, p. 102.

⁹³Ibid., vol. II, p. 49.

⁹⁴Thompson, Historical Writing, vol. II, pp. 286-87.

histories⁹⁵ that were close at hand, and Edward Gibbon had used the best of his printed resources: of his methodology, as one critic wrote,

He had little interest in research in manuscripts. He had a lofty idea of the historian as the architect of a great literary and scholarship enterprise, and only supreme contempt for the mere copyist or research clerk, who has become the historian par excellence in our day.⁹⁶

Historical accuracy was not disregarded, but at the same time, not exalted. What remained a priority was the tracing of underlying motives and causes which would instruct the reader to better, more responsible living. Facts about the past were dead unless they inspired life in the present.

Given this context, then, it should be no surprise to see the Milners vowing fidelity to original source material while making extensive use of the work of preceding historians. This necessity of leaning heavily on the works of others became crucial for the German Reformation. Though Luther's writings had been circulated in the early days of the continental Reformation, as Rupp noted, succeeding generations in England displayed not much more than a fleeting interest in the German Reformation.⁹⁷ Milner's need, as noted in the History, to turn to sources overseas for sources demonstrates the paucity of Luther material, let alone interpretational work, in England. In making use of the work of historians like von Seckendorf, Father Paul, Maimbourg and Mosheim, Milner had recourse to what was available on the continental Reformation in a language he could read, in his time. The end result was the presentation of the most extensive collection of Luther and his writings to the general English reading public compiled and interpreted by an English hand to his time. Despite its faults and failings, particularly in the light of modern historical scholarship, the Milners must be commended for this accomplishment.

VII. Milner and the High Church Controversies

But it is undoubtedly its position as a standard historical text with its unique presentation of Martin Luther that provoked some interest in the Milner History during the high church controversies of the 1830's and 1840's. The Tractarians had understood the key to restoring the Church to health was to recall her to 'the faith of the Bible and Father of the undivided Church

⁹⁵'Not for him the laborious consultation of manuscripts and ponderous folios'. Peardon, Transition, p. 23.

⁹⁶Harry Elmer Barnes, A History of Historical Writing, 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1937), p. 159.

⁹⁷Rupp, Righteousness, p. 37. A.G. Dickens attributes this ^{lack} of interest in Luther and the continental Reformation movements to British insularity: 'As for the Anglicans', Dickens wrote, 'their belief in an autonomous and self-explaining English Reformation has notoriously lingered into our day'. A.G. Dickens and John Tonkin, The Reformation and Historical Thought (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), pp. 100-101.

before the Reformation and Counter-Reformation divided it'⁹⁸; the Evangelicals, while fostering a high regard for the early Church, found their champions in Luther and other Reformers, whose recovery of Evangelical doctrine meant the difference between vital, and lifeless Christianity. The Tractarian response to the Evangelical solution in its repudiation of Luther and his theology is well-known, and need only be briefly referred to here. In a series of articles run in the British Critic in the early 1840's, W.G. Ward rained condemning pronouncements on Lutheran theology and judged that no heresy had

ever prevailed so subtle and extensively poisonous. It is not only that it denies some one essential doctrine of the Gospel (as, e.g. inherent righteousness); this all heresies do: it is not only that it corrupts all sound Christian doctrine, nay the very principle of orthodoxy itself.⁹⁹

Picking up the thread of previously-expressed Anglican anxiety about Lutheran theology, some Tractarians maintained that an ill-conceived doctrine of justification had led the Lutheran movement inexorably down the path of antinomianism: echoes of this earlier concern can be heard in Ward's call for discussion of Luther's famed doctrine because it

formally denies the truth, which seems to me the key to all moral and religious knowledge, and which accordingly I lately mentioned as the leading idea of the present work; the truth, namely that careful moral discipline is the necessary foundation, whereon alone Christian faith can be reared.¹⁰⁰

William P. Haugaard coupled this Tractarian distrust of Luther's antinomian dress with the judgement that ecclesiastical authority had been usurped by reason under Luther's auspices to illustrate how a common Tractarian belief attributed Luther with fathering the age of rationalism: 'the enemy which struck at the twin roots of scriptural revelation and church dogma'.¹⁰¹

Edward Bouverie Pusey stands as the notable exception to the Tractarian disparagement of Luther. Not only had he learned German¹⁰², but he had read Luther and in 1828, praised him as the greatest Christian since St. Paul.¹⁰³ A.P. Stanley believed that Pusey ran the only German

⁹⁸Sheridan Gilley, Newman and His Age (London: Dartman, Longman and Todd, 1990), p. 165.

⁹⁹Quoted in William P. Haugaard, 'A Myopic Curiosity: Martin Luther and the English Tractarians', Anglican Theological Review 66 (1984), p. 396.

¹⁰⁰W.G. Ward, The Ideal of a Christian Church considered in comparison with Existing Practice, containing a Defense of Certain Articles in the British Critic, 2nd ed. (London: James Toovey, 1844), p. ix.

¹⁰¹Haugaard, 'Myopic', p. 395.

¹⁰²Dean William R. Inge attributed a serious lack of knowledge of continental theological thought in England to ignorance of German. Outspoken Essays (London: Longman, Green and Co., 1919), p. 183.

¹⁰³Leighton Frappell, 'Science in the Service of Orthodoxy: The Early Intellectual Development of E.B. Pusey' in Pusey Rediscovered, ed. by Perry Butler (London: SPCK, 1983), p. 12.

professorial classroom in Oxford; further, he held Luther's doctrine of the Eucharist to be the orthodox Catholic one.¹⁰⁴ Still, Luther's popularity with Pusey was not long-lived. In 1853, he informed his congregation that 'the exclusion of Lutheran statements from our Articles are more instructive than what we have taken from them'.¹⁰⁵ He also traced the roots of rationalism to Luther.¹⁰⁶ Thus, Newman's scathing condemnation of the Lutheran movement remains a clear summary of the main Tractarian concerns:

Away then with this modern, this private, this arbitrary, this unscriptural system which promising liberty conspires against it; which abolishes Christian Sacraments to introduce barren and dead ordinances; and for the real participation of the Son, and justification through the Spirit, would, at the very marriage feast, feed us on shells and husks, who hunger and thirst after righteousness.¹⁰⁷

Such categorical condemnation of Luther by those who, when viewed from the perspective of a new ecumenical age, could be seen to have shared a significant number of Luther's concerns and values, is disappointing. As Haugaard suggests, the affirmation of a traditional liturgy, weekly attendance upon the Eucharist, baptism as a vehicle for God's grace, the value of auricular confession, the regular use of credal symbols in worship and the propriety of using visual and musical art to enhance communal worship were aspects of Lutheran teaching and practice with which most Tractarians could identify, and appreciate.¹⁰⁸ But few did.

One voice, however, was not content to be silent amidst the Tractarian deluge of anti-Lutheran sentiment. Like Pusey, Julius Charles Hare had learned German from a tutor in Weimar, and was an example of a rare Anglican who could claim an authentic and intimate acquaintance with Luther and his theology. Disturbed by those churchmen who so passionately sought to 'depreciate and to counteract the work of Reformation'¹⁰⁹, Hare sought to defend Luther from their aspersions. In doing so, he identified an important source of the Tractarian problem with understanding Luther: they had failed to acquaint themselves with Luther himself. Thus, Hare could complain,

But one comes every now and then to indications which would incline one to suppose that the Confession of Augsburg can never have been heard of by most of the writers in the new Oxford School of Theology. So pertinaciously do they draw their notions of what they term Lutheranism from English writers of our so-called Evangelical

¹⁰⁴Robert Harvie Greenfield, 'Such a Friend to the Pope', in Butler, *Pusey*, p. 164.

¹⁰⁵Edward Bouverie Pusey, *Justification: A Sermon Preached before the University at St. Mary's* (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1853), p. 15.

¹⁰⁶Frappell, 'Service of Orthodoxy', p. 15.

¹⁰⁷John Henry Newman, *Lectures on the Doctrine of Justification*, 3rd ed. (London: Rivington's, 1874), p. 57.

¹⁰⁸Haugaard, 'Myopic', p. 393.

¹⁰⁹Julius Charles Hare, *Vindication of Luther* (London: John W. Parker, and Son, 1855), p. 74.

School, ascribing the opinions which they find in those writers, in the gross to Luther, - or else from Romish polemics, from gossip pickt up no matter how or where, from everything except its one genuine source, the Symbolical Books.¹¹⁰

As noted above, Milner performed a commendable service by making Luther accessible to the Christian reading public of his day. But there is little doubt that he employed Luther to the furthering of his own theological aims,¹¹¹ and if the Tractarians and others of their generation failed to do their homework, it is no wonder that Luther was misunderstood by those who were advocates of a Catholic reform. Newman, for one, had not delved deeply into the works of Luther,¹¹² and it is not difficult to conclude that others would have been content with confining their reading of Luther and his work to secondary sources.

Those intent upon an Evangelical reform without the counterbalancing Catholic concern were bound to present an incomplete picture of Luther. Thus, Milner's severe censure of Luther for his disagreement with Zwingli over the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist,¹¹³ and the minimizing of the differences between a reformed and Lutheran understanding of this sacrament, deprived Newman and his colleagues of a view of Luther for whom the Eucharist was an occasion in which 'the body and blood of Christ are truly and substantially present and are truly offered with those things that are seen, bread and wine'.¹¹⁴ This divergence was not a point of minor theological disagreement, as Milner portrayed it, but to Luther, was crucial to the life of the Christian community. Luther would have heartily agreed that the abstraction of Christ's real presence from the visible words of the sacraments (as opposed to the spoken word), made them into the empty husks and shells Newman declared the Lutheran sacraments to be. The insistence on Christ's real presence in the sacraments was integral to the Lutheran doctrine of justification by faith alone. It protected against subjective pronouncements of self-justification by insisting on

¹¹⁰Hare, Vindication, p. 96. Yngve Brilioth attributed the Tractarians' dependence upon Evangelicalism to the limitations of their theological training, thus allowing them 'to treat Luther as the great champion of a subjective religion, who left people in bondage to their own feelings'. Three Lectures on Evangelicalism and the Oxford Movement (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934), p. 9.

¹¹¹Alexander Knox was convinced that in regards to his promotion of the doctrine of justification by faith, Milner had 'impute[d] more of his own favourite orthodoxy to the ancients, than they were entitled to'. Remains of Alexander Knox, Esq., 4 vols. (London: James Duncan, 1834), vol. I, p. 259.

¹¹²Gilley, Newman, p. 169; Alister McGrath, Iustitia Dei, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), vol. II, pp. 126-130. Note, however, that references in Newman's Lectures on Justification suggest that he had read Luther's Commentary on the Galatians in Latin.

¹¹³Milner believed that through this disagreement with Zwingli, Luther had provoked an unnecessary and harmful split within the Protestant community of the Reformation age. History, vol. V, p. 396.

¹¹⁴Theodore Tappert, ed. and trans., 'Apology of the Augsburg Confession':10:4, The Book of Concord (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959).

the externality of the Word of God which declares one's justification from outside the self.¹¹⁵ Further, using the doctrine of justification as a means of identifying the true Church with what Milner understood was by and large an invisible Church compromised the Lutheran affirmation of a visible Church that 'actually exists, made up of true believers and righteous men scattered throughout the world'.¹¹⁶ Finally, Milner's eagerness to forge an essentially complete identification of the Lutheran reform movement with other continental reform movements, though Calvinism in particular, set the stage for the development of a significant Anglican misunderstanding of what Luther would have understood as important theological differences between his and other reform movements. Though the quote is lengthy, the following thoughts taken from J.B. Mozley's essay on Luther effectively illustrate the Anglican tendency to lump all continental Protestants in the same ball:

Such is that whole system which amongst ourselves, goes under the name of Calvinism. It is, of course, wrong, historically speaking, to call Luther a Calvinist, because Luther preceded Calvin, and was the original discoverer of that set of ideas which Calvin only compacted and systematised. But, amongst ourselves, in consequence of our acquaintance having lain more with the Genevan than the German branch of the Reformation, these ideas are associated with the name of Calvin, and, therefore, amongst us, Luther's theology may be designated as Calvinism. No greater contrast, indeed, than that between the personal characters of the German and the Genevan Reformer can be well imagined, and the types of character they have handed down to their respective schools are widely distinct, but their theology is essentially the same.¹¹⁷

Tractarian views of Luther and his theology exerted a deep influence upon the Anglican perception of Lutheranism for the succeeding century and a half. While they cannot be held entirely responsible, the Milner and other Evangelicals' repression of Luther's commitment to an evangelical catholic reform of the church called forth a distorted picture of Lutheranism that

¹¹⁵Thus the word that Jesus lives does not occur as a mere conveyance of information, but as a word that includes such addresses as, "This piece of bread is the living Jesus; take," thereby pinning me each time anew to what does not come from me, but is out there in the world and comes to me from it. In the estimate of the Lutheran reformers, however earnestly Zwingli and those like him set out to praise the justification brought by the gospel, their "spiritual" understanding of the gospel-event [the sacraments] invariably perverted that praise into praise of our faith and into talk of the interior conditions we must fulfill'. Eric W. Gritsch and Robert W. Jenson, Lutheranism: The Theological Movement and Its Confessional Writings (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), p. 82.

¹¹⁶Tappert, 'Apology of the Augsburg Confession':7-8:20. W.H. Proby maintained that Milner's doctrine of the Church succeeded in creating two Churches: 'Thus it will be seen that he implicitly denied an Article of the Faith. He denied the existence of that Catholic Church whereof the Creed speaks, and he substituted for it a Church of his own imagining. And thus, no doubt, he contributed in no small degree to confirm the Low-Church party generally in this heresy, wherein he and they shared in common'. Annals of the "Low-Church" Party in England, 2 vols. (London: J.T. Hayes, 1888), vol. I, p. 205.

¹¹⁷J.B. Mozley, Essays: Historical and Theological, 2 vols. (London: Rivington's, 1878), vol. I, p. 350.

current ecumenical dialogue and rapprochement still strives to correct.

VIII. The History of the Church of Christ: Accomplishments

A. Evangelical Context: The Doctrine of Justification by Faith Alone

Of great importance for the purposes of determining the significance of Martin Luther and the doctrine of justification in Milner's work are his claims to uniqueness in the presentation of both the broad subject of church history, and of the Saxon reformer. As stated before, from the opening pages of the History, Milner asserted that he was offering something new to his readers; something that was legitimated because it was new, and would, in fact, make up deficiencies that could be identified in previous attempts to write ecclesiastical history. And yet, it must be acknowledged that John Newton, whose A Review of Ecclesiastical History appeared in 1770, proposed a plan to which Milner's bears a notable resemblance. Contrary to previous histories, Newton aimed to

open a more pleasing prospect, to point out, by a long succession of witnesses, the native tendency and proper influence of the religion of Jesus; to produce the concurring suffrage of different ages, people and languages, in favour of what the wisdom of the world rejects and reviles; to bring unanswerable proofs that the doctrine of grace is a doctrine according to godliness, that the constraining love of Christ is the most powerful motive to obedience, that it is the property of true faith to overcome the world, and that the true church and people of Christ have endured his cross in every age; the enemy has thrust sore at them that they might fall, but the Lord has been their refuge and support; they are placed upon a rock that cannot be shaken, they are kept *ῥησυσπυκνεῖν* guarded and garrisoned by the power of God, and therefore the gates of Hell have not, cannot, shall not, prevail against them.¹¹⁸

Like Milner, Newton was interested in tracing the operations of the Spirit and would, with his successor, maintain that these events must be told with fidelity to the facts. Luther's reformation should be held as the most successful and extensive of the medieval reformers, and his primary purpose was to do nothing less than

vindicate the doctrines of the Reformation, or, in other words, the main doctrines taught in the articles and homilies of the Church of England, from those unjust and disingenuous invectives which are every day cast upon them, by not a few who owe all their distinction and authority to their having solemnly engaged to defend them.¹¹⁹

Further, Newton identified the doctrine of justification by faith as the criterion used by Luther to judge a church 'flourishing or falling',¹²⁰ and may have given the Milners their idea of presenting church history as a history of this fundamental doctrine. James Stephen made clear the connection between Newton's work and the Milners', and suggested that Newton gave Joseph Milner the idea for his history. In his Review, Newton did not get beyond the events of the first century, but his

¹¹⁸Newton, Ecclesiastical History, pp. xvii-xviii.

¹¹⁹Ibid., p. xvi.

¹²⁰John Newton, The Works of the Rev. John Newton, 6 vols. (London: For the Author's Nephew, 1808), vol. IV, p. 523.

stated plan and regard for Luther, as well as for the importance of the German Reformation, were similar to the Milners'.

The work of Johannes Mosheim, which Milner expressly identified as an example of woefully inadequate historical writing, also bore similarities to Milner's. One cannot help but become suspect that Milner borrowed from Mosheim when one encounters commentary such as the following in Maclaine's translation of Mosheim's account of the German Reformation:

The light of the Reformation spread itself far and wide; and almost all the European states welcomed its salutary beams, and exulted in the prospect of an approaching deliverance from the yoke of superstition and spiritual despotism.¹²¹

Mosheim clearly regarded Luther as a key figure within church history, and the Reformation and its recovery of Evangelical doctrine as that event which changed the course of European history. Although Mosheim's presentation of history differs from that of Milner, they nonetheless converge in their aims. Mosheim wrote:

Ecclesiastical History is a clear and faithful narration of the transactions, revolutions, and events, that relate to that large community, which bears the name of JESUS CHRIST, and is vulgarly known under the denomination of the CHURCH. It comprehends both the external and internal condition of this community, and so connects each event with the causes from which it proceeds, and the instruments which have been concerned in its production, that the attentive reader may be led to observe the displays of providential wisdom and goodness in the preservation of the church, and thus find his piety improved, as well as his knowledge.¹³¹

By such examples of pious and faithful disciples, the history of the Church serves to 'inflamm our piety, and to excite, even in the coldest and most insensible hearts, the love of God and virtue'.¹³²

It is clear, then, that before the publication of the Milner work, histories of the Church were being circulated within Evangelical circles that were not only based on plans resembling the Milners' outline, but also assigned to Martin Luther a predominant role in the history of the church. Milner's purpose in offering a corrective to Mosheim's work indicated he knew his scholarship, and it is doubtful, even if Milner did not receive express encouragement from Newton to undertake his project, that he would not have known the work of the one whom Stephen described with Milner, Venn and Scott as cornerstones of the Evangelical church of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.¹³³

¹²¹Johannes Mosheim, An Ecclesiastical History, Ancient and Modern, A. Maclaine, trans., New ed., 6 vols. (London: T. Cadell, 1790), vol. IV, p. 78.

¹³¹Mosheim, History, vol. I, p. 1.

¹³²Ibid., p. 12.

¹³³Stephen, Essays, vol. II, p. 99.

B. Evangelical Accomplishment

Still, one wishes to take Milner's claim to uniqueness at his word, and so, the burning question that remains to be answered is this: Why did good, moderate Calvinists like Joseph and Isaac Milner choose to resurrect Luther, and then proclaim his doctrine of justification by faith as central to their new presentation of the course of Christian history? As Walsh pointed out, Milner treated predestined election only sparingly, and as a non-essential, and both the History and sermons suggest the brothers favoured a doctrine of general rather than particular redemption. Calvin received virtually no coverage whatsoever, and should Milner's reader never pick up another history of the Church, he might believe that Luther had been the sole actor on the Reformation stage.¹³⁴ Yngve Brilioth made note of this lack of reference to Calvin:

With him this Calvinist colouring seems to have disappeared and Lutheran influence to have been predominant. Milner's 'History of the Church of Christ' aimed at giving a history of the Christian Religion, not of doctrinal controversies. The point of view from which he arranges his subjects is the doctrine of justification by faith alone, apparently in a purely Lutheran form, as the sign and seal of true Christianity. He proposes to show how it was the open or concealed source of strength to the Fathers of the Church and the Saints in all ages.¹³⁵

One answer to this question lies in the constant Milner concern to distance the Evangelical Christianity they served from a hard line Calvinism associated with Puritanism and fanaticism. Understanding Martin Luther to be the exemplary moderate Calvinist they all should emulate, Evangelical theology and history could afford to be identified under the guise of Luther and his reform. Though it is doubtful that the accomplishment of such an aim was worth the effort of producing a work of the length of the History, the Milners had come upon an association far less provocative than an acknowledgement of their Calvinistic roots, if only because it was that much less known, and this cannot be discounted as a possible factor in the Milner fascination with Luther and German reform.

Integral to understanding the crucial role Milner assigned to this Lutheran doctrine lies in his understanding of history. In reflecting upon the view of history current amongst his contemporaries, Joseph Milner made the following observation:

It seems to be commonly believed that there is a natural and gradual progression in religious knowledge, as in all human arts and sciences; that each age must necessarily be wiser than that which preceded it; that the era of the Reformation was only the infancy of theology; that great improvements were made by the divines of the seventeenth century, but that the eighteenth century bids fair for advancing the science to perfection, on account of the labours of certain ingenious and philosophical persons, who hope to emancipate it from the fetters of scholastic jargon, and fix it on the solid foundation of reason and truth.¹³⁶

¹³⁴Walsh, 'Milner's Church History', pp. 177-78.

¹³⁵Yngve Brilioth, The Anglican Revival (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1933), p. 35.

¹³⁶Joseph Milner, 'Remarks on the History of Religion', Selection, p. 297.

History develops as an organism both in terms of complexity and accomplishments. The discoveries and knowledge of a previous generation may certainly be the rough materials for the ideas and accomplishments of a later time, though one will certainly expect that the knowledge of posterity will be deeper and the technology greatly improved. Significant events and ideas, as they evolve through the years, may bear very little resemblance to what has preceded them. As such, succeeding generations may relegate past accomplishments, ideas and events to the annals of time, a few with gratitude and others with an amused wink.

For Milner, however, 'Christ, his Gospel, and human nature, are the same in all ages'.¹³⁷ The message of the Gospel did not change nor did the basic human character of those who have heard and have chosen to follow that Gospel. John Walsh further expanded upon Milner's conception of history in this way:

Despite his belief that he had made allowance for the individuality of other ages, the orthodoxies, problems and viewpoints of ancient and medieval Christendom were the same as those of the eighteenth-century: Evangelicals, Philosophers and Dissenters much the same then as now.¹³⁸

Christians of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries did not confront anything that had not been faced before in the history of Christianity. The study of history, then recommended itself in a particular way within the Christian community. For Milner, Walsh stated,

History was more than a branch of polite learning; it led to more than 'mere conclusions respecting civil government, civil liberty and certain improvements of human society.' For God was at work in his world to-day as in biblical times: in the pages of secular history one could see the world still under Providence and Judgment...And if history taught us much of the character of God, it showed even more clearly the character of man; it forcibly disproved the optimistic view of human nature current among eighteenth-century philosophers. Some writers, said Milner, following the Epicureans, had looked at man's senses and called him a beast: others, following the Stoics had looked at his reason and called him a God, but the Bible alone showed us post-lapsarian man as he really was, in all his glory and shame, a creature retaining tragic remains of pristine greatness 'in the beauty and force of his intellectual endowments', but by the fatal legacy of the Fall corrupted with a moral taint that brought the grandest of his schemes to ruin.¹³⁹

That the Church had often succumbed to the tempting corruptions caused by the Fall is obvious from the opening pages of the History. And though the effusions of the Spirit would surely come to water a parched and withered Church, Milner nonetheless saw his own age to be wallowing in its depravity:

The decline from the principles of the Reformation has been general in the kingdom ever since the Restoration. Its real doctrines are despised as fanatical and sectarian; and the Reviewers, at the same time that they themselves are carried away by the general

¹³⁷Milner, Works, vol. VII (1819), Practical Sermons, p. 147.

¹³⁸Walsh, 'Milner's Church History', p. 185.

¹³⁹Ibid., pp. 175-76.

torrent, aid its progress, and facilitate its course.¹⁴⁰

Given such a view of history, then, Milner and his companions did not need to despair at the state of the Church as it existed, but rather, saw in their society similarities to the societies of Luther and St. Paul. And although the Socinians and the Arians, the infidels and the nominal Christians of their day might have borne different names in a previous age, they were, nonetheless, the same corruptors of the Church that had confronted the saints of old. Christians of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries did not have to deal with anything that had not been faced before in the history of the Church of Christ. The high Arianism of Eusebius became the substance of the Trinitarian doctrine of Samuel Clarke.¹⁴¹ Pelagianism was nothing more than a revived Deism (natural religion) which Milner could detect in his own day as Socinianism.¹⁴² The lapsed of Cyprian's congregations were in tandem with their successors who wished to hear nothing preached but comfort: 'by finding fault with ministers who dare not speak false peace; - and by unsoundly healing themselves'.¹⁴³ Contemporary dissenters could find their spiritual forebears in any number of groups including the Novatians and the Cathari. With the identification of such historical parallels, Milner concluded:

Thus it appears that heresies are revived, from age to age, with new names, and under new dresses, carrying the appearance of something original, and not allowed to be the same things which had been long ago exploded and refuted.¹⁴⁴

Just as it would be reasonable to expect that such corruption occurred from age to age, so it would not be unreasonable to expect that the remedy that was successful once will be successful once again.

Fundamental to Milner's appreciation of Luther's contribution was the Reformer's recovery of the doctrine of the justification alone. It is that gift of God to the world that determines the vitality of Christ's Church. In his discussion of the central place this doctrine holds in the ministry of St. Paul, Milner asserted,

It will be proper for us to bear in mind the Apostle's reasonings on this subject, and to apply them to every period of Church-history; since it is evident, that the rise or fall of this great Christian article, must determine the vigour or decline of true religion in all ages.¹⁴⁵

To the Church, God granted the saving knowledge that the way of salvation lay with the

¹⁴⁰Milner, 'The Treatment which Methodism', *Selection*, p. 211.

¹⁴¹Milner, *History*, vol. II, p. 61.

¹⁴²*Ibid.*, pp. 374, 386.

¹⁴³*Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 361.

¹⁴⁴*Ibid.*, p. 396.

¹⁴⁵*Ibid.*, p. 60.

acceptance of the 'real Gospel of remission of sins through Christ alone received by faith'¹⁴⁶ as a treasure to be guarded and preserved.

But the Gospel, as summarized in the doctrine of justification by faith alone, goes entirely against human nature as it emerged from the ravages of the Fall. 'The doctrine', Milner stated, 'has indeed nothing in human nature to befriend it'¹⁴⁷; therefore, it faces a continual onslaught from the human will that refuses to allow God to be the Saviour He has promised He will be. Thus, from Luther, Milner conveyed to his generation that this doctrine must be proclaimed rightly. Throughout history, some men and women have proclaimed this Gospel purely while others have not. Discernment of what is and what is not the Gospel is a difficult task, and a study of the history of the Church can only reveal how easily the Church had fallen short of faithful proclamation. Milner believed that preaching after the Restoration failed to convey the Gospel and that 'men were no longer taught in the Church of England to put their whole trust in Christ for salvation'.¹⁴⁸ Faith was not seen as sufficient and the clergy, embroiled in politics and worldly concerns, preached reason and morality as the way of Christian discipleship.¹⁴⁹

And so it was with what he understood to be a Lutheran understanding of the doctrine of justification that Milner drew himself into polemical engagement with those groups he believed to be upholding impure and corrupt versions of this doctrine. Contrary to the views of a seventeenth-century churchman like William Forbes, whose irenic spirit sought to smooth over the difference between the Roman and Protestant parties, Milner maintained that which separates Trent from the protests of the reformers 'is not merely verbal'.¹⁵⁰ As to the formal cause of justification, Milner upheld the imputation of Christ's righteousness and directed to those (both Methodists and Roman Catholics) who judge such a cause to be a grand deception the apologetic that

though Christ be a sinner only in a forensic sense, and sinful men be righteous only in the same way, it causes not the least confusion in my ideas, to retain still the same notion of the inherent personal merits of each, nor will, I suppose, in the ideas of any one who is content with plain Scripture.¹⁵¹

But a doctrine of justification based upon the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the believer in no way lessened the necessity of good works on the part of the redeemed. Rather than leading to antinomianism, justification meant that the lives of the justified were marked by the conduct that shone as evidence of that Spirit, whose work Milner proposed to trace throughout history. The problem with good works, Milner explained, only arose when the Church allowed

¹⁴⁶Milner, *History*, vol. IV, p. 310.

¹⁴⁷Joseph Milner, 'The Christian Doctrine of Justification Recommended', *Selection*, p. 423.

¹⁴⁸Milner, 'Christian Doctrine Recommended', *Selection*, p. 414.

¹⁴⁹See the argument of C.F. Allison, *The Rise of Moralism* (London: SPCK, 1966).

¹⁵⁰Milner, *History*, vol. IV, p. 307.

¹⁵¹Joseph Milner, 'The Scripture Doctrine of Atonement and Justification', *Selection*, p. 226.

these 'evidences to become conditions of salvation'.¹⁵² Even Augustine must be criticized for his apparent misunderstanding of sanctification after the event of justification. Making use of the theological position of the moderate Calvinist, Milner showed that Luther agreed that for those people who attended to the Word of God, if laid upon the foundation of Christ, predestination

was of singular efficacy to dispel that fear, by which men, trembling under the sense of their own unworthiness, are tempted to fly from God, who ought to be our sovereign refuge'.¹⁵³

Finally, human reason, philosophy and excess of learning could not lead one to God, but the whole of salvation must be commended to the work of the Holy Spirit who enlightens, comforts and invigorates the church.

By its forensic nature, Milner also understood from Luther that in order to be effectual, the doctrine of justification by faith alone must be proclaimed purely. The History of the Church of Christ, then, become a kind of proclamation of the Gospel. In the opening pages of his work, Milner asserted his perception of this commission:

We are to describe the rise of a dispensation the most glorious to God, and the most beneficent to man.¹⁵⁴

Given this object as the primary purpose, it is no wonder that historical accuracy and original sources played a secondary role in the composition of the History if, as Maitland suggested, the primary purpose of the work was 'to inculcate certain doctrines'.¹⁵⁵

Thus in order to assist his fellow human beings to come to repentance, Milner held up a mirror which reflected through history the human condition in its depravity, and the Gospel's call to repentance and the humble reception of a lively faith in Christ the Redeemer. To the clergy fell the task of proclaiming this Gospel-doctrine. Rejecting the practice which had developed in the preaching of the seventeenth century to describe justification by faith alone or the moral implications of the doctrine, Milner insisted that the most important commission of Christian pastor was 'to invite men to be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ by faith, according to the article of Justification'.¹⁵⁶ It was only through this proclamation that men and women could come to know Christ's peace and thus, could 'heartily serve God, love their neighbours, and, in general, be fruitful in good works'.¹⁵⁷

Finally, in understanding through Luther that the Christian vocation consisted of a commission to proclaim and to defend the Gospel, Milner also knew that although standing as a

¹⁵²Milner, 'Christian Doctrine Recommended', Selection, p. 410.

¹⁵³Milner, History, vol. IV, p. 332.

¹⁵⁴Ibid., vol. I, p. 1.

¹⁵⁵Maitland, Letter to Rose, p. iv.

¹⁵⁶Milner, 'Christian Doctrine Recommended', Selection, p. 421.

¹⁵⁷Milner, History, vol. IV, p. 423.

body with a commitment to reform the Church may place one in opposition to the establishment, such opposition did not automatically put one outside the body of the Church Catholic. As Luther appealed to the witness of Scripture and the testimony of the saints throughout the ages, so could Milner and other Evangelicals draw upon these sources in undergirding their claim to the continuity with the Christian tradition. Thus, in response to charges that they preached a new Gospel, the Evangelicals could bring to their defence a link with tradition: the same tradition to which their contenders laid claim. With Milner's work in hand, 'everything fell into place, the providential pattern emerged, the perplexed Evangelical found himself equipped with a historical justification'.¹⁵⁸

In the preface to Volume 5, Isaac Milner made the following observation of his age:

Several persons, and even some of our leading Senators, suppose that Popery has long since been abundantly meliorated. But I wish they may not be nearer the truth, who think that the spirit of Protestantism has sadly degenerated. Both these points may receive much illustration from that part of this History which is yet unfinished. In the mean time, the true nature and character of Protestantism, as well as of Popery, ought to be carefully examined, and ascertained with all possible accuracy. And for this purpose, the diligent study of the same memorable period, and especially of the first eight years of it, namely, from 1517 to 1525, will be found peculiarly useful. During these years, Luther stood almost alone; and the documents contained in this and the preceding Volume will leave no doubt on the mind of the inquisitive Reader as to the real motives by which he was actuated. Then the doctrines of Luther are well known to be, in the main, the doctrines of every branch of the Protestant Reformation.¹⁵⁹

To the Milners and other Evangelicals, the Reformation continued. Although time marched on, the challenges and threats which confronted the Church of the first and the sixteenth centuries were the same ones that challenged the Church of the eighteenth century and beyond. Through much of the first sixteen centuries, the Church declined for want of the refreshing vitality of the gospel as proclaimed in the doctrine of justification by faith. To Martin Luther God had commissioned the recovery of this vital doctrine in all its purity and power. Christians of the Milners' time must also apply themselves to the defence of this doctrine, which, when proclaimed rightly, ensured the continuation of Christ's Church. And so, the Milners commended to their generation the study of Martin Luther in a particular and urgent way.

¹⁵⁸Walsh, 'Milner's Church History', p. 175.

¹⁵⁹Milner, *History*, vol. V, p. vii.

Chapter Five: Milner and Theological Controversy

*Again, if this baptismal regeneration be real, by the infusion of habitual grace, how comes it to pass that the greater part of those, who have received it, lead profane and unholy lives, and too, too many perish in their sins?*¹

* * * * *

Isaac Milner disliked controversy and avoided involving himself in many public disputes. Still, two particular issues arose during his lifetime that demanded he take up his pen on behalf of Evangelicals. This chapter, which is divided into two independent sections, examines Milner's contributions to contemporary discussions concerning the sacrament of baptism and the British and Foreign Bible Society.

I. Milner and the Baptism Controversy

A. Introduction

In his study of Evangelicalism in Britain, David Bebbington identified baptism and its relationship to the beginning of the Christian life as the chief theological controversy of the early and mid-nineteenth century.² This claim will hardly surprise the student of Evangelical history. How could the fundamental of the faith which insisted upon the essential though unpredictable operation of the Holy Spirit on the repentant and believing heart to bring forth the converted man, be reconciled with an official rite of the Church which claimed baptism as the indisputable vehicle of this same Spirit's saving action? Though one could rarely, if ever, accuse Evangelicals of devaluing the sacrament of baptism as such, their questioning of its relationship to the initiation and sustenance of the Christian life set the stage for controversy.

1. Richard Mant and Baptismal Regeneration

The culmination of the dispute in the Gorham case of 1847 to 1851 is well-known; the roots of the specifically nineteenth-century controversy are not so visible. During the first decade of the century, Richard Mant, a parish priest in Coggeshall in Essex³ had discovered in the midst of his flock those who claimed to be members of the Church of England but had never been baptized. This basis for church membership did not accord with the understanding of the spiritual leader of

¹Bishop Hopkins quoted by John Scott, An Inquiry into the Effect of Baptism (London: C. Baldwin, 1815), p. 150.

²D.W. Bebbington, Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730's to the 1980's (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), p. 9.

³I am grateful to D. M. Thompson for his fine Hulsean Lectures entitled 'Baptism, Church and Society in Britain Since 1800' (Cambridge University Library, Hulsean Lectures 1983-1984).

the parish, and though it is worth noting that Mant approached the problem as a High Churchman, it is difficult to see that any of the Evangelical clergymen of the period would have viewed the parishioners' position as tenable.

The specifics of Mant's parochial struggles are irrelevant to the discussion at hand; what is important is Mant's delivery in 1812 of the Bampton Lectures in Oxford which were subsequently published in the same year under the title An Appeal to the Gospel.⁴ The lectures addressed a variety of ills afflicting the Church but two were particularly provocative. Published in 1815 as Two Tracts intended to convey Correct Notions of Regeneration and Conversion according to the Sense of Holy Scripture, and of the Church of England⁵, Mant had thrown down the gauntlet: Evangelicals had wrongly rejected the Prayer Book doctrine of baptismal regeneration. In doing so, they had done nothing less than

in some sense to do despite unto the Spirit of grace, and to rob him of his peculiar honour.⁶

Baptism without the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit became an empty and pointless ritual. Those who separated the Spirit's work from the sacrament made a mockery of the avenue declared by God as the necessary road by which those whom would seek to enter the Kingdom must travel. Evangelicals, Mant was convinced, had confused regeneration (meaning a change of state) with renovation (meaning a change in heart), thus leading to a devaluation of the sacrament. 'Of persons such as these', Mant concluded,

regeneration is, as it were, inscribed on their banners, and is one of the watchwords of their sect: regeneration, not the fruit of Christ's holy ordinance of baptism, but the effect of their declamation; not the blessing of a soul, peacefully devoted to Christ's service, but the mark of one zealous in the cause of their party.⁷

Reactions to Mant's accusations were forthcoming. Lengthy discussions about the tracts took place in the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge which had condoned the works by including them on its circulation list. Some pressure was exerted to drop the works from the Society's list, though it lessened with the publication of an edited version of the texts which rendered them 'much less objectionable'.⁸

⁴Richard Mant, An Appeal to the Gospel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1812).

⁵Richard Mant, Two Tracts, intended to convey Correct Notions of Regeneration and Conversion, according to the Sense of Holy Scripture, and of the Church of England, New Ed. (London: F.C. and J. Rivington, 1815).

⁶Ibid., p. 28.

⁷Ibid., p. 23.

⁸Milner, Life, p. 640.

2. John Scott's Response

The earliest and probably most significant response to Mant's work made on behalf of the Anglican Evangelicals, came from the pen of John Scott in his work published in 1815 entitled An Inquiry into the Effect of Baptism, according to the Sense of Holy Scripture and of the Church of England. This work, put forth as indicated by its sub-title as an 'Answer to the Reverend Dr. Mant's Two Tracts on Regeneration and Conversion' attempted to defend the Evangelical wing from Mant's serious accusations that Evangelicals were anything less than loyal churchmen, and certainly not the heterodox fanatics who would "fain fasten THEIR HERESY upon our church, and sedulously labour to propagate it as hers?"⁹ Evangelicals, Scott argued, strove to maintain views of Christian initiation that were consistent with Prayer Book teaching, and faithful to the Biblical witness.

In constructing his argument, Scott maintained that in the earliest days of Christianity, the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit was connected with the rite of baptism; thus, one could refer to the person who had arisen from the waters of baptism as 'born again'. Understandably, the Church had retained the use of this language in describing the effects of baptism but what precisely this language meant remained problematic; in Scott's words, 'different modes of explaining it have been adopted by high authorities'.¹⁰ For some Churchmen such as Bishop Hopkins, baptismal regeneration symbolized entry into the visible communion of Christian believers, but no more. The entitlement to eternal life must be sought in another regeneration, 'independent of the washing by water'.¹¹ Others, like Mant, had seen baptism inextricably tied to the act by which the Holy Spirit brought forth the newly born Christian. This view Scott found to be inconsistent with Scripture and the Anglican theological tradition.

To Scott, regeneration was the term used to denote the experience described in Scripture as the 'quickening of those who were dead in trespasses and sins, a new heart, a new Creature'.¹² It is an event necessitated in the life of the would-be true follower of Christ because of an inherited depraved and corrupt human nature. Regeneration effected a moral renovation by which man was restored to the image of God and thereby enabled to pursue a life characterized by holiness and grace. The Holy Spirit was the operative agent though it could not be said that the Holy Spirit worked indiscriminately; the 'preached and opened' word of God were the ordinary means of effecting the change. It is important to note, then, that the Holy Spirit did not despise

⁹Mant quoted in John Scott, An Inquiry into the Effect of Baptism, according to the Sense of Holy Scripture and of the Church of England (London: C. Baldwin, 1815), p. 3.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 5.

¹¹Hopkins, quoted in Scott, Inquiry, p. 6.

¹²Ibid., p. 16.

ecclesiastical channels but rather used them as an essential means by which God offered salvation to His people.

Scott had no problem viewing this regeneration of the Spirit in connection with the rite of baptism; indeed, baptism stood as an important sign or pledge of the blessings of the Spirit. The problem lay in considering baptism to be the sure and sole means of the Holy Spirit's operation. Though indeed the blessing might be conveyed in the right administration and reception of the sacrament, there was no guarantee that this would be the case. Scott expressed the problem in this way:

But as to its 'entitling us to eternal life,' this we think, in all cases, a misapplication of terms. We make a marked distinction between our title to eternal life, and our 'meetness' for it. Christ, and his 'obedience unto death' in our behalf, embraced by a living faith, constitute our only title to heaven, the sole ground of our admission to that blessed state; though personal holiness is the necessary preparation for it, 'without which no man shall see the Lord'.¹³

The example of Simon Magus stood as a serious corrective to those who would boast of reliance upon baptism alone. But to harness those on the other extreme who would tend to throw out the baptismal baby with the bath water, Scott presented a view of baptism by which one could see the sacrament as the effective channel of the Holy Spirit in a hypothetical sense. For the sincere adult believer, this meant that before the performance of the rite, the Scriptural requirements of faith and repentance would be in place. At the baptism, prayers were read that the candidates 'may be received into the ark of Christ's church' and 'may receive remission of their sins by spiritual regeneration'.¹⁴ Further, the baptismal candidate pledged vows which were supposed to be kept. The Church, then, might suppose that the blessings of baptism would grace the lives of those who had entered into her fellowship in this way. Still, Scott maintained that the very language of these prayers stood as proof that this spiritual change 'may fail of accompanying baptism; else why so earnestly pray, that these persons, "coming to baptism" may have it?'¹⁵

For Scott, the key to understanding the relationship between regeneration and baptism lay in holding together the right administration of the sacrament with its equally important right reception. To his way of thinking, the practice of infant baptism, which he saw to be entirely consistent with adult baptism, clearly demonstrated how the two were inextricably connected. From Scripture, man understood that he must be born of both water and the Spirit. In obedience to Christ's command to wash, children and adults were brought to water baptism. But it was clear to Scott that with children, the prerequisites of faith and repentance were missing. Indeed, the same situation might also apply to adults. Still, these youngsters received baptism. The Church

¹³Scott, Inquiry, p. 17.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 124.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 125.

then exhorted and admonished them, and extracted the same promises from those acting on their behalf as it expected from adults. With these requirements fulfilled, the child might be supposed to be regenerate. But all this was dependent, once the child had come of age, on its actual performance of the vows which were undertaken on its behalf. Should the child in adult years fail to meet these conditions, Scott then concluded

that the spiritual blessing, dependent upon such conditions is, with regard to him, null and void: and that, although, having been admitted into the visible church by the external sign of baptism with water, he needs not to be baptized again, yet without the 'baptism of the Holy Ghost,' without 'spiritual regeneration,' he never can be a member of the spiritual church of Christ, (consisting of all true believers) or come to the kingdom of heaven'.¹⁶

For Scott, baptism was the means by which people were received into God's visible community. An indisputable benefit was that it admitted those who would be genuine followers of Christ to that community of faith where they might hear God's word preached, and thus hope for conversion of heart - the effectual operation of the Holy Spirit. Other benefits of baptism were not denied but could only be predicated hypothetically: in the case of adults, by the sincerity of their profession, and with infants, by the fulfilment of their baptismal vows. Though certainly important, baptism, according to Scott, was not ultimately essential for salvation.

3. Other Evangelical Contributions

Other Evangelical apologists were quick to enter into the dispute, and one can observe the various understandings of baptism held by Evangelicals emerging through the pages of their polemical tracts. George Bugg published a tract in 1816 which he titled Spiritual Regeneration not necessarily connected with Baptism. Through examples drawn from Scripture and liturgy, he argued the danger of resting one's salvation upon external means, and challenged the ideal that early Christianity had always understood that regeneration was infallibly connected to the rite of baptism. Regeneration, which he understood to result in a 'fresh, or new nature'¹⁷ came as a gift of the Holy Spirit whose work cannot be confined to external rites of the Church. The belief that one could look only to baptism as the source of God's saving activity was dangerous for it threatened that the

great numbers of Christian professors, however sincere their repentance, and undisguised their error, and however blameless their lives, or strong their faith, or warm their love, or active their zeal, must of necessity be shut out of heaven, for not having been baptized.¹⁸

¹⁶Scott, Inquiry, pp. 144-145.

¹⁷George Bugg, Spiritual Regeneration not necessarily connected with Baptism (Kettering: T.B. Seeley, 1816), p. 5.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 10.

The problem which Bugg shared with most other Evangelicals was that given the regeneration brought forth a man believed to be born again - a man capable of good works and holy living - the lives of the multitudes of the baptized which did not reflect a moral change served as clear evidence that regeneration did not always accompany baptism.

For Bugg, inextricably binding baptism and regeneration introduced fatalism and the Calvinistic notion of irresistible grace. Though he would not have advocated abandoning the rite, Scriptural evidence and the teaching of the Church provided strong testimony to the contention that baptism was an important moral and public testimony to one's experience of the Spirit, but was in no way essential to salvation.

Like Bugg, Thomas Biddulph also viewed a theology of baptismal regeneration as uncharitable to those who might die without the benefit of baptism through no fault of their own. In his Baptism Seal of the Christian Covenant¹⁹, he maintained the value of baptism as symbolic of, and testimony to, the operation of the Spirit, but nothing more. His Prayer Book definition of baptism ('an outward visible sign OF an inward spiritual grace')²⁰ came close to acknowledging the possibility that the sacrament could be a vehicle for God's grace; still, the sign 'is not the thing signified'²¹. Baptism stood as God's signature to His promise that He had willed salvation to His people but it was no guarantee that the Holy Spirit had been operative. Justification, the means by which the sinner was brought into a right relationship with God, could be effected through the rite of baptism but it must never be confused with regeneration, or sanctification, the beginning of the truly spiritual Christian life.

A third expression of an Evangelical viewpoint concerning baptismal regeneration may be found in two pamphlets by George Nicholson entitled Two Letters²². Mant, Nicholson believed, had mistakenly connected baptism and regeneration with the same event; thus Mant put 'baptism for both the Alpha and the Omega. We say it is Alpha, but not Omega'.²³ Placing the whole of God's saving action within the context of baptism was dangerous as it encouraged recipients of this rite to view their passage to heaven as smooth and all but accomplished. While baptism remained valid as a sign of introduction into the Christian Church, and might even serve as a basis of hope that this life might be lived in a godly fashion, it must be kept separate from regeneration. This gift would be given at God's choosing and could not be limited to a single event; rather, it

¹⁹Thomas Biddulph, Baptism Seal of the Christian Covenant (London: J. Hatchard, 1816).

²⁰Ibid., p. 4.

²¹Ibid., p. 50.

²²George Nicholson Two Letters to the Reverend Dr. Mant (London: E. Thomas, 1816).

²³Ibid., p. 47.

initiated a process by which the baptized person would grow in grace and holiness.²⁴ That baptized children

are full of evil propensities, whether they are heathens, mahometans, quakers, anabaptists, or any other denomination²⁵

stood as powerful evidence that baptism itself was not a vehicle of salvation.

From this survey of the primary responses made to the gauntlet Mant had thrown down to the Evangelicals, we can see various views of the relationship of baptism to regeneration. Most Churchmen affirmed the value of the rite as an external and public sign of an inward transformation already accomplished by the Holy Spirit. Possessing the prerequisite gifts of faith and repentance, the nascent adult Christian could present himself at the font to join himself to God's visible community. Others, like Biddulph and Scott, maintained that the gracious benefits of baptism were conditional, and would become truly effective only when the believer had faith and a repentant heart. Still, it must be acknowledged that Scott came close to the theory of the implantation of a 'principle of new birth',²⁶ as did Henry Ryder in his image of a seed planted in the soul of newly baptized²⁷, and in his suggestion that the sacrament would dispose the baptized child to seek the blessings of God. In the final analysis, most Evangelicals could be said to have refused to equate the human and ecclesiastical rite of baptism with the event of conversion which clearly belonged within the province of the Holy Spirit. Although some would come to the preceding conclusion sooner than others, none of them would hold baptism to be the indispensable sacrament.

B. Isaac Milner and Baptismal Regeneration

1. Milner's Interest in the Controversy

But what of Isaac Milner's voice? It is hard to believe that a man of Milner's intellect and connections would have failed to be aware of one of the most debated topics of his day. Mary Milner contended that her uncle had considered the baptismal controversy 'to involve a principle of the first importance in religion'.²⁸ Still, none of the titles of Milner's published works indicate that he had entered the debate over baptism.

²⁴Nicholson, Two Letters, pp. 64-65.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 67-68.

²⁶Anonymous Member of the Salop District Committee of the SPCK, Dr. Mant's Sermon on Regeneration, Vindicated from the Remarks of the Rev. T.F. Biddulph (Shrewsbury: Eddowes, 1816), p. 53.

²⁷Henry Ryder, A Charge Delivered to the Clergy of the Diocese of Gloucester at the Primary Visitation of that Diocese, in the Year 1816 (Gloucester: Walker and Sons, 1816), p. 20.

²⁸Milner, Life, p. 638.

A survey of his personal books in the Queens' College Library indicates, however, that Milner had deliberately collected the writings of the major contestants in the dispute. What is more, in an article which appeared in the June 1820 number of the Christian Observer, Milner's friend and eulogist, Daniel Wilson, asserted 'the Dean had, at one time, nearly determined to write upon the subject'.²⁹ Ill health, Wilson believed, had prevented Milner from making the major contribution of which he had no doubt that Milner was capable of making.

Still, there were other means besides the publication of a major work through which Milner could contribute to the contemporary discussions about baptism. The writer of Milner's memoir in the Christian Observer deemed the Dean's views on baptismal regeneration important enough to summarize.³⁰ Daniel Wilson noted that Milner had shared with him on several occasions his opinions on this controversial topic, and he judged them worthy to include among the conversational recollections of his friend and mentor. John Scott also consulted Milner on this subject and commended him for the help and instruction Milner's insights gave in light of Scott's work

on a subject which you have repeatedly done me the favour to talk over with me, and which is daily acquiring more interest and importance among us. I hope you will find that I have in some degree profited by what has fallen from you upon it: but I shall be most happy to receive your remarks upon the work, and to take advantage of them, should another edition be called for.³¹

In addition to these conversational recollections, the sermons, manuscript notes and references preserved in the Milner Life indicate what he thought about baptism.

2. Baptism: Rite of Christian Initiation

Probably the most important source of information concerning Milner's baptismal theology is his personally annotated copy of Richard Laurence's reply to Scott entitled The Doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration Contrasted with the Tenets of Calvin.³² Its pages contain the following note as a summary of what Milner thought to be the most important points about baptism. 'I conceive', he wrote

²⁹Christian Observer, vol. XIX (1820), p. 362.

³⁰Ibid., p. 293.

³¹Milner, Life, p. 638.

³²Richard Laurence, The Doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration Contrasted with the Tenets of Calvin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1815). Mary Milner noted the existence of this annotated copy in the Milner Life (p. 639), but such a hint, though valuable, is not a guarantee that the work would still be accessible some one hundred fifty years later. I am grateful to the perseverance and enthusiasm of former Queens' College librarian, Mr Iain Wright, whose willingness to try 'one last place' unearthed the desired volume: Queens' College, Old Library, B.12.44.

that in adults the substance of regeneration has actually taken place before baptism; but as the rebirth is said to require both water + the Spirit, it maybe too much to say that the N.B. may be completed without Water, that is without Bapt'm + this would be true, even tho' Bapt'm were a mere outward form; + to be observed because it is an ordinance of Xt. But there is reason to believe that the H. Spt. blesses the due performance of the ordinance.³³

For Milner, the practice of baptism within the Christian community was secure and indisputable; it was established by an express mandate of Christ³⁴ as a means of initiation into the community of the faithful.³⁵ In its earliest days, the rite was offered only to adults with the Scriptural prerequisites of faith and repentance as evidenced by a godly character. In a public way, baptism completed the process by which the new creature in Christ was born, though the sacraments did not, in themselves, in Milner's view, confer grace. They testified to the previous graceful activity of the Spirit.³⁶

3. Infant Baptism: An Historical Dilemma

But Milner maintained that an historical problem had developed which had serious implications for the practice of baptism within the Christian community, and that this problem contributed directly to the controversy surrounding the sacrament in his own day. Milner believed that the early extension of the rite of baptism to the children of Christian parents was an inevitable development. A problem arose, however, when the term 'Regeneration', which had been properly used to describe the new state entered into by the adult believer, came to be applied to infants as well. Through this development, the essential requirements of repentance and faith became separated from the event of baptism. Out of necessity, then, what the community had understood to take place in the baptism of adults had to change. Milner summarized the consequence of this shift in theological language in this way:

The baptism of infants, which for a season, must have been comparatively infrequent, in process of time, became very common in the Church, and that of adults comparatively uncommon; and it is here, that I seem to discover the origin of the deviation of the term Regeneration, from its true Scriptural meaning. To 'be born of water and of the Spirit,' in other words, to have FAITH, REPENTANCE, and BAPTISM, was still called Regeneration, although two of the ingredients were dropped, or necessarily excluded.³⁷

To Milner, the tripartite formula of salvation consisting of faith, repentance and baptism was

³³Annotated Laurence, p. 21.

³⁴I. Milner, Sermons, vol. II, p. 7.

³⁵Milner, Life, p. 375.

³⁶Annotated Laurence, Milner's Preface, p. 11.

³⁷Milner, Life, p. 644.

separated with infant baptism becoming the norm for the community's practice, and the subsequent diminishing of the custom of baptizing only adults. This historical circumstance demanded that the community reinterpret how it understood regeneration to fit into God's plan of salvation. Ultimately, this would mean distinguishing the regeneration of the adult from what came to be understood as the baptismal regeneration of the child. Milner remained confident that such a 'distinct't will go a good way towards untying the perplexed knots which have been tied on this subject'.³⁸

4. Baptism: The Hypothetical Sacrament

Clearly, Milner insisted that faith and repentance were fundamentally necessary for regeneration to be complete. Children, then, might be said to be hypothetically regenerated and brought into the Christian community. He hastened to defend this view from what Laurence and others attacked as a 'fictional baptism'.³⁹ The foundation for the Christian life was truly laid in the rite of infant baptism, but it was obvious that as the newly born infant could not be expected to possess the prerequisites of faith and repentance, or take on for itself the baptismal promises, someone must be called in the child's stead to do so. Thus, parents and godparents genuinely exhibiting the required qualities brought the child to the font and earnestly made the promises on the infant's behalf. In this regard, the office of godparents was anything but sentimental or superficial. They were nothing less than 'bondsmen'⁴⁰ and called to take on the serious obligation of doing everything they could to ensure that the child would be able to fulfil all that was promised in subsequent years of discretion.

But despite the best of intentions and earnestness of promises, an element of doubt persisted, and this accounted for the reason that Milner believed the baptism of the infant must remain hypothetical. Though it must be said that he left open the possibility that God could convey an inward and spiritual grace through the vehicle of the sacrament, 'we cannot be certain'⁴¹... 'we cannot be called upon to believe, that unconditional salvation will be the necessary consequence of the baptism either of the adult or the infant'.⁴² Certainly, within the covenantal act of baptism, 'God will perform his part'.⁴³ But the same assertion could not be made of the child.

³⁸Annotated Laurence, p. 20.

³⁹Laurence, Regeneration, pp. 113, 114.

⁴⁰Milner, Life, p. 651.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 653.

⁴²Ibid., p. 652.

⁴³Ibid., p. 651.

5. Confirmation: The Historical Solution

Ultimately, the earnest vows made on behalf of the infant by its sponsors must be taken on by the child some time after its coming of age; in other words, the child must seek after the regeneration which accompanied the receiving of the gifts of faith and repentance. It was only upon securing these gifts that the child could call upon his baptismal promises and thus complete the event of regeneration. To Milner, then, confirmation became an essential step on the way to salvation, for it was within this context that the hypothetical aspect of baptism was made effective and thus completed the process of the new birth. Isaac Milner was Robert Isaac Wilberforce's godfather, and upon the eve of his godson's confirmation, he wrote to him of the gravity and obligations attending the forthcoming event:

Many times before the Bishop asks you the question, do you ask your own conscience, whether, 'in the presence of God,' you are prepared to 'renew the solemn promise and vow that was made in your name at your baptism;' and to 'ratify and confirm the same in your own person; acknowledging yourself bound to believe and to do all those things which your godfathers and godmothers then undertook for you?' And if you find, you can answer these questions with a safe conscience towards God, you may then humbly hope, that the prayers of your pious parents and of your sureties, offered up at the throne of grace when you were baptized, have had a blessed effect.⁴⁴

Milner could not stress the importance of the rite of confirmation enough: it was inextricably tied to the office of baptism and stood as nothing less than that 'which renders the whole of this ecclesiastical regulation, a consistent and Scriptural system.'⁴⁵ To see baptism unconnected with this event; in other words, to see baptism as sufficient in itself was to stand in a highly perilous situation. Milner rated the risks especially high: that the Christian, satisfied with the knowledge that salvation had been accomplished solely in baptism, would rest in a false sense of security, and would risk deluding himself about God and his responsibilities as a true member of God's redeemed community. From the pulpit, Milner gravely warned his congregation:

To be in Christ, then, implies something more than the mere name of a Christian and a compliance with certain forms and ceremonies. Even a strict observance of many moral and indispensable duties does not constitute a man to be in Christ. And it is the more necessary to make this matter clear, because there is but too much reason to fear that many may continue to suppose themselves to be in Christ, merely on account of these things, and for having been baptized in his name, and having always belonged to a sound and orthodox church.⁴⁶

An important question remains to be asked: given that Milner could not view the rite of baptism as conveying the complete gift of salvation, would he have joined other Evangelicals in declaring the sacrament of baptism a non-essential? A survey of his ideas committed to paper do not reveal such a categorical declaration, and would suggest both a 'yes' and a 'no'. If what one

⁴⁴Milner, Life, p. 666.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 665.

⁴⁶I. Milner, Sermons, vol. II, p. 9.

meant by an 'essential' identification of baptism with God's once and for all saving act, the answer must be 'yes': Milner clearly believed that the infant necessarily lacked the prerequisites of faith and repentance, and was incapable of being regenerated by this washing with water alone. But on the other hand, he was most unwilling to throw the proverbial baby out with the bath water. Baptism, faith and repentance had in the earliest times gone hand in hand. By historical circumstance, the rite had been separated from the prerequisites. But just as the growing baptized child was counselled to seek after the regeneration of the adult, so was the unwashed adult to seek baptism, once he had experienced the spiritual regeneration of the Holy Spirit. 'Faith to repentance', Milner noted on his copy of Laurence,

necessarily go before + prepare the Subject; + Baptism completes the Regener'n - It is not true, I think, to represent Baptism as the proper + distinct + sole cause of Regener'n nor on the other hand is it correct to deny the necess'y of Bapt'm to complete Regen'n, - nor is it safe to reject Bapt - an ordinance of Xt's appointment.⁴⁷

Historical circumstances might well have separated baptism from its original accompaniments of faith and repentance, but this was not a reason to abandon one and exalt the others. God's work would not be thwarted but it would take time.

That Christ had instituted baptism with a command that it be practised, and that the earliest Christian communities had understood the new birth to be accomplished by faith, repentance and baptism were enough to convince Milner that the sacrament of initiation must be retained as part of the foundation of the Christian life. But there was another reason. Just as it was perilous for the Church to see baptism as the sole, infallible vehicle of salvation, so also was it dangerous to see confirmation, or the taking on of one's baptismal promises as a 'passport to heaven'.⁴⁸ Whether the initiation was completed by baptism or confirmation, these acts heralded the initiation of a lifetime walk with God: a walk which would be fraught with dangers and temptations to abandon the way of God. To his godson, Robert Isaac, Milner explained what he would face in a frank though tender way:

Here, my dear Robert, I am brought to a most important part of this letter of advice. When the ceremony is over, however diligent your preparation may have been, and also, however steady and fervent and well - directed your prayers may have been, both before and during the short service of confirmation, you are by no means to suppose, - as I fear too many do - that having discharged with decency an important Christian duty, you are, as it were, furnished with a sort of passport to heaven which renders you sufficiently safe, and entitles you to be easy as to your everlasting salvation, provided you do but, in future, abstain from gross vices, and live as those people usually do, who are called good sorts of persons. You must not so learn Christ. The 'renewing of the Holy Ghost,' must be a daily, practical thing. The confirmation of a person baptized in infancy, and now arrived at years of discretion, may be looked on as a good beginning; but the Christian life requires continued watchfulness, and repeated renewings. The Holy Ghost is a tender spirit - soon grieved, soon quenched: and His

⁴⁷Annotated Laurence, p. 51.

⁴⁸Milner, Life, p. 666.

blessed presence in the heart is only to be recovered by humble and incessant prayers.⁴⁹

6. The Benefits of Baptism

Milner did not directly link the daily renewings of the Holy Ghost with baptism, though his language certainly evokes images of Luther's admonition and counsel to a daily return to one's baptism. Certainly for Milner, the baptismal vows were to be remembered, and were to form the rule by which the Christian must live. Further, there were undeniable benefits accompanying baptism which served to strengthen and to console one undertaking the Christian journey. Though the Christian must never confuse the blessings of baptism with regeneration, Milner affirmed 'that a blessing may be expected on baptism, duly performed in obedience to Xt's ordinance'.⁵⁰ He went on to say in another place that regeneration might actually be effected in the baptism of infants, though this cannot be taken as a surety.⁵¹

In baptism, God also imparted knowledge which clearly placed the washed Christian in a superior position in relation to his fellow men as they stood before God. Of this knowledge, Milner wrote,

We have been baptized in his name, and have a much clearer revelation of the nature of his salvation than was vouchsafed to the Israelites, who were only initiated into the true religion by types and emblems; and it is our own fault, and will be our condemnation, if we do not turn to good account this superior knowledge and information.⁵²

The baptized could also see in this act his adoption into the family of God and the promise of a share in the riches of God's Kingdom. Like the infant, the regeneration of the adult was hypothetical, and dependent upon his faith 'being a true faith'.⁵³ Added to its grounding in Christ's ordinance and the practices of the early Christian community, baptism held an essential position in Milner's view of God's plan of salvation.

C. Milner and Scott

It is clear in an examination of the various Evangelical contributions to the debate on baptism that Milner's thoughts and John Scott's writings bear a resemblance to one another that suggests a strong linking of mind and effort. Their basic arguments are similar. Both point to an early

⁴⁹Milner, Life, p. 666.

⁵⁰Annotated Laurence, p. 102.

⁵¹Milner, Life, p. 653.

⁵²Ibid., p. 68.

⁵³Ibid., p. 652.

introduction of baptizing infants as necessitating a shift in the Christian understanding of regeneration, and they regarded this circumstance as a major cause of the contemporary controversy concerning baptism of both adults and children. Together, they insisted it was vital faith and a repentant heart which activated the blessings of baptism; still, one could charitably assume that all that was hoped for in the life of the baptized would come to be so. Further, both acknowledged baptism as an important seal and pledge affixed to the rite of Christian initiation, and they would not deny that the sacrament could serve as a vehicle for God's grace, though both would hasten to add that this was never to be confused with regeneration.

The link between the men is there. But it is practically impossible to assess in the light of the present sources whether it was Milner or Scott who first introduced the ideas of 'hypothetical baptism', 'charitable assumption' and baptismal blessings into the contemporary discussion of baptism. Scott did indicate in his reply to Laurence that

no individual, except one friend on the spot, saw or heard any part of my Inquiry...until it was in print...and that no one, save the friend referred to, gave me any particular advice about it.⁵⁴

From the aforementioned letter quoted by Mary Milner, we can deduce that Milner was the friend to whom Scott turned for criticism and advice as he prepared his manuscript. Still, it is difficult to assess the extent to which Milner's views on baptism influenced Scott, or other Evangelical contributors to the debate.

One piece of evidence, however, adds weight to the argument that Milner did play an important role in the theological development of Scott's thoughts concerning baptism: the aforementioned annotated copy of Laurence's reply to Scott in the Queens' College Library. Mary Milner reckoned that the substance of the notes as well as the more complete 'General Observations' preceding the notes had been communicated by Milner to John Scott. The style of the notes suggests that Milner probably intended to turn the book over to Scott for his use. The notes are dialogical in character and invite a response that one would not expect to find in notes purely for personal use. From these notes, it is not difficult to postulate that Scott had asked Milner to criticize Laurence's work and that Milner had responded.

From a perusal of Scott's subsequent reply to Laurence (*The Principles*), it is not hard to imagine that he had read Milner's comments and had incorporated his mentor's ideas and concerns into the body of his own work. A recurrent theme of Milner's notes was a defence of Evangelicals and their distance from severe Calvinistic theology. Scott picked up on this line, stating his case plainly in the opening pages of the *Inquiry*:

But a much more important issue of unfairness is, Dr. L.'s representing the whole question as a Calvinistic one. On this representation he evidently places great

⁵⁴John Scott, *The Principles of an Inquiry into the Effect of Baptism defended against the Animadversions of the Rev. Dr. Richard Laurence, LL.D.* (London: C. Baldwin, 1817), pp. 55-56.

reliance...Throughout the former part of his work, those, who take any such views of baptism as I have done, are exhibited as the champions of absolute predestination; and in the latter part, as ready to sacrifice every thing to the doctrine of final perseverance, or, as he terms it, 'indefectible grace'.⁵⁵

To Laurence's accusation that the Evangelicals had held that it was possible for the Christian to be born again without the benefit of baptism, Milner had countered with the comment quoted already that explained the shift in understanding of baptism which came with the practice of initiating younger members of the community clearly not possessing the givens of faith and repentance, while insisting that for adult converts, baptism must take place to complete the process of being newly born. Scott also argued that baptism held an important place within the Christian community though not with the strength of his mentor. His views on Luther were similar to Milner's. He considered the German Reformer 'as determined a predestinarian as even Calvin himself', and also criticized him for the unhelpful stance he took in the controversy with Zwingli over the doctrine of the Real Presence. In addition to the incorporation of ideas and emphases, Scott also saw appropriate on occasion to quote Milner in full, or to adapt him for his own purposes. The following passage adapted from Milner he deemed appropriate to conclude his work:

I conceive that in believing adults the substance of regeneration has actually taken place before baptism; but as the new birth is said to be both of water and the Spirit, it may be too much to say that it is complete without water, that is, without baptism. And this would be true, even if baptism were observed merely because it is an ordinance of Christ. But, besides this, the Holy Spirit blesses the due performance of the ordinance, and 'increases grace' in it. At first the business of baptism was necessarily with adults for the most part. Of course there were repentance and faith, at least supposed to exist: and then baptism closed the initiation: and being, as it were, the seal, it came to be called regeneration, because without it the initiation could not be complete. Originally, when regeneration implied repentance, faith, and baptism: when transferred to infants, the name was continued, though two of the ingredients were dropped, or necessarily excluded.⁵⁶

D. Concluding Remarks

It is to be regretted that Isaac Milner failed to present the public with a polished presentation

⁵⁵Scott, Principles, p. 3.

⁵⁶Ibid., pp. 167-168. Cf. Milner's notes in the Annotated Laurence, p. 21: 'I conceive that in adults the substance of regeneration has actually taken place before baptism; but as the n. birth is said to require both water + the Spirit, it may be too much to say that the N.B. may be completed without Water; that is without Bapt'm + this would be true, even tho Bapt'm were a mere outward form; + to be observed because it is an ordinance of Xt. But there is reason to believe that the H. Spt. blesses the due performance of the ordinance...Regeneration was not understood in the primitive time to imply conversion of heart; at least not in so decided a manner as the term has been taken by the moderns: This distinct'n will go a good way towards untying the perplexed knots which have been tied on this subject. Many of the Fathers seem to have used the word in a confined technical sense, restraining the word to Baptism, whereas many of our best + most spiritual Divines have consid'd Regenerat'n synon with being born of God + c'.

of baptismal theology. His notes reveal he had considered the subject as well as the contemporary controversy that had erupted concerning this sacrament. Though he had in the end to challenge the assertion that regeneration infallibly accompanied baptism as held by churchmen like Mant and Laurence, he strongly argued that the rite had what amounted to an essential role in the scheme of salvation, and conveyed blessings which enabled the newly-born Christian to meet the challenges and sufferings intrinsic to the life genuinely lived with God. His insistence that baptismal vows constituted the framework in which the Christian should lead the Christian life is reminiscent of the Lutheran emphasis upon baptism as the foundation of Christian existence and on the daily renewal through the work of the Holy Spirit. No other major Evangelical contributor sought to retain baptism as an essential in quite the way Milner did; in doing so, he came much closer to the arguments of Mant and Laurence than those Evangelicals who understood baptism as an essentially empty act, devoid of effective grace or promise.

Still, there were Evangelicals who saw merit in Milner's thoughts on baptism and attempted to preserve them. As mentioned above, John Scott acknowledged the influence of Milner upon his thought and presented excerpts from him in his published work. Mary Milner collected what she could of her uncle's writings on the subject and faithfully recorded what she deemed useful into the Life. It may have been her information that Milner's annotated copy of Laurence was housed in the Queens' library that possibly led George Gorham (also a member of Queens') of the famed Gorham controversy to consult Milner's marginalia.⁵⁷ Finally, Daniel Wilson saw fit to convey Milner's thoughts on baptism to the readers of the Christian Observer in his 'Memoirs' published shortly after Milner's death. Though his contribution to the baptismal controversy of the first half of the nineteenth century was largely dependent upon the value others placed on what he had to offer, Milner's voice concerning the fundamental rite of Christian initiation was not a silent one.

II. Milner and the Bible Society Controversy

A. Introduction

The stormy beginnings of the British and Foreign Bible Society have been described, especially in relation to the involvement of Evangelicals in the founding of the Cambridge Auxiliary Society.⁵⁸ But troubles did not cease even with the strong establishment of the Auxiliary, and by the early months of 1812, a full-scale pamphlet war had erupted. Although the

⁵⁷What may be Gorham's signature (dated 1847) on p. 136 of the Annotated Laurence indicates his possible interest in the work. The accompanying remark in response to Laurence reads: 'a remarkable admission by the Nonconformist party, that Regeneration was not absolutely declared in Baptism.'

⁵⁸See Chapter Two.

brevity of the controversy tempts one to dismiss the affair from the perspective of nearly two centuries later as a tempest in a teapot, the earnestness with which the controversialists engaged their opponents, as well as Milner's own contribution to the affair, encourages a brief discussion of the Bible Society controversy.

B. Herbert Marsh and the Danger of *Sola Scriptura*

1. Confessional Ambiguity and the Integrity of the Gospel

Herbert Marsh's initial assault on the Society circulated on the eve of the founding of the Cambridge Auxiliary as An Address to the Members of the Senate has already been noted in Chapter Two. With this piece safely in the hands of the public, Marsh's pen was not idle, and the 'Address' was shortly followed by An Inquiry into the Consequences of Neglecting to Give the Prayer Book with the Bible⁵⁹.

As its title suggested, Marsh, in the Inquiry, concentrated upon what he perceived as the dangers which accompanied the distribution of the Bible without the Prayer Book. The fact that this omission was justified by the clergy of the Establishment was bound to weaken the allegiance of their parishioners, particularly when they viewed their spiritual leaders working in close cooperation with members of dissenting congregations. In addition to the poor example encouraged by this practice, Marsh believed the Society deliberately deprived the masses of the safeguard which the Liturgy provided to protect the educated and uneducated alike against the false interpretation of Scripture. The Bible, Marsh argued, was prone to grave misinterpretation and one need only look to the array of religious groups as confirmation of individual licence to extract whatever one wished from Scripture to suit one's individual purposes. 'But have not Christians of every age and nation', Marsh asked,

been at variance on the question, what doctrines are contained in the Bible? If you ask a Trinitarian why he receives the doctrine of the Trinity, he will answer, Because it is contained in the Bible. If you ask a Unitarian, why he rejects that doctrine, he will answer that it is not contained in the Bible. On the authority of the Bible the Church of England admits only two Sacraments, in opposition to the church of Rome, while the Quakers, in opposition to the Church of England, admit no Sacrament at all. From the same Bible the Calvinist proves the doctrine of absolute decrees, and the Arminian of conditional salvation'.⁶⁰

Though Marsh would certainly contend for the position of the Bible as the sole basis of the theology of the Church of England, the accompaniment of the Liturgy, which paralleled other

⁵⁹Herbert Marsh, An Inquiry into the Consequences of Neglecting to Give the Prayer Book with the Bible, 3rd ed. (London: Law and Gilbert, 1812).

⁶⁰Ibid., pp. 11-12.

confessional documents found within the Protestant community⁶¹ provided a defence against a perversion of the Gospel as well as a means for the expression of Anglican identity. To be a member of the Established Church in England was to conform to the particular expression of Christian doctrine as expressed in the Book of Common Prayer.

To distribute a book, then, so vulnerable to misinterpretation and abuse, was to risk dissolving the distinctive features (and those which presumably maintained the purity of the Gospel) of Anglicanism into a sort of general Protestantism, or a 'Protestantism abstracted from all peculiar creeds'.⁶² Historically, Marsh could point to the example of the Independents who adopted this system, but it was also nothing less than the favoured system of the members of the Bible Society for 'they soar into the regions of high Protestantism, till the Church of England entirely disappears'.⁶³

2. The Danger of Calvinism

Marsh also strategically drew attention to a parallel he perceived between the 'Assembly of Divines' appointed by Parliament in 1643 which drew up the Westminster Confession and tried to presbyterise the Church of England⁶⁴ and the Bible Society Evangelicals. Marsh noted that the Assembly had received the support of three Bishops, and two Heads of Houses in Cambridge. He then noted the Bible Society's claim that their work would 'never be injurious to the Church, because several Bishops and Heads of Houses have joined it'.⁶⁵ Intensifying the threat, the author of the Inquiry pointed out that the seventeenth-century Assembly consisted primarily of Calvinists, thus placing himself in a prime position to deliver the most potentially damaging observation of all:

the Calvinistic Clergy of the Church of England are generally members of the modern Society. Now a man, who adopts the doctrines of Calvin, cannot be zealously attached

⁶¹'Are not the Moravians, the Methodists, the Baptists, the Quakers, and even the Jumpers, the Dunkers and Swedenborgians all Protestants? Since therefore Protestantism assumes so many different forms, men speak quite indefinitely, if they speak of it without explaining the particular kind, which they mean. When I hear of a Swedish or a Danish Protestant (namely one who belongs to the church established in those countries) I know that it means a person, whose religion is the Bible only, but the Bible as expounded in the Confession of Augsburg. When I hear of a Protestant of the Church of Holland, I know that it means a person, whose religion is the Bible only, but the Bible as expounded in the Synod of Dort. In a like manner a Protestant of the Church of England, is a person whose religion is the Bible only, but the Bible as expounded in the Liturgy and Articles'. Marsh, Inquiry, p. 14.

⁶²Ibid., p. 47.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 36.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 47.

to our English Liturgy. A Calvinist may in many respects have a great regard for it: but he cannot have much pain in parting with it, as it abounds with passages so decisive of conditional salvation, that no ingenuity can torture them into the language of absolute decrees.⁶⁶

By neglecting to distribute the Prayer Book as a safeguard of both Scripture and the particularly Anglican expression of Christianity, the supporters of the Bible Society risked compromising the Church and catapulting the State into the same political chaos as precipitated by the Puritans.

In this challenging of the Bible Society, Marsh represented himself as the lone defender of the Church and State within a University whose political and ecclesiastical commitments he feared were rapidly dissolving. For the sake of these institutions, Evangelicals were called to forsake their misguided commitments to denominational cooperation, and to channel their efforts into the SPCK, the Society which Marsh defended as the 'Church of England Society'. In a sermon preached at St. Paul's, Marsh spelled out the importance of this allegiance. 'It appears', Marsh preached,

that the former, or the ancient Society, is not only a Bible Society, but likewise (what the other is not) a Church-of-England Society. With the former it is an invariable rule, in promoting Christian Knowledge, to keep in view the Doctrines, which the members of the Society believe and maintain. Especially where the Church of England is established, they consider it as their duty to promote Christianity, not under any form, but under that particular form, which, above any other, they are pledged to support, which alone is the tenure of ecclesiastical and even of civil preferment.⁶⁷

C. Evangelical Response

Marsh's Inquiry was provocative. He had accused the Evangelical Churchmen of disloyalty to the Establishment and attributed to them activities which were bound to undermine the security of both Church and State. He also had named names - names of individuals whose reputations had to be defended and upheld. Thus, the Evangelical replies were swift and numerous: William Otter, William Dealtry, Charles Simeon, Nicholas Vansittart and E.D. Clarke all contributed to the debate. All five mounted a common defence against Marsh's accusation that Evangelical churchmen had forsaken the Church in their conscious decision to omit the distribution of Prayer Books as a part of the Bible Society's brief. They further failed to confess that their collaboration with Dissenters in this project could do any harm to the mission of the Church, and posed questions to their opponents like Otter in his Vindication: 'Can Methodism be considered in any point of view, as worse than total blindness and wickedness?'⁶⁸ The Evangelical Churchmen's commitments to the Bible Society in no way impaired the individual's commitment to Anglicanism

⁶⁶Marsh, Inquiry, p. 48.

⁶⁷Quoted in Ibid., p. 43.

⁶⁸William Otter, A Vindication of Churchmen who become Members of the British and Foreign Bible Society (Cambridge: Francis Hodson, 1812), p. 22.

within the parish, and these Evangelical apologists believed that interdenominational cooperation on this level would in fact increase the possibility of Dissenters returning to the Establishment through their association with committed and loyal Churchmen'.⁶⁹ Given the power, influence and current resources of the Society, Otter and his colleagues shared a common fear that a positive response to Marsh's suggestion that Churchmen should withdraw from the Society's ranks would indeed leave a most threatening and effective instrument in the hands of Dissent.

D. Milner's *Strictures*

1. Rationale

Isaac Milner's contribution to the Bible Society Controversy was late, arriving some fifteen months after the publication of Marsh's Inquiry. One should note, however, that he had already responded to Marsh's provocative Address in his speech at the founding of the Cambridge Auxiliary, and his subsequent reflections upon the occasion of the celebration of the first anniversary of the Cambridge branch indicate that he had not lost interest in the subject.

Undoubtedly, the fact that well-respected representatives of the Evangelicals had responded early to Marsh's accusations played some part in the formulation of Milner's reply. He acknowledged the contributions of his predecessors in his own work and summarized their virtues. Each one he believed to have defended adequately the constitution of the Bible Society and its continued commitment to the corporate distribution of Scripture without denominational encumbrances which would shatter the unity which the Society professed to promote. He did, however, find a time had come in which it was 'highly expedient to trace and expose the errors that have served to conceal and disguise' the truth about the Bible Society and its work.⁷⁰ The fact that Milner's work is considerably longer than that of any other Evangelical contributors also serves to account for the comparatively late presentation of Milner's work to the public eye.

That Marsh had made personal reference to Milner's leadership in the Cambridge Auxiliary in the Inquiry would also probably have exercised a dissuading as much as a persuading influence upon Milner's decision to enter the fray. He had expressed doubts about the prudence of a senior member of the University involving himself with a popular movement initiated by students as in the initial stages of the establishment of the Cambridge Auxiliary, and at times, it might have seemed better simply to ignore Marsh's provocation. But the need to defend his personal reputation exceeded the temptation to let the matter drop, and he wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury that through his work he hoped only to

show, that the principle of his opposition is without foundation, and also, that his

⁶⁹Otter, Vindication., p. 17.

⁷⁰Isaac Milner, Strictures on Some of the Publications of the Rev. Herbert Marsh, D.D. (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1813), p. 287.

representations have increased and confirmed a hurtful dissension among the friends of the Church.⁷¹

Finally, it was too much for Milner to let rest Marsh's accusations of the disloyalty to the Establishment exemplified by the Evangelical Churchmen's neglect to distribute Prayer Books with Bibles, the possible damage of this practice on Church and society in England, and his identification of the Evangelicals with the life and times of the Puritans. A letter to Zachary Macaulay indicates that Milner had encouragement from his friends to come to the Society's defence⁷² and in 1813, the Strictures On Some of the Publications of the Rev. Herbert Marsh, D.D. was available for public dissemination.

In a critical remark concerning the Inquiry, Milner had commented on the range of topics covered by his opponent. 'Yet what a quantity of heterogeneous matter', Milner wrote, 'has our Inquirer introduced into his publication of 1812! - Popery, Bell, Lancaster, Puritans, Sorts of Protestantism, Test Act, Elections, Sectaries, Calvinists, & c.& c.!' ⁷³ Ironically, one can only offer a similar comment about the Milner work, as one trudges through over four hundred pages of text, making diversions around various topics addressed to secondary issues like Scriptural hypothesis, theological education and the general study of ecclesiastical history. The ever-faithful biographer tried to cast the collection in a positive light, urging that value would be found in 'a book full of sound and luminous views both of history and philosophy; powerful in reasoning, and admirable in illustration'.⁷⁴ One cannot help but wish in perusing the work that Milner had abandoned what can seem like his last public defence, and had attended more closely to the concerns at hand.

Still, despite the diversions, it is not difficult to discern Milner's purposes in writing his work. To his friend and ally, the Archbishop of Canterbury, he described his motives:

The chief objects of my Strictures on the writings of Dr. Marsh are, to show, that the principle of his opposition is without foundation; and also, that his representations have increased and confirmed a hurtful dissension among the friends of the Church.⁷⁵

Through his reply to Marsh, Milner hoped to undermine the authority of one of the most powerful opponents of the Bible Society while soothing the anxieties of those who may have been persuaded by Marsh's charges of disloyalty and warning cries of a Church in danger.

⁷¹Milner, Life, p. 534.

⁷²Huntington Library MS MY 657, Isaac Milner to Zachary Macaulay, 7 February 1813.

⁷³Milner, Strictures, p. 235.

⁷⁴Milner, Life, p. 556.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 534.

2. An Evangelical Defence

To accomplish his stated objectives, Milner began his task by addressing an issue taken up by most of his colleagues: that the Evangelical commitment to distributing Bibles without the immediate and necessary accompaniment of the Prayer Book did not preclude an individual commitment to the distribution of the Liturgy apart from the corporate activity of the Bible Society. This matter, to the Evangelical don, served as the key 'that unlocks all the dark and mysterious corners' of the controversy, and was one that should 'be kept in mind by every careful reader of the Inquiry'.⁷⁶ He stated the problem in this way:

But when it is either asserted or insinuated, that the churchmen who belong to the Bible Society do actually neglect to distribute the Prayer-book among their poor brethren in the church; when from the acknowledged fact, that churchmen subscribe to the Bible Society, an intrepid inference is drawn, that such churchmen do in principle disparage the Prayer-book, and do in practice neglect to distribute it, the whole controversy assumes a very different aspect.⁷⁷

As the charge was not only libellous but potentially injurious to the tender consciences of Churchmen loathe to support a Society that did not uphold the Establishment, Milner found it necessary to address this topic once again.

Milner responded to Marsh's charge with two points. In the first place, it was faulty reasoning that led Marsh to maintain that participation in the corporate activity of the Bible Society necessarily precluded the private activity of individual Churchmen. Marsh had not provided concrete evidence that his fears could be substantiated, and Milner believed that had he been able to furnish proof, Marsh would have done so.

Secondly, Milner sought to assure his audience that there was no evidence to suggest that the involvement of Churchmen in the Society diminished their commitment to a solidly Anglican expression of the Gospel. It was, in fact, the commitment to 'dismiss all inferior considerations, and to unite for the common glorious object of dissemination the Bible' as members of the interdenominational Bible Society that would encourage them to 'to discharge this part of what they conceive to be their respective duties, by some other means'.⁷⁸

The key to understanding Milner's and other Evangelical Churchmen's commitment to the Bible Society lay in their common commitment to the principal Evangelical doctrines which united Evangelical Christians, and the belief that there was little, if any, theological distinction to be made amongst Evangelicals across denominational lines. Of course there existed characteristics that distinguished faith communities as well as historical circumstances, but these were to be

⁷⁶Milner, Strictures, p. 33.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 9.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 31.

considered 'adiaphora', or to use an Evangelical's phrase, 'matters of inferior moment'⁷⁹. As the depository of the great Evangelical doctrines, the Bible could therefore be safely promoted in cooperation with those who held to similar theological commitments. One could even work alongside an Arian as long as he would agree to the distribution of the Authorised Version of Scripture.

a. The Liturgy as Sword for Evangelism

But this willingness to forego the distribution of those documents which served to shape and to focus a peculiarly Anglican identity would not be abandoned by faithful Evangelical clergy within their own parishes. Though it was clear that the specific distribution of the Liturgy must take second place to a general distribution of Scripture, it was still 'a bulwark against innovation and heresy in our own church'.⁸⁰ With such a useful instrument at their disposition, it was clearly incumbent upon Evangelicals to distribute the Prayer Book.⁸¹ Of even greater importance, however, was a practical consideration: the distribution of the Liturgy encouraged corporate participation in the worship life of the Church. 'It is not', Milner wrote,

because the Bible cannot be trusted alone with safety in the hands of the poor and unlearned that we acknowledge our obligation to furnish them with Liturgies, but because without the Liturgies they cannot properly join in the public worship of God; and consequently must be deprived of many of the inestimable advantages of religious communion.⁸²

To Milner, the resistance of Marsh to the distribution of the Bible without the benefit of the Prayer Book manifested 'a rooted aversion to any connection in religious concerns with any Christians if they dissent from the Established Church'.⁸³ Unencumbered with this prejudice, Evangelicals could join freely with other Christians in the distribution of that Book which transcended denominational boundaries. Still, for the Evangelicals, forsaking the Liturgy would be tantamount to shooting themselves in the foot. Why abandon this important tool which not only provided a theological safeguard but also an essential evangelistic tool which rendered nothing less than

a safeguard against leading a prayerless life, against the coldness and indifference in

⁷⁹Milner, Strictures, p. 32.

⁸⁰Ibid., pp. 347-48.

⁸¹'...My mind has for many years past been strongly impressed with the absolute necessity of distributing Prayer-books to poor churchmen; and why am I to suppose, that in a concern of such moment, a pressure of duty similar to that which I have described, and equally strong, is not felt in general by the good members of our Establishment?' Ibid., p. 349.

⁸²Ibid., pp. 350-351.

⁸³Christian Observer, vol. 10 (1811), p. 816.

spiritual concerns of which the best Christians complain; here is a most valuable help to true devotion - an excellent preservative of a right Christian spirit of supplication.⁸⁴

The Christian on his knees, Milner believed,

is in the habit of saying, 'O God the Father,' - 'O God the Son,' - 'O God the Holy Ghost', will not be an Infidel, a Socinian, or an Arian, but will trust in God's mercy through Christ for redemption, and in the Holy Ghost for sanctification. So, he who daily acknowledges that he is 'tied and bound with the chain of his sins,' and entreats God that the 'pitifulness of his great mercy may loose him,' cannot consistently deny the doctrine of original depravity and become a self-righteous Pharisee. On the other hand, it is impossible that those who earnestly pray for true repentance, forgiveness of 'all their sins, negligences and ignorances,' and that they may be 'endued with the grace of the Holy Spirit to amend their lives,' should adopt Antinomian principles, and deny the necessity of holiness of life.⁸⁵

That Evangelical Churchmen would neglect to avail themselves of what amounted to an important and effective evangelistic tool was absurd. Marsh's fears were groundless.

b. Calvinism

Milner's efforts to absolve his Evangelical colleagues from the guilt of liturgical neglect remained a constant theme throughout the Inquiry. But Marsh had raised another matter: the link of Evangelical Anglicanism with the dreaded scourge of Calvinism. Marsh's connection was unmistakable. It was notable that he had pointed out that the seventeenth-century Westminster Assembly of Divines charged with the task of advancing religion could claim three Bishops and two heads of Cambridge Houses within their ranks. Just as the Assembly had laid aside the Liturgy as part of a programme to cleanse the Church of Popery, in the present circumstances a professor of divinity had been accused of Popery because he sought to defend the Liturgy of the Establishment; Bible Society members, too, could lay aside the Liturgy. Finally, as exemplified in the history of the Assembly, to uphold the theological system of Calvin and to remain faithful to the Liturgy and all expressed therein must prove to be an impossible task. Marsh further explained:

When our liturgy teaches us to pray, that the rest of our life may be pure and holy so that we may come to eternal joy; - that the ministers of Christ may so prepare the way, that we may be found acceptable in his sight; - that we may so pass through things temporal as finally to lose not the things eternal; - that we may so faithfully serve him in this life, that we fail not finally to attain his heavenly promises; such and similar expressions it is impossible to reconcile with Calvin's doctrine of salvation, which entirely excludes conditionality.⁸⁶

Their objections to the English Liturgy had led Scottish Calvinists to insurrection. Marsh's silence concerning the consequences of the modern Calvinists' neglect of the Liturgy was pregnant with

⁸⁴Milner, Strictures, p. 351.

⁸⁵Ibid., pp. 351-52.

⁸⁶Marsh, Inquiry, pp. 48-49.

suggestion.

The ghost of Calvin had been called once more into the service of those who sought to discredit the Anglican Evangelicals. Marsh's message was clear: an 'Anglican Calvinist' was a contradiction of terms. No one who claimed a theological stance shaped by the tenets of Calvin could be expected to be seriously committed to the conditionality of one's state of salvation expressed within the Anglican liturgy. The terrible consequences of the destroyed Church and State in revolutionary France remained fresh in the minds of the people, and Marsh linked those whom he identified as the Calvinist clergy with a period of English history marked by turmoil and destruction. It was through faithful allegiance to Church and State that England could hope to remain at peace. Those who challenged these safeguards must be exposed and cast aside.

Milner understood the dangers, and set his pen in the Strictures to yet another defence of Anglican Evangelical loyalty. Clearly, Marsh had made use of a controversial piece of divinity with the intent to damage the Evangelical cause. A recurring theme, Milner summarized in his perceptions of Marsh's purpose in the following way: 'Those objects were but too plain; namely, to disparage the church members of the Bible Society, and to assail Calvinism and Calvinists with incessant hostility'.⁸⁷

Recognizing Marsh's effectiveness in comparing the Puritans with his contemporary Calvinists, Milner the historian rose to set the record straight. In choosing the particular example of the Puritans, the Margaret Professor had craftily picked to his advantage historical facts from a context which in fact differed significantly from their own. 'Two periods may agree in the single circumstance of danger belonging to both', Milner wrote, 'but if we neglect to keep in view the requisite distinction concerning its cause, we may easily become the dupes of injudicious, prejudiced, or interested alarmists'.⁸⁸ In addition to referring his reader to Nicholas Vansittart's summary of distinctions⁸⁹, Milner stressed that neither King Charles' attempt to force a corrupted Liturgy upon the Scottish Church, nor the clerical profanity, immorality and political diversions which he believed to have been rife in the seventeenth century were paralleled in their present circumstances.

Marsh had asserted that the attempt to introduce the English Liturgy in Scotland had led to insurrection because of its exposure of the Scottish Calvinists to an offensive rite. Here, Milner went to great lengths to illustrate that the Liturgy offered to the Scots had been corrupted. Marsh, he asserted, had claimed that it was the defective Calvinism in the English Liturgy which had

⁸⁷Milner, Strictures, p. 91.

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 86.

⁸⁹Ibid., pp. 86-87.

principally offended the people of Scotland.⁹⁰ But this fault, according to Milner, was not the cause. In accordance with his designs to bring the Church of Scotland into line with the Church of England, King Charles had ordered the bishops of Scotland to compile a liturgy which they subsequently sent to England for the King's approval. The King's advisers, Milner reported, had altered the arrangement of the Liturgy as well as the content of various prayers. Thus, in the English Prayer Book, the prayer of Thanksgiving stood after the communion and did not contain the words, 'May worthily receive the most precious body and blood of thy Son Jesus Christ' which were added to the English bishops' edition of the Scottish version. These words had been removed by the English reformers as they supported the notion of corporeal presence, a tenet offensive (in Milner's mind) to English Protestants.⁹¹ In another instance, the prayer of humble access was noted in the English Liturgy to have come before the consecration of the elements, but in the revised Scottish Liturgy, it had been restored to its former location within the pre-Reformation Ordinary of Sarum. A Scot, Milner contended, would have seen the English positioning of this prayer in a place not easily distorted by those favouring transubstantiation. The placement in the Scottish Prayer Book 'countenances that Popish doctrine'.⁹²

It was not, then, a want of Calvinism in the revised Prayer Book that provoked the Scottish recipients to rebellion. The examples of alteration Milner cited, coupled with his illustrations of the feelings of the Scottish Calvinists when they were commanded to accept this Liturgy, indicated that to them, the acceptance of this Prayer Book would have meant the introduction of what was perceived as Popery into the Scottish Kirk. Milner summarized the Scottish complaint thus:

That the grounds of their objection to the English Book of Common Prayer were of this sort: viz. - That it was too much like the form of the Church of Rome: - That our mode of prayer was too easy, and our prayers too long: - That they disliked the minister's attire and his gestures: - That lessons and prayers were improperly mixed; and the Lord's Prayer too often repeated: - That time was wasted in music, and the people's responses - That the Athanasian Creed was not unnecessary; and that unseasonable things were to be found in the Litany. To all which may be added, the institution of godfathers and godmothers, the interrogatories and the cross in Baptism, the ring in Marriage, and a number of passages in the Catechism and in the Burial and Communion Service.⁹³

Marsh had been unfair to parallel the rejection of the liturgy by the Scottish Calvinists (which had led to rebellion!) with the present decision on the part of the Evangelical clergy to forego the distribution of the Liturgy within the context of their Bible Society activities. The Evangelicals, Milner maintained, were not plotting an insurrection, nor were they anything but committed to the

⁹⁰Milner, *Strictures*, p. 95.

⁹¹*Ibid.*, p. 95.

⁹²*Ibid.*, p. 95.

⁹³*Ibid.*, p. 114.

Liturgy of the Established Church.

Having corrected Marsh's use of history in order to stir up what Milner saw as political fears, he turned to theology, thus engaging briefly with the Calvinist-Arminian debate. Marsh had argued that the modern-day Calvinist would experience no difficulty in parting with the Liturgy because

such and similar expressions [as 'teach us to pray, that the rest of our life may be pure and holy so that we may come to eternal joy;'] it is impossible to reconcile with Calvin's doctrine of salvation, which entirely excludes conditionality.⁹⁴

But history, Milner believed, pointed to a different image in which Calvinist and Arminian lived amicably under the banner of the Articles. It was true that the example of the Puritans revealed a time in which 'the Calvinistic sentiments ^{were held} too strongly to be justified by an appeal to the Liturgy and 17th Article of our Church', but he was convinced that they might in present times have lived peaceably in the existing establishment (with its improvements), 'well convinced of the imperfection of all human contrivances, and the almost certain evils attendant on innovation'.⁹⁵ Similarly, he maintained that anti-Calvinist members of the Establishment could live with the theology of the 17th Article though they might alter the language if given the chance. Further, eminent English churchmen of the past such as Hooker and Bishop Beveridge, whom Milner regarded as Calvinists, were committed to the Liturgy, and he could call upon the wisdom of Horsley who had maintained that the Articles 'explicitly assert nothing but what is believed both by Arminians and by Calvinists'.⁹⁶

Milner clearly understood that in linking Evangelical Anglicans to Calvinism, Marsh was in possession of a dangerous and effective weapon. In an effort to gain the sympathy of his readers, Milner sought to expose Marsh's use of the connection as one calculated to wound and to break down Christian fellowship:

Thus, when, under the protection of insinuation, the public are led to believe that the advocates of the Bible Society entertain religious sentiments of a stamp peculiarly offensive at the present time, and even inconsistent with the sobriety of good sense and sound principles, such indirect attacks, although in every respect unworthy of the pious and good man, of the scholar, and the Christian are extremely difficult to withstand. They produce impressions which imperceptibly wound the reputation; and are the more mischievous, because that, in order to serve the purpose of insinuation, it is not always necessary it should produce an absolute conviction. It is quite sufficient, for example, in the present case, to inject the suspicion of the present doctrine of Calvinism. The disposition of the public mind supplies the rest.⁹⁷

Milner aimed to balance Marsh's use of historical connections with his own. In the first

⁹⁴Marsh, Inquiry, p. 49.

⁹⁵Milner, Strictures, pp. 114, 115.

⁹⁶Quoted in Ibid., p. 163.

⁹⁷Ibid., p. 369.

place, fair comparisons of historical contexts must be made. Then, one must be thorough and truthful when analyzing the underlying causes of historical events. Finally, Milner argued, great figures of Anglican history could be seen as committed Calvinists and Churchmen at the same time. Like their forebears, Milner and other Anglican Evangelicals had not lost the ability to distinguish between the theologically sound doctrines of Calvin and

those peculiar dogmas which he has pronounced with great positiveness, and which I, with many others, exceedingly disapprove, as violent, rash, and unscriptural.⁹⁸

Throughout his defence, Milner separated the contemporary English Calvinist from the Kirk, the presbytery and Geneva, and firmly rooted him as a member of the Establishment which he himself sought to uphold.

E. Concluding Remarks

In Marsh, Milner recognized a person capable of wounding the Evangelicals' reputation. Marsh had gained a respect as a Biblical scholar and his position as Margaret Professor of Divinity added weight and authority to his presentation. This authority had to be challenged and diminished if the Evangelical don's voice was to be heard. We have already seen how Milner dealt with Marsh as an historian. Unfortunately, he also challenged Marsh's scholarship by analyzing the foundation upon which Marsh rested his hypothesis concerning the origin of several of the Gospels. Of course, Milner asserted Marsh's work had been marked by 'notorious or fundamental mistakes in reasoning'⁹⁹ that he then set out to find, thus hoping to discover why this eminent scholar should have had such difficulty in providing substantial reasons for his opposition to the Bible Society. If these points did not serve Milner's purpose of leading his reader at least to questioning of Marsh's authority, his pointing out that the Roman Catholic Gandolphy's public claim that in Marsh the Roman Catholics had found 'a champion' would cast doubt in at least some minds of Marsh's right to speak as the devoted Anglican Churchman. Milner believed that through his work, he had exposed that Marsh had

confounded together things which ought to have been kept distinct; that he has pronounced of individuals what is true only of the collective body; that he has grossly misapplied the historical events of our own country; that he has illogically deduced conclusions unconnected with their premises.¹⁰⁰

Marsh's position and reputation undergirded his argument, but Milner warned his readers that the actual pillars of authority were weak and unreliable.

Marsh had complained that Milner had entered the discussion that had erupted over the events concerning the establishment of the Cambridge Auxiliary to the Bible Society conveniently late.

⁹⁸Milner, Strictures, p. 370.

⁹⁹Ibid., p. 203.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., p. 288.

As far as Marsh was concerned, the controversy had died down, and Milner's late contribution was unnecessarily rekindling a fire that was meant to die. Yet, it was clear in his introductory letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury that at least for Milner, the matter had not been resolved: 'Your Grace will perceive how little any personal considerations have weighed with me', he wrote, 'as I have now waited above a year, in the hope, that animosities would cease'.¹⁰¹ That Milner's work had been welcomed and prized by those Churchmen whom he proposed to defend stands as further evidence pointing toward the contribution to a controversy which invited a reply. In response to apparent criticism that Milner had attacked Marsh's authority too harshly, Charles Simeon pointed to the example of Scriptural rebuke, and concluded that

in lowering the imposing weight of Dr. Marsh's authority, I think that he has done right; and I think most decidedly that he has done right; and I think that there is a mistake in the minds of religious persons in relation to this: in that they think nothing should proceed from a religious character but what is soft, and gentle, and persuasive. I think there are times and seasons when he must 'contend earnestly for the faith', and 'reprove with all authority'.¹⁰²

In approaching his opponent with courage and conviction, Milner had won a decisive victory for the Evangelicals:

He has actually crushed his adversary to atoms. Of all the men in Britain that have done good to the Bible Society, there is scarcely one, except the Secretaries, that can vie with Dr Marsh. In doing all that man can do against it, he has advanced it a thousands times more than if he had written in its favour.¹⁰³

The writer of the review of the Strictures in the Christian Observer agreed with Simeon's assessment. What had been lacking in the previous Evangelical responses, and what needed yet to be addressed, was a weighty criticism which exposed the errors that lay beneath Marsh's argument. These gaps his contemporaries judged Milner had been able to fill. He had succeeded in disentangling the 'fugacious and shadowy issues'¹⁰⁴ embedded in Marsh's presentation. Of primary importance, he had set before his readers the most crucial point of contention - that Marsh insisted that by their involvement with the Bible Society, Churchmen justified the distribution of Scripture without benefit of the Prayer Book - an accomplishment which in itself would have been enough had Milner chosen to conclude his labours even at that point.

But he had gone further. Marsh had misrepresented historical facts, and Milner supplied what his advocates accepted as a true analysis, and they believed that he had exposed the error of

¹⁰¹Milner, Life, p. 530.

¹⁰²Carus, Simeon, vol. I, p. 377.

¹⁰³Ibid., p. 373.

¹⁰⁴Christian Observer, vol. 12 (1813), p. 377.

Marsh's assertions.¹⁰⁵ He had defended Marsh's attack on Calvinism and challenged the authority of the Margaret Professor. As a benefit, the writer of the 'Review' welcomed the occasional digression as an opportunity for

valuable instruction, and for the Christian views, with which Dr. Milner has contrived to adorn even this unpromising discussion.¹⁰⁶

Praising Milner as a 'master of argumentation'¹⁰⁷, the reviewer of the Strictures believed that Milner had produced a work to be valued

by the scholar, for its style and research; by the logician for its reasoning; and by all classes for the Christian instruction, and for the lessons of practical wisdom, which fill its pages.¹⁰⁸

Milner's contemporaries were certain that the Strictures would be of lasting value.

The Evangelical reception of Milner's Strictures was warm and enthusiastic. But the greatest testimony to its impact came in the form of Marsh's reply which he wrote and published in 1814. Throughout 170 pages of text, the Margaret Professor sought once again to establish his claim that the Evangelicals by their involvement in the Bible Society demonstrated their disregard for the Establishment. Much of the same ground covered in the Inquiry Marsh reiterated in the Reply, and it is not important to provide detailed analysis of the argument. What is of note is that the busy Margaret Professor had seen a sufficient threat to his reputation and argument to warrant a substantial response.

By 1842, Mary Milner could lament that her uncle's contribution to the Bible Society controversy was largely unknown, though she commented that this neglect had as much to do with the value of the work which Milner's piece sought to correct. The unfamiliarity also probably had everything to do with the fact that by 1814, the debate occasioned by the acceptance and establishment of the Bible Society within the nation's intellectual centres had subsided. The establishment of the Cambridge Auxiliary had been seriously challenged by an eminent and respected member of the University - a challenge which seriously threatened the foundation of the life of the British and Foreign Bible Society. Like Marsh, Milner raised the voice of the scholar, thus lending authority to a Society which survived the threat, and continued to grow and expand in the years to follow.

¹⁰⁵Christian Observer, vol. 12 (1813), p. 384.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., p. 460.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., p. 463.

¹⁰⁸Ibid.

Conclusion

To live the life of a disciple of Christ, in all our varied intercourse with men, and to act the faithful part, I find a much harder task.¹

Isaac Milner died peacefully at the home of his lifelong friend, William Wilberforce, on 1 April 1820. His bodily remains were laid to rest in a vault in the Queens' College Chapel, Cambridge. Daniel Wilson preached the funeral sermon which, according to his biographer, highlighted his 'ponderous sense, his tenderness and kindness, Milner's solid and experimental piety'.²

A man of his own to the end, Milner simply died. Neither pious words of blessing nor reports of heavenly visions graced the last moments of the dying man. Ever quick to defend his friend, Daniel Wilson, the author of Isaac's 'Memoir' published in the Christian Observer, somewhat ruefully explained to his readers that the unexpected circumstances of his illness had robbed his admirers of 'any explicit testimony of his death'.³ After all, Wilson concluded, 'A last testimony to the grace of the blessed Saviour, is, without doubt, exceedingly gratifying to surviving friends; but the real question is, not so much how men die, as how they lived'.⁴

Throughout this thesis, I have presented Isaac Milner as a transmitter of what he understood to be an authentic Evangelical tradition, particularly as it was to be upheld in the Church of England. It was a tradition that cherished the dynamic presence of the Gospel which called men to repentance and conversion, and then to the active service of renewal and reconciliation within the world. Milner's own experience taught him that suffering and doubt were realities of the authentic Christian life lived at the foot of the Cross, but that these realities were not without meaning or redemptive value. Life was understood as a gift that was meant to be received with joy. Milner maintained a respect for life in its diversity, and his curiosity and openness to people and experience exemplified an expression of Christianity that called Christ's followers to embrace the world, not reject it.

Was Milner successful in passing on this Evangelical tradition he sought to preserve? If one was to rely solely on the most popular images of Evangelicalism that emerged in the decades following his death, one would have to conclude he was not. It has been popular to maintain that

¹Milner, Life, p. 575.

²Ibid., p. 715.

³Christian Observer, vol XIX (1820), p. 297.

⁴Ibid.

the loss of Evangelical leadership led, in part, to the 'crisis of Evangelicalism'⁵ as the Claphamites and their associates 'had not successors of their own calibre and influence'⁶. There were no suitable runners to whom the torch of faith could be passed, and Evangelicalism, at least within the Anglican fold, necessarily suffered. Anti-intellectualism is another charge hurled at nineteenth-century Evangelicalism, and Bernard Reardon's assessment is typical:

Intellectually, it [Evangelicalism] was narrow and naively reactionary. The wider problems of faith and reason did not trouble it and in philosophical theology it had no interest...Philosophy, science and the arts were things intrinsically of this world, and of no consequence for eternity'.⁷

J.H. Overton reported that the Evangelicalism of the nineteenth century was considered to be 'grievously degenerated'.⁸ So reckoned Ian Bradley: 'Evangelicalism in the second half of the nineteenth century was very different from what it had been in the first: there was a good deal more cant and a great deal less practical piety'.⁹ Leonard Elliott-Binns was somewhat more generous in his estimation, but he still conceded that 'Evangelicals had lost something of their first love and became conventional for the most part'.¹⁰

The testimony of at least some of the individuals closely involved with nineteenth-century Evangelicalism has been used to support modern assessments of the movement after the Golden Age of the Clapham Sect. Sydney Smith judged the 'Methodists'

to hate pleasure and amusements; no theatre, no cards, no dancing, no punchinello, no dancing dogs, no blind fiddlers; all the amusements of the rich and poor must disappear wherever these gloomy people get a footing.¹¹

W.E. Gladstone and Mark Pattison's negative assessments of the lack of Evangelical intellectual vigour have already been noted, and the exodus of the children of Clapham, as well as other offspring of Evangelical homes, from the faith of their fathers strongly suggests that something in Evangelicalism had gone awry. Even those who remained within the Evangelical fold admitted to a change. Sir James Stephen's lament is characteristic: 'Oh where are the people who were at once really religious, and really cultivated in heart and understanding - the people with whom we could associate as our fathers used to associate with each other. No 'Clapham Sect'

⁵David Newsome, The Parting of Friends (London: John Murray, 1966), p. 1.

⁶E.L. Woodward, The Age of Reform 1815-1870 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1938), p. 485.

⁷Bernard Reardon, From Coleridge to Gore (London: Longman, 1971), p. 29.

⁸Overton, Nineteenth Century, p. 99.

⁹Ian Bradley, The Call to Seriousness (London: Jonathan Cape, 1976), p.

¹⁰Leonard Elliott-Binns, Religion in the Victorian Era (London: The Lutterworth Press), p. 50.

¹¹Sydney Smith, 'Review of Robert Acklam Ingram's "Causes of the Increase of Methodism, and Dissension"', Edinburgh Review, vol. 11 (1808), p. 357.

the loss of Evangelical leadership led, in part, to the 'crisis of Evangelicalism'⁵ as the Claphamites and their associates 'had not successors of their own calibre and influence'⁶. There were no suitable runners to whom the torch of faith could be passed, and Evangelicalism, at least within the Anglican fold, necessarily suffered. Anti-intellectualism is another charge hurled at nineteenth-century Evangelicalism, and Bernard Reardon's assessment is typical:

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¹¹Sydney Smith, 'Review of Robert Acklam Ingram's "Causes of the Increase of Methodism, and Dissension"', Edinburgh Review, vol. 11 (1808), p. 357.

nowadays'.¹²

Several forces at work within Evangelicalism have been identified by David Bebbington as significant in remoulding Evangelicalism in the decades following Milner's death. A summary of those which were bound to have influenced the destiny of Milner's legacy follows:

Calvinism. Men such as Henry Drummond and Robert Haldane had spent time in Geneva reviving and repopularizing Calvinism. The result, Bebbington concluded, was that Calvinism became 'the label for the ideal of a primitive, apostolic Christianity'.¹³ This trend ran counter to the efforts Milner and his colleagues made to distance themselves from the Genevan reformers.

Enthusiasm. Milner died before Edward Irving made his public sensation. But if Simeon's style of Evangelical ministry made Milner uneasy, it is not difficult to envision what his reaction would have been to Irving's theatrics. In addition to challenging the much-defended Evangelical notion of sober, rational Christianity, the Irvingites' premillennialism conflicted with an Evangelical world view that was optimistic, and world-embracing. Irving's decision not to support Roman Catholic Emancipation fuelled a strong anti-Catholic attitude in Evangelical circles, most notably in the work of the Protestant Reformation Society (1827) and Hugh McNeile's Protestant Operative Society. A deepening commitment to the ideal of an Established Church as fostered in the late 1820's encouraged the development of a similar hard-line attitude toward Dissent. A more militant Anglican attachment to the Establishment led to increased tensions in the areas of interdenominational cooperation that had been nurtured and treasured by Milner and those of his generation.

Rigidity. Along with Calvinism, the later Evangelicals were seen to be slipping into a discipline considered to be Puritanical. Novel-reading, music, and recreation were often viewed anxiously, and indulgence in these pleasures strictly controlled. The many prohibitions went hand-in-hand with a devaluation of learning that some considered to be a 'dispensable luxury'.¹⁴ Milner would have viewed such prudish behaviour as a sure source for spiritual pride. He believed a man must always be a good and watchful steward of God-given time but this responsibility did not exclude the God-given gifts of pleasure and learning.

Clash with the Tractarians. H.A. Wilson asserted that in their clash with the Tractarians, the Anglican Evangelicals

forgot that their tradition was based upon the preaching of a positive Evangel of Christ's dying love for souls. Their preaching often became a panic anti-Roman proclamation, witnessed to by a form of service from which dignity and beauty were

¹²C. Stephen, ed., The Right Honourable Sir James Stephen: Letters with Biographical Notes (Printed for Private Circulation Only, 1906), p. 87.

¹³Bebbington, Evangelicalism, p. 77.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 12.

rigorously excluded.¹⁵

The Tractarians were not exempt from similar criticism. The Evangelical-Tractarian clashes of the 1830's and 1840's encouraged a siege mentality as each party retreated into what it took to be its bastion of orthodoxy. Peter Toon identified a result of the conflict as a 'polarisation in both parties; in the one towards Rome and in the other towards a cold, tough Protestantism'.¹⁶ By retreating to these defences, both sides effectively cut themselves off from the Anglican tradition they would have assuredly claimed to uphold.

Of special interest to this study of Milner is that as the Evangelicals became more embroiled in controversy with their Tractarian opponents, they began to write their own histories. The justification of these contributions were claimed on grounds similar to those claimed by the Milners: previous histories did not suffice as adequate presentations of the history of Christ's Church. Thus, E.A. Litton, author of The Church of Christ (1851), claimed that he could not find an adequate historical 'weapon or argument'¹⁷ to assist him in his task. Isaac Taylor, writing twelve years before, maintained that previous 'church histories scarcely lift a corner of the veil that hides from us the inner recesses of the ancient church'.¹⁸ He set himself the task of laying 'open the real condition, moral, spiritual, and ecclesiastical, of the ancient church'.¹⁹ Two other historians, G.S. Faber and William Goode, also published historical works which suggest that they found Milner's History insufficient for the challenges they confronted.

On the face of it, Taylor's description of the state of the Church in decline could have been lifted from the pages of Milner. 'That while there were to be found', Taylor wrote,

here and there, MANY INDIVIDUALS, eminent for piety (according to the dark notions of the age) and who, for the most part, had fled into the wilderness, or had shut themselves up in monasteries, the mass of the christianised community - the accredited recipients of the sacraments, exhibited scarcely any indications of genuine spirituality; while the morals of those who crowded the churches ranged far below a mean level; and, in a word, that a degree of grossness, and of violence - a sensuality, a frivolity and a fierceness, marked the social body (of all ranks) to which a parallel could now be found nowhere, in protestant countries; and only in catholic countries where no protestant or biblical influence has ever been admitted.²⁰

¹⁵H.A. Wilson, Liberal Evangelicalism, 2nd ed., (London: Hodder and Stoughton Ltd., 1923), p. 25.

¹⁶Peter Toon, Evangelical Theology, 1833-1856: A Response to Tractarianism (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1979), p. 77.

¹⁷E.A. Litton, The Church of Christ (London: Longman, Green, and Longman, 1851), p. viii.

¹⁸Isaac Taylor, Ancient Christianity and the Doctrines of the Oxford Tracts, 2 vols., (London: Jackson and Walford, 1839-1842), vol. I (1839), p. viii.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid., vol. II (1842), p. 75.

It is the hint of an anti-Catholic polemic found at the end of this quotation from Taylor that begins to set Milner apart his Evangelical historical successors. Milner acknowledged and lamented the declension that beset the Church from its earliest days, but he commended the age of the Fathers to his generation as its spiritual forebear. It has already been shown that for Milner, even in the darkness of the Middle Ages, true examples of piety could be found.

Though Faber and Goode remained more positive toward accepting the authority of the Fathers than others, the predominant Evangelical attitude to the early Church that emerged later in the century was one which sought to distance the Evangelicals from their catholic inheritance.²¹ Litton immediately set himself to the task of describing the 'fundamental differences between Romanism and Protestantism, as opposite systems of dogmatic theology'.²² His study took him to the roots of Christianity where he saw the distinctions between the two immediately emerge. Throughout his argument, Taylor raised the question of 'NOT What ought to be said of Basil; or of pope Gregory, or of pope Hildebrand; but whether the SYSTEM which they severally promoted, and to which they zealously attached themselves, was such that we should do well in taking it as our model'.²³ His conclusion was that the Church of the earliest days was marked by 'the deepest stains of fraud, idolatry and blasphemy'.²⁴ Full of corruption and error, the early Church had little to offer by way of example or spiritual heritage.

To fill the vacuum left by this depreciation and even outright rejection of the Fathers, Taylor and his sympathisers counselled their followers to look to the sixteenth-century English Reformers for examples of efforts to reform and purify the seriously corrupted Church. This interest in the English Reformers was strengthened by the formation of the Parker Society in 1840 which supplied a steady stream of the writings of the English Reformers to an eager reading public until the Society's dissolution in 1855. The erection of the Martyrs' Memorial in Oxford in 1841 honouring Cranmer, Latimer and Ridley stands as another example of a revived interest in the English Reformation.

Milner, on the other hand, had argued for what may be understood as the catholicity of Evangelical Christianity. What Evangelicals believed was in direct continuity with what had been believed by the earliest Christians; many of the early Fathers were nothing more than good Evangelicals also concerned for the continued vitality and renewal of the Church. Further, Milner had located the heart of the sixteenth-century renewal of the Church in the work of Martin Luther

²¹Peter Toon declared that a regrettable outcome of the Evangelical-Tractarian debate concerning tradition was 'the generally negative attitude that it bred among the average clergy and laity towards the early Fathers and to the usefulness of tradition'. *Evangelical Theology*, p. 205.

²²Litton, *History*, p. 5.

²³Taylor, *Ancient Christianity*, vol. II, p. 18.

²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 365.

from whom was derived the Reformation in England, amongst other reform movements. This ecumenical dimension, while not having a direct bearing on the founding of the Jerusalem bishopric in 1841, at least ensured that Anglicans had some idea of the sister communion with which they engaged in this rather daring ecumenical experiment. In this setting, Milner's presentation of Evangelical Christianity in continuity with the teaching of the early Fathers, and its emphasis upon the German, rather than the English, Reformation made the work less attractive as a weapon in the polemics between Evangelicals and Tractarians.

One more point needs to be made. It has been argued that throughout the Milners' presentation of what they understood to be Luther's doctrine of justification by faith alone, the History served not only as a kind of instructional guide for church renewal, but also as a vehicle of proclamation itself. But, as Toon pointed out, by the middle of the century, the phrase 'justification by faith' had begun to fossilize into a party slogan: Evangelicals had succumbed to the temptation to emphasize the political and ideological aspects of the doctrine rather than the soteriological.²⁵ Isaac Milner believed that it was the faithful proclamation of the doctrine of justification by faith alone that ensured the vitality of the Church, and he would have been concerned about what he would have seen as an abuse of doctrine.

From the preceding analysis based on popular conceptions of Evangelicalism, then, we may find ourselves tempted to commend Milner for what he contributed to his immediate setting but then forced to admit that what he had to bequeath to succeeding generations of Evangelicals could not be passed on: 'For all these sad developments', Cockshut mourned, 'the early Evangelicals should not be blamed'.²⁶ Still, it must be recognized that not every scholar of Evangelicalism of the nineteenth century has judged it to be the ineffectual, gloomy, defensive, spent movement it has been claimed to be. As Bebbington pointed out, Evangelicalism was coming into its prime in the 1850's and '60's.²⁷ A significant aura of confidence and optimism has been seen to have characterized the movement of this period undoubtedly attributable to successes in missions, the abolition of the slave trade and then slavery itself, philanthropic endeavours and the continued increase of the number of clergymen considered to be Evangelical. Further, both Michael Hennell and Marcus Loane have pointed out that the work of men such as Josiah Pratt, Edward Bickersteth, Robert Bickersteth, Henry Venn, Daniel Wilson and James Stephen indicates that the early nineteenth-century Evangelicals were not without their successors: Hennell concluded that 'the sons of the prophets were, in the main, worthy of the prophets; they represent a wide group

²⁵Toon, Evangelical Theology, p. 169.

²⁶A.O.J. Cockshut, ed., Religious Controversies of the Nineteenth Century: Selected Documents (London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1966), p. 3.

²⁷Bebbington, Evangelicalism, p. 105.

of clergy and laity of the mid-Victorian Church, who have been too long neglected.²⁸ Doreen Rosman, in her masterly study entitled Evangelicals and Culture, agreed with Hennell's suggestion that a major problem with present evaluations of Evangelicalism is the continued dearth of information and analysis of the men and women who provided the movement with its vision and inspiration. Rosman wrote,

Evangelicalism has suffered from the failure of historians to give due attention to its special literature which as Lecky and more recently Donald Davie have pointed out, 'has scarcely obtained an adequate recognition in literary history'. It has suffered too from a shortage of individualised and localised studies which increasingly reveal the fallacy of treating the movement as a homogenous entity. Biographies and group histories clearly prove that not all evangelicals and not all evangelical groups can be tarnished with the same anti-intellectualist, philistine brush.²⁹

Through this study of Isaac Milner, I hope that I have been able to make a contribution toward a more complete understanding of Evangelicalism as it made its way from the fringes to the heart of British Church life. Though there are doubtless instances in which charges of anti-intellectualism were deserved, when they are measured against the life of a man like Milner who was dedicated to the furthering of science and the defence of the intellect, an assessment such as the one offered by Reardon (quoted above) sounds absurd. Honours lists of the Universities continued to include Evangelicals who went on to become leaders in their society. Even a complaint of Irving directed toward Evangelicals that 'Intellect, cold intellect, hath the sway over heaven-ward devotion and holy fervours'³⁰ demonstrates that within the Evangelical world, human reasoning was alive and well. Further, the publication of theological works from Evangelical pens show that Evangelicalism 'did generate academic theology', and that its adherents 'did not spurn the task of reflecting on their faith'.³¹ Through the scholarly efforts of men like Milner, education and the valuing of the mind continued to be important to Evangelicals.

The continued work of the Bible Society, the C.M.S., and countless philanthropic societies and charities stand as another tribute to Milner's Evangelical leadership. Lord Shaftesbury, a prime mover in the humanitarian efforts of the Evangelicals, considered himself to be the successor of Wilberforce, and it will be remembered that it was Milner who had introduced Wilberforce to the Evangelical Christianity which, throughout his life, he identified as the wellspring for his efforts to alleviate suffering and oppression. Milner inducted Wilberforce into a Christian life that engaged with the world, and a sign of this guidance can be seen in the continuation of Evangelical engagement with society.

²⁸Michael Hennell, Sons of the Prophets (London: SPCK, 1979), p. 123.

²⁹Rosman, Evangelicals, p. 7.

³⁰Edward Irving, The Oracles of God, 3rd ed., (London: Printed for T. Hamilton, 1824), p. 14.

³¹Bebbington, Evangelicalism, p. 141.

The continued appointment of Evangelicals to the higher echelons of the Anglican Church hierarchy throughout the first two thirds of the century stands as another tribute to Milner's leadership. From the modest though significant appointment of Milner to the deanery of Carlisle, to the appointment of J.B. Sumner as Archbishop of Canterbury, to the heights of Evangelical ecclesiastical power during the Palmerston premiership (1855-58, 1859-65), Evangelicals proved that they could be loyal, faithful and effectual leaders within the Anglican community. Two of the Palmerston bishops, H.M. Villiers and Samuel Waldegrave, were appointed to the see of Carlisle where Milner first broke into the ranks of the Anglican ecclesiastical hierarchy.

Finally, as indicated above, there were signs in the 1830's that the Milners' History may have outlived its day. Advances in historical scholarship had led men like T.B. Macaulay and Samuel Roffey Maitland to reject the work as a serious sourcebook for Christian history. Within the Evangelical fold, the composition of new works by Litton, Goode, Faber and Taylor suggest that the History may have been superseded. Still, it must be remembered that these men were engaged in a specific struggle with their Tractarian opponents for which they required a different set of weapons. The Milner History was issued six times during the 1830's and '40's, and in 1849, Sir James Stephen, an historian in his own right, declared that the 'Church History of Joseph Milner is one of those books which may perish with some revolution of the moral and religious character of the English race, but hardly otherwise'.³² The work clearly remained an authoritative one throughout the first half of the nineteenth century. Today, it gives us an important view of the theological world of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Isaac Milner has remained an almost legendary figure within the spheres he moved. Articles published in the Christian Observer continued to refer to him as an authority, and twenty-three years after his death, one entitled 'Cursory Reflections of the Milners'³³ concluded with an appeal for any unknown manuscripts of his to be brought forward for the benefit of the readership. L.J.M. Coleby's article published in 1954 on Milner as the first Jacksonian Professor in Experimental Philosophy and some attention devoted to his place in recent works on Queens' College and the development of the study of engineering in Cambridge have served to keep Milner's memory alive in the collegiate community: the chair Milner had constructed to accommodate his substantial girth is an artefact of Queens' College, and his portrait gazes down upon contemporary Cambridge academic life from its place of honour in the College Dining Hall.

I hope through this study, I have enabled the shadowy presence of Milner to emerge from the pages of Evangelical history into a man of flesh and blood who was deeply concerned about the renewal of the Church which he loved and served. His concerns were of the kind that confront

³²Stephen, Essays, vol. II, p. 158.

³³Christian Observer, vol. 42 (March 1843), p. 158.

Christ's Body in every age, and a study of his life, and others like him can serve to inspire and to instruct. I also hope this work has served as a further contribution toward the correcting of some of the assessments of Evangelicalism which have been based on biased opinions and insufficient evidence.

In 1987, the Dean and Chapter of Carlisle Cathedral commissioned a series of tapestries to honour three great deans of the past. Milner was chosen as one of the deans to be so honoured. How fitting is this tribute to a man who left his weaver's loom to make his mark upon the church, college and community he served. Through the imagination of the artist, one can discern in the beautiful design the legacy which Milner left behind. He is commemorated for his contributions to scholarship which showed that the light of knowledge and learning is to be received as a gift from God. The warm colours of the tapestry were employed by the artist to recall Milner's warmth and humanity: for him the living of the Christian faith was a matter for both the mind and the heart. He recognized the vitality of the Church to lie in the faithful proclamation of the Gospel in word and deed; of this joyful burden must the Church be reminded in every age.

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